EDUCATION AND ITS CRITICS:

PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAMMES IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION POLICY

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INTRODUCTION
This thesis is concerned with the relationship between the education system and its critics – with the terms in which programmes of educational reform are viewed by critical intellectuals, and with the claims and limitations of a particular mode of 'principled' critique. It explores this concern in relation to a number of recent developments in Australian education policy, describing the debates that they have engendered and identifying the political ambiguities that attend them. Three case studies are developed. The first is drawn from reactions to the recent bureaucratic reorganisation of higher education, especially those responses concentrated on the defence of the humanities. The second concerns developments in post-compulsory education, especially the construction of the new national credentialling system based on the assessment of 'Key Competencies'. The third addresses the endemic problem of educational assessment and equity. While each of these case studies is discussed in its own right, the three areas of discussion supplement one another within an overall argument concerning the relationship between the education system and a particular mode of 'principled' critique. In exploring this relationship, the thesis puts the case that we require a more historically-informed understanding of current problems in Australian education and a more pragmatic appreciation of the achievements of the existing education system.

The issues raised are timely ones. Matters of educational policy have become particularly pressing over the past decade, as Australian education has undergone significant changes. In recent years, we have seen the effects of the drive towards a national education system, of the reorganisation of higher education, of the development of schemes for national credentialling and of the reconstruction of links between schooling, training and industry. These reforms have been driven by some pressing imperatives: to produce a trained and flexible workforce; to monitor levels of literacy and numeracy at
a national level; and to satisfy the 'unmet demand' for increased educational places, while managing a limited educational budget.

Each of these goals has met with fierce criticism from dissident educationists and critical intellectuals. Of course, not all criticism comes from the same source or shares a common framework. A good deal of it is technical and piecemeal, aimed at making local revisions to the programmes as they evolve. The criticism that we are concerned with, however, tends to be global, oppositional and above all, principled – aimed at subordinating educational policy to philosophical, ethical and political imperatives of a 'higher' order. Typically, such criticism rejects the reform programmes as instrumentalist, reductionist and unprincipled. The educational bureaucracy, it is said, is more interested in managing populations than in forming a self-determining democratic community, and more committed to meeting the needs of industry than to promoting the self-development of children or the self-determination of citizens. There is certainly ground for these accusations. The educational bureaucracy probably is less concerned with higher goals of human self-realisation than it is with meeting more immediate targets, such as those of implementing programmes, managing budgets, combatting the effects of unemployment and identifying the needs of national industry. It formulates these objectives with reference to a range of political imperatives and technical instruments, including economic indicators, demographic patterns and international standards of literacy, training levels and economic productivity in advanced industrial nations.

For critical intellectuals, the fact that education reform is driven by these objectives indicates the extent to which the education bureaucracy has cashed in its principles, and succumbed to the influence of market forces, technocratic rationality, or the political doctrines of the New Right. Under
such influences, it is said, the education system has been split by divisions between the educational and the instrumental, the human and the technical, utility and culture, ideology and truth. Once, it seems, it was possible for government to be informed by humane wisdom and democratic principle. Once, it was possible for the school system to orient itself to the goals of 'universal self-realisation'. This time will come again, if only critical intellectuals keep to their critical vocation. What must be maintained, it is urged, is the vision of a democratic society and an education system founded on the ideals of equality, social justice and democratic self-determination. It is this vision, apparently, that enables critique to see beneath the layers of interest, ideology and instrumental calculation which have obscured the true vocation of society. It provides the moral certainty with which economic prosperity, improved training and enhanced efficiency are dismissed as unworthy goals for the education system. Instead, it is urged, truly democratic principles provide ends in themselves, ends which are irreducible to 'instrumental' means or calculation.

This abstract and schematic understanding of education has held sway in academic circles for some time, providing the orthodoxy in critical analysis of education. It has appeared to provide an indispensable explanatory model, capable of incorporating the complex relations between economic processes, political interests and ideological structures. Such explanations seem to account for why it is that goals such as equality and self-determination have not been achieved. They identify the barriers preventing the expression of political rights and interests, and describe the processes by which citizens have been persuaded to accede to an unequal education system. On the one hand, they promise to explain how it is that citizens have surrendered their struggle for individual self-expression and political self-determination. On the other, they offer the hope that the
education system can redeem itself by promoting critical reflection and recognising the agency and resistance of political subjects.

Recently, however, these terms of analysis have come into question. Conceptions of 'structure' and 'ideology' have been undermined by observations of the autonomy and irreducibility of the various 'departments' of social, political and economic life. It has also become more difficult to treat 'agency', 'interests' and 'rights' as expressions of pre-given political identities. These terms have begun to seem too schematic to describe the variety of statuses and subject positions engaged in political, social, legal, economic and governmental relations. Instead, historical and anthropological studies have begun to suggest the peculiarity of the modern Western preoccupation with the human subject and its development. Rather than appearing as an absolute principle to which all human societies must aspire, the conception of human self-realisation is beginning to look like a relatively recent product of post-Kantian humanism. Commitment to the goal of self-realising subjectivity can now be described as a component of the definite and limited mode of intellectual conduct associated with the critical intelligentsia. Such observations have tended to undermine the abstract and principled nature of critical political and social analysis, bringing the practice of social critique down to earth. Once the self-evidence of humanist critical analysis is undermined, it becomes possible to describe modern forms of social administration in less principled and ideal terms.

The second factor which has brought education analysis down to earth is the revision of theoretical and historical understandings of government. Because of its abstract and 'intellectualist' interest in power, repression and resistance, critical analysis has tended to ignore the more mundane elements
of governmental programmes, remaining largely indifferent to the actual means by which government has equipped itself to identify and alleviate social problems, to shape populations and to form workforces. However, the routine technologies of government may bear little relation to the principled models applied to them within humanist critique. Once their degree of historical independence from these modes of reflection is identified, it becomes possible to describe the definite – if limited – historical achievements of modern social administration, giving the practices and objectives of government a degree of ethical substance and importance.

The implications of these shifts for debates on Australian education are significant, if as yet largely unexplored. As recent work has begun to show, the field of Australian education has been overtheorised and underdescribed. From the vantage point of critical theory or philosophy of education, it has been all too easy to place the education system on the grid of principle, a grid extended across the historical and current expansion of education institutions, practices and statements. What is more difficult to observe from this height is the mobile and motley components of the modern Australian education system – and the unexpected problems, improvised solutions and unpredictable outcomes which formed it.

The theoretician tendencies of critique have significantly informed academic response to current developments in education policy. Too long trained on the ethical horizon, the critical vision tends to become myopic at close quarters. When required to engage with the mundane routines of institutional organisation and education management, it is often too abstracted to focus on the immediate targets of institutional reform, and too impatient with technical detail to attend to the complexities of governmental
programmes and the range of imperatives which they attempt to address. Located in institutions protected by a degree of autonomy from the sphere of public planning, critical intellectuals have been able to maintain this posture of other-worldly detachment, making rare prophetic appearances within the domains of public planning and consultation on education policy, and then withdrawing to a more refined ethical environment. In this way, many within the academy have been able to ignore the mundane demands of education planning.

Recently, however, the autonomy protecting the academy has begun to be dismantled, as the developing national education system has sought greater accountability from the universities. In their workaday mode as teachers and researchers, critical commentators have been required to engage in new planning exercises, to organise their activities according to new performance and accountability measures, and to reorganise their teaching and administrative procedures in order to accommodate students arriving from a broader range of social backgrounds. Critical intellectuals have responded with bleak prophecies concerning the impact of these reforms on the higher goals of culture and critical reason. But these pronouncements have had little impact on those concerned with the immediate and limited ends of bureaucratic planning. While critics accuse the education bureaucracy of lacking either intelligence or moral seriousness about its own operations, those engaged in policy formulation have tended to shrug off these accusations as an indication of the irrelevance of academic commentary to the pressing task of reshaping the education system. In turn, this entrenches the critical certainty that education is facing a crisis of 'bureaucratic instrumentalism'. The result is an apparent impasse in education policy debate.
In this thesis I undertake the task of describing this impasse. I begin with some current problems in Australian education policy, describing how these problems are addressed in the present, as well as some of the historical circumstances in which they have appeared. Without attempting a comprehensive history of these problems, I make use of a variety of historical facts and arguments, drawing out their lessons for current concerns. The thesis is organised in three parts, each addressed to a different case study.

Part I describes the terms in which Arts faculties have reacted to the federal education bureaucracy's efforts to reorganise Australian higher education, opening up the issue of the relation between 'principled' academic critique and bureaucratic calculation. The elements of confusion and political ambiguity in the academy's response are described in Chapter One. The humanities, it has been said, cannot be required to account for themselves, since they are oriented to more absolute ends, ends which are irreducible to the instrumentalist and anti-intellectual concerns of the education bureaucracy. However, I argue, these critical self-definitions seriously misunderstand the intellectual and ethical attributes of bureaucratic organisation. At the same time, these self-definitions show little understanding of the technical components of the academic ethos, of its historical formation or of its social context.

The task of developing a more informative and empirically-based account of the modern humanities is undertaken in the remainder of Part I. First, in Chapter Two, I take up the question of the pedagogy of humanistic education. Teaching in the humanities, it has been argued, is irreducible to institutional norms, serving no calculable end but that of individual self-realisation and cultural development. However, such self-definitions are
shown to bear little relation to the kinds of pedagogic techniques deployed in modern Arts faculties, or to the historical circumstances which installed them in these institutions. In fact, many of the forms of teaching now regarded as so central to the humanities stem from relatively recent institutional adjustments, as Australian universities adapted themselves to the pressures of an expanding mass education system.

In Chapter Three, I sketch some of social and vocational outcomes of education in the humanities. This task entails collating statistical indications of patterns of student intakes and graduate outcomes from Australian Arts faculties. These demographic facts are marshalled as a reminder that Arts faculties are positioned in a series of prosaic relations to the governmental formation of a citizenry, a workforce and an educated population. These statistical indicators provide the grounds for an empirically-based description of the humanities' capacity to form a definite range of vocationally useful skills and attributes. This kind of information, I argue, is more useful than the generalised claim that the humanities are the traditional keepers of social conscience, that they form the democratic community or that they provide the moral heart of government.

Identifying this field of vocational connections provides the impetus for the third task of empirical investigation, outlining some of the vocational outcomes of modern Australian Arts faculties. This task is undertaken in Chapter Four. Here, I describe some of the contingent and reciprocal exchanges which occur between humanities-based education and the adjacent sphere of bureaucratic work, detailing the definite forms of conduct and capacity formed by education in Arts faculties and adapted within vocational arenas. In doing so, I suggest that humanistic education and bureaucratic work occur within autonomous 'departments of existence', each
with its own historical formation, its own routines, ethical commitments and proprieties. At the same time, however, these separate zones of ethical formation are connected in a variety of routine ways. The observation makes it possible to describe the technical, routine and normative elements of the academic milieu, while identifying some of the ethical components of the bureaucratic environment.

In these ways, Part I opens up the general theme of the relationship between the education system and its critics. Its central proposition is that the analysis of education policy must be conducted with more sensitivity to the technical and institutional components of the critical ethos, while giving more credence to the ethical components of bureaucracy. This theme is extended within the second case study developed in Part II. Here, we move outward from the reform of higher education to the bureaucratic reorganisation of post-compulsory education and training. Once again, the focus is on the terms in which critical intellectuals have responded to these bureaucratic reform programmes.

In Chapter Five, I outline the development of a new scheme for the construction of a national system of credentialling based on the assessment of 'Key Competencies', describing some of the hopes and fears that have attended this reform process. For some, the competency programme represents a long-awaited opportunity for the realisation of democratic education principles. For others, it is a sign of the extent to which the education system has broken faith with its historical promises. Nevertheless, both the proponents and opponents of competencies tend to judge the programme against its capacity to realise the greater ends of full participation, educational equality or critical citizenship. Where the programme promises to realise these ideals, it is treated as the vehicle for
progressive political aspirations. Where it is judged to fail, it is regarded as the instrument of conservative interests, market-driven forces and repressive modes of state control. As it has developed, however, the debate on competencies indicates that the relationship between 'principle' and programmatic ambitions, between the governmental and the political, and between 'progressive' and 'conservative' positions is more complex than either its supporters or detractors are prepared to acknowledge.

A more extended discussion of the debate is provided in Chapter Six. Here, I argue that the abstract and perfectionist preoccupations of critical intellectuals have limited the constructiveness of their contributions to these important policy developments. In implementing programmes such as the competency scheme, the education bureaucracy routinely addresses conflicting demands, often couched in terms of absolute principles and the language of rights. It does so by means of an apparatus which operates by allocating statuses and arbitrating between rights-based claims. For many critical intellectuals, the fact that these negotiations fail to achieve a greater end of producing full participation or complete equality indicates only the 'unprincipled' character of bureaucratic planning. But these absolutist reactions, I argue, show little appreciation of the actual and historical achievements of the bureaucratically organised education system, seriously underestimating both the capacities of government and its limitations. Instead, it is necessary to understand the rarity and fragility of the available intellectual and political means for organising political life and educational realities.

This argument is further developed in Chapter Seven. Here, I challenge the critical assertion that the education system has somehow failed because it has abandoned the moral and political principles on which it was founded.
Such assertions, I argue, are based on the untenable assumption that the education system should be a medium for human self-realisation or for expressions of democratic political will. Such expectations are bound to be disappointed. But this is not the result of the education system's failure to honour its historical promise to realise democratic rights. No such promise was made. Mass schooling, I argue, was not founded as an expression of principle or of political identity. Instead, it has a messier and more mundane history, one closely tied to the emergence of modern forms of government. When popular schooling first emerged, it did so as an uneasy combination of pastoral tactics for forming conscience and conduct, and bureaucratic strategies for maximising the strength and security of the state. The lesson for current debates concerns the need to re-evaluate the historical achievements of the bureaucratic school system, while recognising its limits.

In Chapter Eight, these wide-ranging historical arguments are brought home to Australian circumstances, through a description of the bureaucratic and pastoral purposes that shaped secondary schooling at the turn of this century. At this point, a number of current problems were already on the agenda, as the education system adjusted itself to the joint governmental goals of forming a workforce suited to 'national purposes', while shaping the moral attributes of individuals and equipping citizens with the capacities required to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities. Since the turn of the century, the education system has been grappling with the problems of aligning pastoral strategies with the distributional elements of the school system. The practical difficulties involved have included the now-familiar ones of negotiating the delicate relationships between state schooling, training sites, workplaces and universities, as well as those of meeting the joint goals of promoting industrial productivity and national
security, while fostering child-centred and pastoral modes of teaching. These ambitions and complexities are still with us, and are unlikely to be removed at the behest of critical intellectuals.

This, then, is the argument developed in Part II. If critics are to engage with the concrete construction programmes occurring around the academy, I argue, it is necessary to develop a sense of the ethical force of bureaucratic planning. At the same time, it is important to appreciate the limits of the intellectual and political technologies available to those responsible for managing school systems. The objectives of government are linked to their actualisation by means of contingently formed instruments which are constantly subject to failure. Nevertheless, such technical instruments are indispensable to the organisation of mass education systems. This fact is unlikely to be altered by the critical discovery that these techniques are normative and often arbitrary in their operation.

This issue of the limitations of governmental technologies is taken up more fully in Part III. Here, in the third case study, I take up the question of the 'failures' of educational assessment. Assessment is a notorious problem within debates on education, and is often regarded as the final barrier to progressive educational reform. At the same time, it is constantly subject to technical alterations and utopian expectations, as new forms of assessment are devised. The hope attached to such schemes has been that revising assessment will make it possible to humanise or democratise the education system, making the technical components of education organic to the development of the individual, and rendering the school system transparent to democratic reason. When these hopes are dashed, the failure is treated as an indictment of the school system and a revelation of its instrumentalist and utilitarian character. The issue raises once more our central question
concerning the relations between critical expectations and the capacities of
the actual and existing education system. At the same time, it provides a
telling example of the complex relationship between the ethical, technical
and political components of education planning, and of their irreducibility
to theoretical clarification or principled adjudication.

I begin, in Chapter Nine, with some of the standard confusions about
educational assessment, outlining some difficulties endemic to the area.
These include the expectation that education should be able to attend to the
full range of individual and social differences, while also providing
common and comparable modes of systematic distribution. The dilemma
appears to be both inevitable and intractable, attracting an ever-growing
field of philosophical clarifications and technical innovation. To critical
intellectuals, assessment's failure to make the whole child and the organic
community transparent to educational understanding is an index of its
fundamental failure. However, these expectations and indictments fall well
short of the technical and political complexity of the modern problem of
assessment.

The task of deciphering these elements is taken up by the two subsequent
chapters. Chapter Ten undertakes the description of the invention and
deployment of the main techniques of educational assessment and
credentialling. These flawed and inefficient mechanisms now act as relays
between diverse educational, social and vocational sites, relays which are
constantly subject to failure. But for all their fallibility, I argue, there are
few obvious replacements for these devices. Understanding this entails
developing an historical sense of the rarity of assessment mechanisms and
of the circumstances in which they were assembled and installed within the
school system. Accordingly, I go on to outline the hopes attached to each of
the current devices of assessment, from examinations to mental tests and school-based records. At various points, each of these devices has been regarded as an instrument capable of solving the endemic problem of reconciling the individualising elements of popular schooling with its normalising and distributory functions. But despite the expectations and disappointments attached to them, each of these mechanisms was hastily forged and adapted to unintended uses. Each in turn has given rise to unexpected problems. Nevertheless, the standard criticisms of the 'truth-claims' of these technical devices misses the mark in a number of respects. Most importantly, it fails to recognise the indispensable role of technical and expert arbitration within the delicate negotiations entailed in managing mass education systems.

Some of these questions are taken up in Chapter Eleven, which outlines the history of current techniques of school-based assessment. Modern 'progressive' forms of assessment, I argue, are neither as new as their proponents tend to imagine, nor as innocently 'principled' in their origins. At the same time, I point out, discoveries of the normative and technical nature of assessment are hardly new. In fact, each of the assessment devices discussed has been accused of failure, inefficiency and inequity from the point of its first deployment. But these discoveries did not stem from a set of philosophical or political insights. Rather, I describe the circumstances in which a series of unexpected problems, adaptations and technical innovations made it possible for the education system to set itself new objectives, including those of identifying disadvantage and equalising education opportunities. Observing this helps to indicate the degree of ethical and technical achievement involved in establishing the routine concerns with parity and commensurability that now drive systems of assessment to ever more sophisticated technical development. Of course,
these innovations have not resulted in the achievement of equal outcomes or in the removal of social disadvantage. But this is not a symptom of the education system's failure to live up to the principles which should shape it. Instead, the system's capacity to set itself these goals can be treated as an unexpected achievement derived from the ethical and intellectual technologies made available by the school system itself. The lesson drawn from this observation concerns the need to govern our expectations of education, while valuing more highly its historical achievements.

Chapter Twelve pursues the implications of these arguments, through a final example of debates on assessment and equity. The chapter concentrates on a controversy concerning unequal 'gender outcomes' from aptitude testing, an issue that entailed extremely complex negotiations between competing rights-based claims, equity-based objectives and technical considerations. On the basis of this final example, I suggest some revision of the standard suspicion of the technical and expert components of educational calculation. Critical discussion of education, I argue, needs to sharpen its appreciation of the means by which the education system is able to live with its consistent failures, while setting new objectives for reform. Developing this more pragmatic mode of appreciation will entail greater willingness to engage with the technical and expert elements now indispensable to the organisation of the education system.

Finally, then, Part III brings us to the question of how it might now be possible to address the political problems which plague debates on education. In concluding, I suggest that what might be in order is an adjustment of the critical demeanour. More effective critical engagement in education policy debates, I argue, will require a pluralist appreciation of the achievements entailed in the routine existing negotiations occurring within
education planning contexts. It may also involve modifying some of the
more romantically utopian and dystopian expectations applied to
bureaucratic reform programmes. This more pluralist disposition towards
policy problems, I suggest, may well help critics to engage in more effective
kinds of advocacy on equity-based issues. At the very least, it may help to
allay some of the absolutism of 'oppositionalist' critical approaches to
education policy.

Before moving on to the main body of work, a few disclaimers and
clarifications are in order. First, it should be made clear that this is not a
work of general theoretical analysis. It is not intended, for instance, as a
philosophical reflection on questions such as the definition of equality or
difference, or on the relationship between truth and ideology. Such
centers are beyond its scope. Instead, my interest is in a more applied
and adaptive use of theoretical discussions, drawing from them some
injunctions and prescriptions, some questions to ask and some
methodological models to emulate.

The strongest influence on the work has been provided by studies which are
themselves applied to particular problems, both contemporary and
historical. For want of a clearer term, this growing body of work can be
described as 'genealogical', a category characterising a variety of
interdisciplinary studies which take their cue from adaptations of Foucault's
conception of the 'history of the present'. It is no doubt unnecessary to point
out that such work distinguishes itself from the protocols and
preoccupations of conventional historiography, often ranging across large
temporal and geographical areas in order to pursue its arguments. The same
might be said for this thesis, which addresses a number of historical
questions, while having no pretension to providing a complete historical
analysis of any of them. The approach to the field of historical analysis is adaptive and experimental, making use of historical instances to support or extend its arguments. Rather than being engaged in the task of comprehensive historical description, I am concerned with more local problems and more dispersed historical instances. These historical observations are not made with an eye to the horizon of human development or social self-realisation. They are not able to tell us where we are heading, whether to greater democratic possibilities or away from them. Instead, my interest has been in exploring some problems solidly established in the present, and in investigating some of the circumstances that have shaped them. Instead of measuring the distance between the education system and the greater ends of principled reform, I am more concerned with the means by which these ends have been made thinkable.

Finally, these arguments also impinge upon the field of policy analysis, without being situated within it. Just as I lay no claim to the mantle of historian, neither do I present myself as a policy analyst in the professional sense. Nor do I focus in any detail on the processes and effects of implementing particular reforms, or on the no doubt multiple mutations which occur as policy statements are translated into action. This work also I leave to others better equipped to pursue it.

Instead, if this thesis has a claim to make, it is that it combines the three areas of policy analysis, theoretical argument and historical investigation in a manner that is still somewhat unusual within the field of education studies. For all the shortcomings of the present work, there do seem to be advantages in this combination, not least because a broader range of investigation makes it possible to draw connections which are sometimes surprising. Such observations often have the potential to unsettle some of
the certainties that have informed discussions of social and educational problems, while opening up fresh areas of investigation. I hope to have made a contribution to such an outcome.
PART I

CULTURE UNLIMITED
CHAPTER ONE: CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTIONS

i. Introduction.

In the late 1980s, the social and historical role of Australian universities excited an unprecedented degree of interest.¹ The trigger to this was the release of the 1987 document *Higher Education: a Policy Discussion Paper*, released under John Dawkins's Ministry, and commonly referred to as the 'Green Paper' on higher education.² One of the most striking aspects of this document (and of its successor, the 1988 'White Paper') was the abruptness with which they dispensed with much of the recognisably 'liberal' and 'social democratic' rhetoric that had characterised education policy under the preceding Education Minister, Susan Ryan, and which had been common currency during the 1970s.³

The 1988 White Paper largely dispensed with rhetorical references to the traditional autonomy of the universities or to the importance of 'culture' and the development of social consciousness. Instead, it was primarily concerned with tertiary education as an instrument of social administration,

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deployed by government for social and economic ends, and therefore politically accountable for its use of public funds. The priorities of the newly amalgamated Department of Employment, Education and Training were explicitly concerned with industrial and economic outcomes, and with 'national goals' such as increased educational participation, the promotion of a workforce with more flexible vocational skills, and the consolidation of trade links with the Asia-Pacific region. These recommendations were accompanied by a strong emphasis on the need to expand the breadth of social access to higher education and to promote more equitable outcomes for specific social groups. But unlike previous governmental campaigns to build educational participation, such as those conducted under the aegis of Susan Ryan's Ministry or under the Commonwealth Schools Commission, the 1988 White Paper made no attempt to ground its recommendations in the principle of 'equality of opportunity'. Instead, the emphasis was on the need to promote more flexible use of the range of Australian educational institutions, from secondary schools, to Technical and Further Education, the Colleges of Advanced Education and the universities. To this end, the universities and Colleges of Advanced Education were to be substantially reorganised. In a now-familiar combination of the centralisation of planning and the devolution of responsibility, higher education institutions were required to monitor their own success in relation to definite performance measures and identified priorities.

7 These developments are best seen in the context of the broader reorganisation of the national education system in Australia. See also J.S. Dawkins and A.C. Holding, Skills for Australia (Canberra: AGPS, 1987); J.S. Dawkins, Strengthening Australia's Schools: A Consideration of the Focus and Content of
A stream of protests followed. Some addressed substantive practical problems, questioning in particular the administrative assumption that reforms to university education would be capable of producing immediate economic outcomes. Many also queried whether applying performance appraisal measures would improve the quality of educational 'output', or whether expanding the size of institutions through amalgamation would promote greater institutional efficiency. Others were primarily concerned

_Schooling_ (Canberra: AGPS, 1988); and J.S. Dawkins, 'Can Australia Become the Clever Country? Australia Day Address, 26 January 1990' (Canberra: AGPS, 1990). Reference should also be made to the ACTU's coterminous identification of the need to build a more flexible, skilled and internationally competitive workforce. See ACTU/TDC Mission to Western Europe, _Australia Reconstructed: A Report by the Mission Members to the ACTU and TDC_ (Canberra: AGPS, 1987).


with the limits of the proposed reforms to training and skill promotion.\textsuperscript{11}

While some cautiously welcomed the reforms as an opportunity to address the entrenched problems of technical education, and to form a national education system,\textsuperscript{12} others argued that the policy emphasis on 'participation' involved no more than a cynical adjustment to numbers, without serious commitment to changing the determinants of unequal educational or vocational outcomes.\textsuperscript{13}

Progressive educationists were particularly definite in rejecting the reforms, arguing that the bureaucratic emphasis on economic outcomes and 'national goals' was irreconcilable with a commitment to promoting either individual self-development or the political self-realisation of collective identities.\textsuperscript{14}

Real change to Australian education, it was argued, would only occur when women, the working class and other disadvantaged groups achieved full self-determination.\textsuperscript{15} For these critics, it was obvious what was at stake. The 1988 White Paper was technocratic, reductionist and philistine, the product of

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an economic rationalist government with no education principles. These forms of analysis have since become the commonplaces of 'critical' discussions of education policy.

From the beginning, the debate generated some odd alliances. A number of commentators identified with the 'conservative academy' were quick to reject the reforms. For them, the issue was one of defending traditional liberal freedoms against the intrusions of the state. But these critics were joined by others concerned that governmental measures were not interventionist enough, since they fell short of the promise to promote equal education outcomes. While many of the latter had earlier been radical critics of academic neutrality, they now found themselves calling on some of the traditional conceptions of university autonomy. Where once the university was the bastion of class privilege, it became the stronghold of critical thought and liberal freedoms, irreplaceably important to democracy. Where critical educationists once called for more thorough governmental scrutiny of academic enclaves, they now maintained that the application of accountability measures was an assault on university autonomy.

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19 Many defenders of the universities, once extremely critical of the 'discredited and bankrupt intellectualism' and 'self-legitimation' of the universities, showed some discomfort at being called upon to support the existing rationales of the university. But these critics were convinced that the critical potential of the universities was under threat, and that only the conventional rationales of liberal education could provide the vocabulary in which to mount a defence. Their stated tactic was to defend the 'idea of the university' rather than actual educational institutions or their practices, of which they remained critical. See G. Sharp, 'The University and After?' Arena 82 (1988): 118-25; Marginson Education and Public Policy.
Problems arose, however, at the points where commentators treated these exercises in academic self-definition as if they provided technically reliable information on the social or vocational role of the humanities, or empirically valid descriptions of the actual and historical relations between Australian universities and public administration. It was not long before weaknesses in the defence were identified. Three main gaps were pointed out. First, the Australian university is not a single entity with an 'inside' which must be protected against the 'outside' intervention of the state. 20 Second, there is no single or pivotal point of exchange between the academy and government. Finally, there is no principle which unifies all the disciplines and activities assembled within the organisational shell of the university. Far from being unified by a single absolute principle of disinterested truth-seeking, it seems, these modes of teaching and research entered the university at various historical points and for different reasons. 21 They are composed of a number of forms of specialised training with diverse histories, modes of internal self-regulation and connection to professional and vocational areas. 22 Most have come trailing connections to social and vocational areas outside the academy.

Developing these observations further will entail a sustained project of description, one capable of addressing the social and historical composition of Australian higher education in an empirical and dispassionate manner. This chapter is intended as a small contribution to this end. Beginning this task of description will also provide us with some perspectives on more recent education policy developments, especially those concerned with the

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22 Hindess, 'Two Kinds' 19.
wider national agenda of reforms to training and education participation. But for now, I want to turn to a closer description of a key area of the debate – that concerned with the defence and redefinition of the university humanities. It is in this area that the distance between the bureaucratic organisation of the education system and its critics has perhaps been most marked.

ii. Defending the humanities.

Few responses to the 1988 White Paper failed to mention the poverty of its limited and cautious references to the humanities. While acknowledging the national importance of cultural understanding and of critical skills, and while emphasising the importance of providing citizens and workers with a better understanding of Australia's cultural and international context, particularly in relation to its Asian neighbours, the document made little mention of the role of Arts faculties.\(^{23}\) Nor did the general reorganisation of higher education funding and performance measures appear to bode well for Arts faculties. On the one hand, the shift in policy was expected to marginalise the humanities in the bid for research time and funding.\(^ {24}\) On the other, it threatened to force large numbers into the Arts faculties, undermining academic work conditions.\(^ {25}\) In responding to these developments, the humanities academy found itself in the position of having to describe the nature of its pedagogic,

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\(^{23}\) Dawkins *Higher Education: A Policy Statement* 8-9, 18.


social and vocational functions in terms that those within the bureaucracy might find intelligible.

The materials available for the purposes of developing this self-account were fairly thin. The Australian academy had provided formal reflections on its social and vocational purposes on an occasional basis, in ceremonial speeches, in annual reports, or in parliamentary debates on institutional reorganisation. But the strain of rapid reorganisation soon showed how remote and threadbare this ceremonial rhetoric had become, as it was hastily donned to meet the bureaucrats with a show of dignity. This rhetoric was composed by combining allusions to Arnold's conception of the academy as the custodian of culture with references to Newman's 'idea' of the university as the stronghold of critical reason and non-instrumental reflection. Two


27 The main effort has been to refurbish rationales concerning the academy's role in promoting forms of critical reason. To this end, the tradition behind the Australian university is relocated from the elitism associated with Newman's conception of liberal cultivation to the principles of critical reason vested in the post-Enlightenment German university. See for instance, J. Hinkson, 'The Embattled University?' Arena 81 (1987): 121-2; and S. During, 'Althusser Meets Adam Smith; Mr. Dawkins' Idea of a University', Meridian 7.2 (1988): 186-7. In such versions, the university becomes the instrument of social unification, as critical reason provides a mediating point between the 'community' and the production of knowledge, between education (Bildung) and research (Wissenschaft). Historically, it is argued, the academy served as a free space between competing and irreducible social principles – of justice, of rational self-legitimation, critique and natural rights, of equality and the ideal of preservation of cultural traditions. Coherent in itself, it formed the foundation of social coherence: 'the basis of civil society and the state and of the organic interconnection of all forms of knowledge' (S. During, 'Woodchipping in the Groves of Academe', Arena 81 (1987): 113). The historical vocation of the critical academy, however, has been lost in the historical wake of modernity, as the ethos of critical reason has been debased by 'use-value' and instrumentality. For discussion of these strands of self-definition, see I. Hunter, 'Personality as a Vocation: The Political Rationality of the
related kinds of rationale were available, one being concerned with the universities' traditional role as custodians of personal self-cultivation 'for its own sake', while the other placed more emphasis on critical reason and the disinterested pursuit of truth. Each rationale founded itself on an absolute principle, whether that of culture or of critical reason. In each case, the principle was treated as though it constituted an end in itself, one traceable to timeless academic tradition. These elements have remained consistent, even if the historical origin of the timeless tradition has shifted between the medieval university and the late eighteenth century German academy.

Each of these forms of self-definition oscillates between defences of cultivation as an end in itself, irreducible to public accountability, and efforts to establish a traditional bond between the humanities academy and the

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30 In the latter case, the point of historical reference is usually to the establishment of the Kantian conception of disinterested truth-seeking. See for instance K. Hart, 'Thinking Otherwise: Deconstruction in the University', *Arena* 82 (1988): 112. Hart, it should be noted, has been criticised for his tendency to 'aestheticise' the issues, treating the development of the university as if it were an organic entity. According to Bernd Huppauf, the principle of autonomy and the Kantian conception of 'truth and the human faculty to reason' should be related not to a 'pure' conception of the university or to a poststructural conception of historical 'rupture', but to the gradual establishment of a specific institutionalised structure. But having said this, Huppauf provides an equally global alternative account of the role of the Arts faculty, arguing that the 'institutionalised structure' of the university was made possible by the 'fusion of two distinct discourses of which one was concerned with truth and the other with morality'. See B. Huppauf, 'Universities and Post-modernism', *Arena* 83 (1988): 148.
'public sphere'. According to some commentators, universities served to protect such forms of truth-seeking from 'Church, market and political parties', a point of view which easily gives rise to the lyrical and elegiac:

Once upon a time, universities consisted of philosophers in search of the truth; a supersubstantial quality, intimately associated with other subjective experiences such as beauty, justice, freedom and the divine. As such, the university was nothing more than the sum of its members ... the university was a genuine community of philosophers; a lively assembly wherein students and staff shared their personal research and there was open-minded dialogue concerning the truth and its consequences and its antithesis.

This was a view that cut across conventional political differences. Towards the conservative end of the spectrum, Leonie Kramer argued that the university would 'never do its best for a community unless it is free to develop, on equal terms, all areas of human knowledge it can reasonably encompass'. But in arguing that the academy's autonomy from the state represented a high point of human and social development, she found unlikely allies in postmodernist critics such as Bernd Huppauf, for whom the 'community of scholars' is conceived as the invisible pivot on which society once swung, mediating between rationality and morality, between tradition and innovation. The fact that this pivotal role has been displaced is taken as a sign that the modern world has spun out of control:


32 During, 'Woodchipping' 112.


35 Huppauf, 'Universities and Post-modernism' 151.
In the electronic age, formal rationality seems to have reached such a stage of abstraction and absoluteness that autonomous enclaves, based on balancing formal elements and those of content, have lost their function. Certainly the balancing of autonomy and commitment—which pre-modern philosophers consider part of a past gone by with the advance of post-industrial society—determined the unique position of the university in modern society for most of its history.\textsuperscript{36}

In such remarks, the defence of the humanities as the home of non-instrumental cultivation merged with the more ‘social democratic’ emphasis on the academy’s role in fostering social critique and political resistance.\textsuperscript{37} At both ends of the political spectrum, some startling claims were made for the social centrality of the university humanities. Only the Arts faculties, it was maintained, were capable of shaping an informed electorate.\textsuperscript{38} Furthermore, only the Arts faculties were able to provide for the maturation of society, providing a place where society could reflect on itself, develop its identity and reconcile the rifts in its psyche caused by the modern tensions between culture and utility. Critical reason, of course, remained entirely non-instrumental:

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criticism ... can isolate and examine the processes of social and cultural production; and in identifying structures of power it can point out both their lines of force and the ways in which that force may be analysed and resisted ... certainly criticism cannot serve any local or immediate economic ends; its function is otherwise, yet relevant to society here and now both directly and indirectly.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} Huwpauf, ‘Universities and Post-modernism’ 151.
\textsuperscript{38} B. (Hu)wpaf, ‘The Universities in the Grip’ 90.
The 'conservative' and 'radical' defences of the humanities, as they have developed, thus share a common vision of the university at the centre of modern society and the modern subject, responsible for both individual and social maturation. Each also insists on a clear separation between the limited norms of government and a 'higher' domain of intellectual principle (whether culture or critical reason). In each case, the limited goals of social management are assessed against ends which are treated as absolute in themselves. In each, there is an insistence on a clear separation between the humanities (a pure zone of principle) and government (the domain of the limited, normative and technical). The bureau is measured against the 'absolute ends' of principles such as culture and critical reason – and it necessarily falls short. As ends in themselves, these principles are both immanent and absolute, and thus unaccountable. This, at least, is the reply that the humanist intelligentsia has rehearsed, against the occasion when the ambassadors of the bureau are brought before the higher court of culture and critical reason.

At a more mundane level, however, the practical response to these policy reforms has been more confused. Since the late 1980s, higher education institutions have adopted new routines and criteria, adapting their internal decision-making procedures to accord with the incentives and penalties of the new federal funding arrangements. In the process, 'autonomy' has begun to look less like an absolute principle. Instead, appeals to institutional autonomy are used as routine tools of negotiation, as standard parts of the self-governing strategies established by devolution and of the internal negotiations of academic departments. At the same time, however, the suspicion of bureaucratic norms and procedures seems to have remained a stable element in most academic departments, creating a familiar ambivalence towards the everyday administrative routines of academic life. These
suspicions have been confirmed by accounts that set out to reveal the extent to which the academic environment has been colonised by corporate managerialism, by technocratic and masculinist rationality and by new modes of corporate management.\textsuperscript{40} Occasionally, the hyper-theoretical and the banal aspects of this sort of critique coalesce, with portentous results:

the invisible hand behind the text ... is neither Government, nor the higher reaches of academia. Rather, the danger lies in the still presence which sits unseen on every committee – the servants waiting quietly in the wings for ideology to do its work ... The ideology of economic rationalism does its work on their behalf, without prompting. How can this be? As the ideology spreads in an overlapping network of discourses and practices – stories, manuals, debates, identification cards – all of us rework ourselves in its image. Even in resisting it we reproduce it, becoming more enmeshed.\textsuperscript{41}

On this view, the symptoms of ideological co-optation are largely imperceptible, except to those possessed of especially acute critical vision. Accordingly, the role of the cultural critic becomes more important, as one able to extract the 'hidden philosophy... make the silences speak'.\textsuperscript{42} This intellectual vigilante role is activated in hermeneutic readings of policy documents.\textsuperscript{43} Here, the critic conducts a deconstructive performance in which the slippery layer of principled bureaucratic language is removed, exposing both the shallow political interests and the 'deep structures' beneath.\textsuperscript{44} The idea is to 'peer under the veil of the plan's own rhetoric, to see it as an exercise of power and a discursive act rather than an inevitable, rational response to the way things are in Australia today'.\textsuperscript{45}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{40} Yeatman, 'The Green Paper'; Blackmore and Kenway, 'Rationalisation'; Taylor and Henry, \textit{Battlers}.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{41} H. Krips, 'After Learning', \textit{Arena} 81 (1987): 141.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{42} Huppauf, 'Universities and Post-modernism' 139.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{44} Krips 142.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{45} During, 'Woodchipping' 112.}
is to relate these elements to a 'deeper problematic', usually that of the relation between capital and the state, or the state and gender.

Given the complexity of higher education reform, it has been convenient to be able to explain the process in terms of an 'ideology of economic rationalism' more insidious than conscious bureaucratic intent or political interest.\textsuperscript{46} There is no shortage of accounts of the way in which this 'ideology' has gone to work on the life of the academic department, altering the routines, norms and aspirations of scholarly life and enlisting staff in the rationalisation of research, teaching and administrative procedures.\textsuperscript{47} The reorganisation of research funding, in particular, has elicited accounts of an Arts faculty marooned within the world of economic rationalism, where the language of humanistic principle is unheard and unspoken.\textsuperscript{48}

But is it really the impact of the 'Dawkins reforms' that has given rise to this pitch of anxiety about the relation between the academic and the administrative, between the humanistic and the utilitarian? Are we really witnessing a wholesale exchange between 'democratic political principles' and 'limited operational objectives and measurable outputs'?\textsuperscript{49} And what would it mean to say that such objects are either equivalent or exchangeable? Perhaps, as I shall argue, the confusions that have attended the efforts to defend and define the humanities can be understood as a more local effect of some standard confusions about the nature of the critical ethos, and of its relation both to political values and to governmental norms. The point

\textsuperscript{46} Krips 141.
\textsuperscript{47} See, for instance, Henry and Ross.
\textsuperscript{49} Henry and Ross 91.
requires some expansion. Let us begin by taking a closer look at the terms in which the 'principled' critique of bureaucratic rationality is conducted.

iii. Visionaries and vigilantes.

The standard reference for the humanistic critique of bureaucratic rationality, corporate managerialism and economic rationalism is Michael Pusey's influential text *Economic Rationalism in Canberra*. Pusey's contention – one with a good deal of influence on the education debate – is that Australian public policy had been 'colonised by economic rationalists'.\(^{50}\) The Australian public service, once the home of social democratic reform, has been overtaken by economic rationalism and corporate managerialism. There are two kinds of reason given for this change in values. One is a shift in the education background of graduate recruits to the public service, resulting in much smaller numbers of senior officers with a liberal humanist education background and many more with training in economics, law and management.\(^{51}\) This shift has devalued the humanities, but it has also caused the decline of the 'principled' public servant and of liberal democratic social policy.

The other strand of argument concerns itself with general flaws in the national political conscience and character. In the 1970s – so the story goes – there

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51 Pusey's remarks occur within a larger study of public administration, one that combines a sociological research project (analysing data on background and attitude, social reproduction and agency) with cultural and political critique. Whereas once the career public serviced contained a predominance of those with liberal humanities training, he argues, it is now dominated by 'econocrats'. In the central agency departments, 44 per cent of officers held degrees in either economics or commerce, or designated themselves as economists, while an additional ten per cent had qualifications in Business Administration or accountancy. Only ten per cent had training in the social sciences or the humanities. In the programme and service departments, senior staff were twice as likely to have a degree in social sciences, humanities or law (20 per cent in the social agencies, and 44 per cent in the program and service departments): Pusey 78.
was a strong public sector commitment to liberal social democratic goals and support for radical governmental intervention in education, health and community development. State policy and action was determined by a partnership between bureaucracy and 'the community'. The Arts faculty had a special role in educating public administrators, providing them with social conscience and the instruments of critical reason. Equipped with the social insight provided by humanist sociology, psychology and human relations theory, bureaucrats were able to keep in touch with social life in the real world beyond Canberra. Government was conducted under the benevolent and integrated gaze of the humanistically-trained, and therefore under the influence of social principle. Under these circumstances, apparently, there was no split between the bureaucratic and the social, the human and the technical, principle and utility, the social and the economic. Society was on the point of dialectical synthesis, able to transcend these oppositions in the organic realisation of the principles of democracy, emancipation and culture.

It is this possibility that the rise of the 'econocrats' has thwarted.\textsuperscript{52} The effects, apparently, are grave. Changes in the recruitment of bureaucratic personnel have produced a new split in governmental rationality and in the fabric of society: a split between the political-administrative (on the one hand) and 'culture' (both intellectual and ordinary) on the other. Consequently, government has become separated from principle: 'from participation, from interpretations of need, and from many of the normal and supposedly

\textsuperscript{52} The 'econocrat' is characterised as a conservative 'yuppie', usually male, from a private school and trained in economics or management. According to Pusey, these comparatively young Economics graduates now fill the senior ranks of the central agency departments of Treasury, Finance and Prime Minister and Cabinet, forming a powerful cadre within government. The portrait of these officers – conventionally enough – exposes an empty inner core. Pusey's central contention is that senior economics-educated officers (usually in the more powerful central agency departments) are consistently more conservative than their counterparts with degrees in social sciences, humanities or law: Pusey 60.
normative prerogatives and entitlements of citizenship in a liberal social democracy.\textsuperscript{53}

But just as it is the universities and their mission of culture and principle that promise the possibility of social reconciliation, so it is the academy that bears the blame for the loss of a 'distinctively Australian culture' able to resist economic rationalism.\textsuperscript{54} The universities have acted as 'switchmen and arbiters' in the 'recolonisation' of Australia by American economic rationalism – a colonisation with a direct point of entry in the common room of the university economics department. The failure of the academy to renounce the instrumental has inclined the 'nation' to forsake a broader social vision of cultural self-realisation and to place its faith instead in the technical operations of limited governmental norms.\textsuperscript{55} Thus it is the universities' failure to provide intellectual leadership and resist anti-intellectualism that is directly responsible for the moral bankruptcy of the public sphere and the limited social vision of public servants.\textsuperscript{56}

There are a number of grounds on which we will take issue with the form of critique offered by Pusey. For the moment, however, I am primarily interested in the claims made for the 'cultivating' and 'civilising' effect of humanistic education – and in the dire predictions made about its absence. In Pusey's account, the humanities (in the form of the 'critical academy') have a crucial role in shaping the psyche of the Australian state and society. This view is comforting for those facing what appears to be the decline of the traditions of liberal education and critical reason, offering the humanities academy a morally exemplary account of its historical and vocational

\textsuperscript{53} Pusey 11.  
\textsuperscript{54} Pusey 231.  
\textsuperscript{55} Pusey 232.  
\textsuperscript{56} Pusey 133.
importance. The assumption is that if the humanities academy were able to realise its cultural mission, it could somehow produce a truly principled form of government, one in which the policy objectives and operational norms of public administration would be fully commensurate with the principles (of emancipation, self-realisation) espoused by the cultural critic.

Humanistic social criticism of this type, based on the expression and fulfilment of human moral and intellectual capacities, is beset, however, by two inter-related problems. In the first place, it tends to misconceive the nature of bureaucratic administration, replacing the latter's complex mix of ethical and technical functions with the caricature of an amoral mechanistic instrumentality. Second, such critique pays little attention to its own historical and technical basis and thus has a limited understanding of its own social context and limits. Let us pursue these problems a little further.

iv. Situating critique.

One of the most striking elements of Pusey's study is his adoption of the persona of the cultural critic – a persona which allows him to claim a transcendent social and historical vision, while denouncing public servants for their 'lack of connectedness to a population with boring jobs'.

Speaking from this status, the critical intellectual is accorded the privilege of commenting on all aspects of culture and society, from the vantage point of culture or critical reason. We must learn to see such visionary statements and revelatory denunciations as characteristic of a specific mode of discourse, an exercise of interpretation which has its own rules and mode of operation.

Recent historical work has made it possible to describe the vocation of humanistic scholarship in terms of a complex habitus, particular to a certain

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57 Pusey 40.
ethical environment of the humanities academy. These regimes, developed by Kantian humanism but derived from Christian ascetic, involve a range of variations on dialectical techniques. The key ethical exercise is that of self-problematisation. Measured against the lost possibility of a complete humanity, the self is found wanting, deficient in feeling or lacking in rationality. These ethical exercises have been flexibly adapted within the different humanistic disciplines, as the inner divisions discovered within the self are relocated within the social, or within the historical tradition, the literary text, or the interpretative process. A series of binary tensions is provided: between text and context, form and content, the subjective and the social, the conscious and the unconscious. It is virtuosity in these ethical exercises, constantly tested by other initiates, that provides the attributes associated with the status of the intellectual.

There are of course different versions of this ethos of critique, adapted variously within the humanistic disciplines. On the face of it, for instance, the exercises of aesthetic reflection seem quite removed from the positivistic routines of historical or anthropological research. Nevertheless, the ethos of dialectically-informed critique is remarkably mobile, partly because the exercises of self-problematisation can be applied to more collective forms of self-development, such as that of 'society', 'nation', 'community', 'class' or 'sex'. Once peculiar to an elite minority, the observation that 'society' is 'split' between principle and procedure is actually the product of a specialised ethos or mode of self-formation, now distributed more widely, due to its adoption within popular education. Reflecting on the 'social whole', we have learned to find it centrally lacking, riven by splits between culture and utility,

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the economic and the social, the human and the technical, the feminine and the masculine.

Take Pusey's description of the past and present relations between the Australian state and civil society. The development of 'Australian society' is judged against its capacity to realise the absolute principles of 'freedom', 'equality' and 'justice' – ends that are treated as absolute in themselves. These absolute ends are perceived only dimly (in the ideas of culture or equality) and will be fully realised only when they are able to push human history on towards social completion, realised in the full development of human capacities – whether those of cultivation, critical reason or democratic participation. Only then can governmental norms and social reform goals become fully commensurate with absolute principle, as the technical operations of government approximate the principles of political democracy. In this moment, democratic principles and governmental practices will be reconciled, and the sum of their parts will be a realisation of the absolute ends known only to the critic.

Here, the history of Australian social policy is read in terms of a single historical dynamic, played out as a dialectical struggle between the state and civil society, bureaucracy and culture. The history of society, state and national identity is rewritten in terms of an organic movement of division and completion between the sundered sides of the social self. In other versions, the same dynamic becomes one of a 'quest for reconciliation' between the state's role of 'co-ordination from the top' and the action of 'norms of democracy grounded per force "from the bottom up"' in immanent

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59 Pusey in fact provides an explicit description of the formulaic nature of this mode of critique, in his account of 'social democratic intellectuals' who are 'unwilling or unable to separate organisation from culture' and who 'insist that there is 'an immanent relation' between the two: Pusey 195.
requirements of identity, civil society and culture'. The principles of social democracy provide the point of balance in this historical dynamic, as well as the 'imaginary horizon' for state and economy.

Similar romantic and dystopian formulae can be recognised in those for whom the point is to build a new synthesis between education and the economy, binding their 'inevitable interaction' into a more 'organic dynamic and creative' form of social 'consciousness'. Postmodernist critique might seem to be exempt from this sort of cultural 'grand narrative'. According to postmodernists, there is 'no centre and no consensus about the transcendental locus of knowledge and education'. Hence the 'post-modern condition' is characterised by tension between 'the loss of a structural centre and the telos of history', and 'the dream of determining history's course through political action based on rational analysis and moral imperatives'. But, as these citations reveal, postmodernist critique is no more exempt from the formulaic balancing of dialectical principles – structure and event, teleology and contingency – than its ostensibly more conservative predecessors.

The insistence on these global oppositions is a clue that this is a particular type of cultural criticism, one conducted within highly routinised terms. For the critic, the technical operations of modern government must be finally reducible to ethical self reflection and the liberal discourse of social democracy. Such a position, as Ian Hunter describes it, 'construes education policies and systems as expressions of certain fundamental principles, typically principles for the just (equal) distributions of basic goods such as liberty, self-determination and wealth. Then it offers to provide an

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60 Pusey 10.
62 Huppauf, 'Universities and Post-modernism' 140.
unsurpassable foundation for these principles and goods by holding them to be given in the rational and passionate nature of human individuals.\textsuperscript{63}

This dialectical play between absolute principles – and the expectation of their resolution – is entirely characteristic of the romantic terms of debate that shape the wider field of educational and cultural commentary.\textsuperscript{64} The similarities between the apparently opposed positions of 'liberal conservative' and 'socially critical' or marxian positions can in part be explained by their resolutely 'subject-centred' approach:

[such positions] envisage human attributes and forms of social organisation as expressions or determinants of the capacities of the individual subject. The subject uses these attributes and forms of organisation in order to realise its rational and moral capacities in the world. They differ only to the extent that the [marxian] version uses a collective form of the subject – "society" – and treats its capacities as the product of the long march of history towards human completeness and emancipation.\textsuperscript{65}

Supplementing this emphasis on the self-divided or self-realising subject (individual or collective) is the equation made between self-realisation (individual or social) and the actualisation of absolute principles, operating as ends in themselves. These absolute ends are perceived only dimly and will be fully realised only when they are able to push human history on towards the full development of human or social capacities:

both variants of modern humanism give rise to styles of social and political analysis that, in addition to being profoundly subject-centred, are profoundly principled. If society is not in fact the actualisation of certain ultimate principles – of free rational decision or universal egalitarian self-realisation – this in no sense


\textsuperscript{64} For descriptions of the dialectical exercises characteristic of the modern critical ethos, see Hunter, 'Setting Limits'.

\textsuperscript{65} Hunter, 'The Humanities' 1.
weakens the principles. It is simply a sign of society's non-ideal condition or moral illegitimacy. The principles represent absolute values or ultimate ends because they are supposed to arise directly from the rational and moral capacities that define our humanity.\textsuperscript{66}

Once 'principle' is understood in these absolutist terms, actual education systems are constantly found wanting and the limited policy goals set by government immediately become counterfeit and compromised. Principled analysis raises itself above the contamination of historical and political reality through a standard two-phase analysis. On the one hand, 'historically existing education systems are described as if they were the product of individuals, groups and movements attempting to realise principles of justice, equality and democratic freedom'. On the other, 'where historically existing educational systems are deemed not to have realised the fundamental principles, description changes gear into critique and non-realisation provides the criterion for judgements of "failure" and prescriptions for "change"'.\textsuperscript{67}

What commentators tend to ignore, in this preoccupation with the perfectibility of the democratic society, is the more limited and mundane achievements of establishing and expanding a popular education system, of identifying social equity goals and of meeting these targets. Consequently, there is a mismatch between the passionate indictments of the education system by many critical intellectuals and the practical indifference of these critics to the terms in which an education system is managed.

In fact, the 1988 White Paper made use of a number of social reform arguments consistent with those which 'radical' critics of the 'conservative' academy had been urging for some time.\textsuperscript{68} It criticised the universities'  

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{66} Hunter, 'The Humanities' 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{67} Hunter, 'Pastoral Bureaucracy' 242.
  \item \textsuperscript{68} As some observed uneasily, the universities were being asked 'to adjust their routines as a matter of principle, to adapt to the social changes in the interest of different goals and ideals' (B. Hoplauf, 'The Universities in the Grip of the Electronic Age', Meanjin 47.1, (1988): 91.) The explanation given for
\end{itemize}
elitism and their indifference to principles of equity and participation, targeting the inflexibility of university entrance and the academy's neglect of its public responsibilities for teaching or research. Its requirement that publicly-funded universities be publicly accountable and connected to community needs was difficult to dismiss. After all, under previous Labor governments, the autonomy of the universities had been widely regarded as the barrier to democratic reforms in university selection. Despite the suspicion aroused by the 'instrumentalist' nature of the emphasis on the need to reorganise training in order to meet economically oriented 'national goals', the argument that the curriculum should reflect Australia's Asian-Pacific context and help to shape cultural literacy and national identity was quite consistent with 'radical nationalist' positions urged within the academy for some time.69 Most importantly perhaps, the main emphasis was on the need to increase education participation and to open the academy to students from a wider range of social backgrounds.

Opposition to such reform on the basis of liberal humanist principles too easily appeared hypocritical, emerging as some said from 'a culture of patronage and privilege'.70 It has proven difficult to argue that universities are central to social and civic purposes, while also maintaining that their social importance is impossible to monitor or evaluate by any publicly

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69 See Brett, 'Uphill Battle for the Humanities' 33; Brett, 'Scratch Ticket for the Humanities' 15-17.

accountable means.\textsuperscript{71} Where it was conceded that universities have extensive responsibilities to a broader civic, political and social context, it was hard to dismiss the argument that they should be held accountable for their use of public funds. The onus therefore fell on the universities to describe what it was that they were able to do. If the humanities were to be defended, then some clear accounts of the vocational and social effects of the teaching and research conducted within Arts faculties were required.\textsuperscript{72} However, teachers of the humanities have been reluctant to tie the ethos of cultivation and critique to definite forms of training and to particular vocational outcomes.

The problem remains with us. So far, there has been little detailed attention to the actual effects of humanistic teaching in forming certain types of persons and a particular range of personnel. Those descriptions which have been proffered have drawn heavily on the stock self-definitions of liberal education. On the one hand, they have disavowed any direct connection between the Arts faculty and vocational outcomes, arguing that the existence of the cultivated individual is an end in itself. On the other hand, they have made extremely ambitious claims to a direct link between humanistic education and the formation of 'public leaders'.\textsuperscript{73} Where it is not claimed that only the Arts faculties can preserve cultural heritage and provide public leadership, then the equally ambitious claim is that only these institutions provide the basis for citizenship and democratic participation. In the latter case, education in the humanities has been portrayed as indispensable to the social promotion and self-determination of various social groups, most

\textsuperscript{71} As Tony Bennett puts it, the appeal to the 'spirit of critique' does little more than cast the 'moment of reckoning' (in which the social benefits of academic work might be assessed) either into the romanticised past, or safely into the future'. T. Bennett, 'Working in the Present', \textit{The Australian Universities Review} 34.1 (1991): 15. See also T. Bennett, 'Really Useless "Knowledge": A Political Critique of Aesthetics', \textit{Literature and History} 13.1 (1987): 38-57.

\textsuperscript{72} Bennett, 'Really Useless "Knowledge"' 16.

\textsuperscript{73} C. Plowman and J. Bishop, 'The University and the State: Preparing its Leaders and Playing its Tune?\textsuperscript{a}', \textit{Vestes} 24.1 (1981).
notably women.\textsuperscript{74} Whatever their claim to descriptive power – and we will see that this is limited – few of these forms of self-definition have been able to provide clear and convincing accounts of the vocational role of humanistic education, or to describe the relationship between the teaching work within Arts faculties and the vocational formation of a workforce or a citizenry. Commentators either ignore the vocational outcome of Arts faculties, or overestimate the distinctiveness of the humanities’ social contribution, in inflated claims concerning the cultural mission of the academy. In each case, the graduate is treading a higher path than that which leads to the workplace or the employment office.

How could the educational effects and aims of the humanities be described in more precise terms – in terms intelligible to those concerned with actual social and vocational outcomes from higher education? To begin with, it seems that we must learn to put aside the usual absolutist oppositions between the principles informing the academy and the technical and limited norms of bureaucratic planning. Such characterisations sell both zones short, while preventing the recognition of the complex interplay between ethical formation and social administration.

\section*{v. Consequences and prospects.}

We are now in a position to reframe the debate between government and its academic critics that formed our point of departure. Two important lessons have been learned. First, we have seen that cultural criticism is itself a specialised ethical practice, and that its social force and distribution are dependent on its institutional location in the humanities academy. Second, we have also seen that the critical theory of bureaucratic administration is too

deeply indebted to the dialectical formulae of critique to give us any empirical insight into the relationships between education and government.

If the debate over the humanities has been marked by the unlimited and absolute character of the defence, then we can begin to see this as a consequence of humanism's own blindness to its limits (and reality) as an ethos. To overcome this problem, we must develop a more precise description of the social deployment of the humanities. This description must satisfy two requirements. In the first place, it must display an empirical sensitivity to the capacities and comportments formed by a training in the humanities. Second, it must display a 'pitiless sobriety' with regards to the formation of such capacities and to the circumstances of their relationship to the sphere of social administration.

We turn, then, to our task of description. What is the alternative to adopting the rigid postures of critique? We can take some cues from recent historical work on the humanities, which has attempted to develop more complex descriptions of the relationship between Australian Arts faculties and government.75 This historical work has given us some reasons to rethink the self-definings of the humanities as shaped by a liberal principle of autonomy and as serenely separate from social administration. Instead, it has been shown that Australian Arts faculties were formed by a messier series of historical circumstances. Historically, these relationships between the Australian academy and governmental purposes have been both piecemeal and pragmatic. Australian universities were established and maintained according to a motley array of social purposes, which included both the moral

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reform of a disorderly population and the provision of professional training. Generalising, what we have is a curious combination, in which elite forms of liberal education – a vocational mode of caste formation – were extended to a mass population. In its turn, however, this largely classical curriculum was reshaped by the requirements of an expanding popular school system, producing hybrid modern disciplines such as English, History or Cultural Studies. Describing this historical formation has involved tracking the various points at which the universities became connected to a popular school system, to teacher training and to the formation of public personnel.

The following three chapters of Part I are offered as a contribution to this project of description and historical re-evaluation. Putting aside the rhetoric of grand oppositions between culture and government, or liberal education and utilitarianism, they describe some of the more mundane exchanges between the academy and social administration. While these exchanges have been both partial and contingent, they have also been reciprocal. On the one hand, humanistic pedagogy is by no means as autonomous of technical and external requirements as many would like to believe. But on the other, the rationality of government is by no means independent of the regimes and forms of expertise developed within faculties of Arts.

Three areas of exchange claim our attention. Chapter Two puts aside claims to the irreducibility of the pedagogic relationship, drawing out more specific descriptions of the effectiveness of humanistic regimes of teaching. Particular attention is given to the pedagogic environment of the tutorial and to its effectiveness in forming a certain range of habits, dispositions, attributes and capacities. Rather than defending the impermeable intimacy of this pedagogic space, this chapter describes the tutorial as one point within a
governmental network, made up of current and historical links between the university and an expanding public education sector.

Developing this argument, Chapter Three raises some problems with existing descriptions of the Australian Arts faculty as either the bastion of privilege or the gateway to equality. Sketching some more complex historical and demographic relations between the Arts faculty and the social distribution of knowledge and cultivation, it suggests that these relationships should neither be denounced nor celebrated, but should be understood in terms of more diverse and contingent patterns of participation and calculations of equity.

The third instance of exchanges between the humanities academy and the technology of government is provided by an inquiry into relationships between the pedagogic formation of 'personality' and the production of personnel. Renouncing claims both to the non-instrumental status of humanistic learning and to a traditional link between humanistic education and social leadership, Chapter Four offers a more cautious assessment of the vocational role of the humanities. On the basis of studies of graduate outcomes from Australian Arts faculties and of the kinds of decisions made in graduate recruitment, it emphasises the flexibility of the attributes possessed by the Arts graduate, while limiting the more global claims often derived from such material. Pursuing this point, we follow the path of many Arts graduates and enter the area of public administration itself. Observing the ways in which the Arts graduate adapts to retraining within this context, this chapter describes both the flexibility and the limitations of a humanistic education. Focussing in particular upon the kinds of expertise involved in the vocational sphere of personnel development, I point out some correspondences between humanistic education and the ethos of public service employment. At the same time, I argue that these are far from
commensurate with current claims to a traditional connection between the humanities and the vocation of public leadership. Instead, current debates within personnel policy provide instances of more indirect connections, illustrating the reciprocal nature of the transformations that occur as humanistic training intersects with bureaucratic routine.

In this way, we call down the humanities from the realm of culture, and reposition them at a busy intersection. At one level, the metaphor is to be taken quite literally. Australian Arts faculties sit between the stream of those leaving schools and the tracks of those entering teaching, the public service and vocational retraining. More figuratively, they are also situated on a complex grid of political rationalities, at the point where general conceptions of 'culture' meet statements concerning the 'clever country' and where conceptions of unlimited individual self-development meet calculations concerning patterns of equity and participation in a school-leaving population. Placing the Arts faculty here involves a descent from the peak of cultural critique and a willingness to explore the social spaces surrounding the Arts faculty at ground level. It also involves recognising that these areas stretch beyond the horizon of 'critical vision', into the sprawling areas of public administration, social welfare, popular schooling and citizenship. Having plotted the place of the Arts faculty more carefully, we can then proceed to explore these zones more fully.
CHAPTER TWO: THE MACHINERY OF CULTIVATION

i. Introduction.

Let us turn then to our first task, that of clarifying the terms in which we can understand the pedagogic outcomes of undergraduate teaching in Australian university Arts faculties. Some work to this end has been undertaken in recent efforts to describe the range of the skills, capacities and attributes formed by the humanities. We should take immediate note of the administrative context in which this work has been done. Recent reforms to post-compulsory education orchestrated by the Commonwealth have required university faculties to develop a clearer picture of their activities. Accordingly, a number of commentators have pointed out that the completion of degrees in most humanities disciplines requires students to develop

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advanced literacy and research skills, as well as specialist knowledges. Such training may promote a range of desirable vocational capacities including data analysis, computer, archival, proof-reading and media production skills, familiarity with clear writing, close reading and explication, confidence in verbal expression, and communication, problem-solving and collaborative and independent working practices.\(^4\)

Those skills characteristically inculcated by the humanities – assessment of relevant evidence, assembling and weighing of argument, lateral thinking, perspectives both historical and cultural, effective communication, social and political skills, imagination, insight and human understanding – are the basic skills required for effective management of a complex and fast-changing society.\(^5\)

Given the postures of education critique discussed in the preceding chapter, however, it comes as little surprise that attempts to develop a more pragmatic account of the humanities have been strongly resisted. According to the critics, the practical outcomes of the humanities are incidental to the educational goals of fostering critical inquiry and personal cultivation.\(^6\) Such educational goals, it is argued, are ends in themselves. As such, they are 'non-measurable and unaccountable',\(^7\) impossible to evaluate within norms of 'skills' or 'outcomes'. What happens between teacher and student is too

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\(^5\) See for instance S.M. Jack, 'Comment' *Arts* 14 (1989): 62-68. Cf. I. Viet-Brause, 'The Significance of the Humanities in a Culturally-Rich Society', *Age Monthly Review* 8 Nov (1988): 12, who comments that 'Culture, in the true meaning of the term, is a valued good that cannot be produced as such. It is a way of being, not an asset one acquires or disposes of at whim. Culture is a quality of a society's life that arises from doing necessary things unnecessarily well. It refers to standards and qualities that add little to the material use value of any human creation and production, but fulfil moral, aesthetic intellectual, artistic ideals of perfection, as an essentially human value'.

fragile to be weighed and assessed, and too personal to be policed. It is
certainly too intimate to be explained in terms that are intelligible to
administrators or employers. The rationales for humanistic forms of
teaching and research are contained within those activities themselves, and are
therefore not amenable to outside scrutiny:

To the questions, why engage in art? why think about the
nature of reality? the only good answer is: 'Because it is part
and parcel of being human'. We cannot therefore measure the
utility of metaphysics any more than we can measure the utility
of love and friendship and art and religion. These human
activities are non-measurable and 'unaccountable', at least in the
obvious and clear-cut sense in which the success or failure of
instrumental activities can be measured or accounted for. ⁸

Here, we encounter two perennial themes of the defence of the humanities –
the absolutist opposition between the human and the technical and between
culture and utility. In Chapter One, I suggested that these formulae have
limited descriptive power and can tell us little more than that those who repeat
them are initiates of a particular discipline of critique. In fact, they are
misleading on at least three fronts. First, they bear little relationship to the
diversity of the forms of training occurring within Arts faculties. Second,
they ignore the normative and technical elements of the pedagogic regimes
particular to these institutional environments. Third, they show little sense
of the historical contingency of humanities pedagogy. In fact, the forms of
teaching deployed within modern Australian Arts faculties are not the product
of an unbroken academic tradition of non-instrumental cultivation and critical
reflection. Instead, they entered university classrooms in more piecemeal
circumstances and in response to pragmatic and external imperatives. Those
who argue that it is inappropriate to apply technical and external requirements

⁸ M. Charlesworth, 'Is There a Place for Liberal Education?', A New Era For
Tertiary Education ed. T. Hore, P. Chippendale and L. West. (Toowoomba:
Higher Education Research and Education Unit, Darling Downs Institute of
to the intimate pedagogic relationship are not engaging in description, but in the very different activity of institutional myth-making.

The first point, on the technical aspects of humanistic education, can be demonstrated briefly, since few would wish to deny that humanistic teaching involves specific techniques, used to build capacities and form comportments. Even those disciplinary areas that are most antagonistic to concerns with 'skills' or 'outcomes' make use of complex pedagogic exercises capable of forming particular attributes. Leonie Kramer, for example, is willing to describe the actual means by which the 'central and stern virtues, of sensibility, honesty and truthfulness' may be produced, even though she goes on to inflate these terms, claiming that humanistic teaching alone is able to form certain 'mental skills'.

The problem with the absolutist defence is that it transforms such virtues into essential human attributes which, it is alleged, only the humanities can form. This leads to overstatement. It is worth asking, for instance, what law faculties might make of Kramer's claim that only the humanities enable people 'to investigate meaning and intention ... to interpret statements and arguments, to define, to evaluate and to discriminate'. Nevertheless, despite the exclusivist nature of these claims, this list provides a fairly explicit description of the norms and techniques used by teachers of the humanities. The capacity to 'interpret statements and arguments' and the ability 'to evaluate and to discriminate'

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9 Kramer, in W. West, 'Why Shakespeare Has a High-Tech Role', *Australian* 10 June 1988: 9. See also her subsequent comment in 'The Relevance of the Humanities in a Technological World', *Perspective* 15 2 (1989): 3: I have no doubt at all that in learning literature, history, philosophy etc. you do actually learn some mental techniques which are transferable to other areas. You learn how to think in philosophy – to argue logically and talk. From history you learn how to see things in perspective because you have a chronological sense of how events have been over time. From literature you learn about human nature, about human experience in other places and times, but principally about language. ... humanities are a kind of racial memory... [which give] you a kind of detachment or measured way of reflecting on human experience.

10 Kramer, in West, 'Why Shakespeare Has a High-Tech Role' 9.
something other than intrinsic human virtues. Instead, each of these terms describes a small attribute-forming pedagogic exercise, initiated and monitored within quite explicit norms of assessment.

It is necessary, then, to uncover the technical nature of even those areas of humanistic teaching most antipathetic to being described in such terms. But it is equally important not to take current self-definitions on their own terms, thus restricting our attention to the specifically aesthetic elements of humanities curricula. Clearly, a range of different disciplines co-exist within Australian Arts faculties, each composed of diverse pedagogic and professional rationales and operating according to specialist protocols. Each of these humanistic disciplines uses some of a range of diverse pedagogic techniques and protocols apart from the close discussion of texts or seminar-based ethical speculation. The pedagogic conventions of the lecture, seminar and tutorial co-exist with those of the studio, the workshop, the language laboratory and the computer centre. Similarly, pedagogic regimes within the Arts faculty include activities as diverse as the memorisation and recitation of rhetorical formulae, the analysis of statistical data, practical workshops in media production, and the classificatory exercises of linguistics or anthropology.

Nonetheless, despite the diverse composition of the Arts faculty, it is also possible to trace some points of commonality in the pedagogic regimes used in tertiary humanistic teaching, again for historical reasons. While many disciplines have a foundation in professional and vocational training, studies as disparate as literary studies, history, sociology, cultural studies and anthropology also have a strong basis in aesthetically-derived forms of self-reflection. The interpretative social sciences, for example, can require students to undertake a series of exercises, in which passionate involvement
in the object of study is balanced with rational detachment. One of the requirements of advanced study in the discipline is the demonstration of the capacity to balance personal involvement with critical distance, modifying empirical observations within a methodology of self-reflection. Hence, there is no need to reject outright the claim of a prominent defender of the humanities that:

To be a successful anthropologist you have to be a "participant observer", that is at once involved sympathetically ... in the life of the people you are studying and yet able to stand apart and observe it dispassionately. I would say that to be a successful human being you also have to be a "participant observer" and to my mind this is one of the chief virtues of a liberal education.11

What must be questioned, however, is the assumption that this intellectual balancing act is a universal feature of 'being human', rather than a complex and prestigious ethical ability formed by a training in the humanities.

Finally, we can observe that the pedagogy of the humanities academy has been shaped by its relationship to extra-mural forces and institutions. This is not of course an unusual situation, as is shown by the relationship between the academic disciplines of law and medicine and their respective professions. In the case of the humanities disciplines, the focus must fall on their relationship to the apparatus of public education – in particular the formation of teachers – and to the provision of personnel for the bureaucracy. Through quite pragmatic connections, such as those provided by university entrance requirements and matriculation examinations, the staffing of the popular classroom has shaped university teaching – particularly in the humanities. It is to such contingent historical circumstances that we must refer in describing the ways in which specialised exercises in self-formation have been adopted within the teaching of the university humanities. In this manner, we begin

11 Charlesworth 146.
the task of providing a more pragmatic and historical account of Bildung or humanistic education. In keeping with this more modest trajectory, let us begin at ground level, with the pedagogy of the tutorial or small group.

ii. The 'nerve and muscle' of the academy.

Despite a growing variety of teaching sites and systems, many humanities faculties continue to base their undergraduate teaching on the tutorial and the lecture. Each of these forms of teaching operates according to standard if variable conventions, and each has a definite if complex history. Tutorials, for example, appear to be a highly flexible teaching arrangement, bearing some resemblance to the more structured space of the secondary classroom, and some to the university lecture, but operating as a specialised and intensive pedagogical form. In the lecture room, the exemplary figure of the lecturer provides students with a model of scholarly performance, conduct and demeanour against which they may judge their own performances. At the same time, education research makes consistently unfavourable comparisons between the lecture and the tutorial, usually citing the pedagogical benefits of the latter's more intimate teacher-student relationship.

In the tutorial, the relationship between teacher and student is expected to be more immediate and more closely related to exercises of self-shaping. Prompted by the relations of emulation and correction established by the tutor, students are required to perform exercises of self-reflection and self-cultivation, learning to discuss experiences without being simply anecdotal, or make contributions without dominating the group. Measuring themselves against their fellow students, they learn to remake themselves according to the protocols of contribution and silence, of argument and defence, 'handling

Kramer, 'The Relevance of the Humanities' 3.
clashes of opinion, identifying the side-tracking of an argument, and making "practical judgements". Such exercises form a basic habitus for academic study, reshaped and reformulated according to the protocols of different disciplines.

In describing this pedagogic regime, however, it is important not to over-endow it with the venerability of tradition. Many will remember that tutorial-based tertiary teaching of this nature is comparatively recent, and that it developed under contingent historical circumstances. Despite its current status within the academy, the tutorial is a very recent component of university teaching – one which not long ago was regarded as an unwelcome addition to existing forms. As a brief historical survey will demonstrate, the emergence of the tutorial provides some clues to the piecemeal formation of the pedagogy now regarded as intrinsic to the modern humanities.

Turning to a point as recent as 1960, it is something of a surprise to find the university tutorial being discussed as a somewhat odd innovation. Introduced at this time in order to cope with such contingent problems as a

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16 There are few histories of universities in Australia, and few of these provide detailed descriptions of teaching routines. Some details can be gleaned from the following institutional histories: W.G. Gardner, Colonial Cap and Gown: Studies in the Mid-Victorian Universities of Australasia (Christchurch: Christchurch University, 1979); D.S. Macmillan, Australian Universities – A Descriptive Sketch (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1968); A.P. Rowe, If the Gown Fits (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1960); J. Hyde, 'The Development of Australian Tertiary Education to 1939', Melbourne Studies in Education 1982 ed. S. Murray-Smith (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982) 105-139; E.L. French, 'The Humanities in Secondary Education', The Humanities in Australia: A Survey ed. A. Grenfell Price (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1959); R.B.A. Farrell, A.P. Elkin, W. Milgate and P.H. Partridge, One Hundred Years of the Faculty of Arts: A Series of Commemorative Lectures (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1952).
massive post-war expansion in secondary schooling and in university places, the tutorial was directly modelled on the secondary classroom. Indeed, it bore little immediate resemblance to the main forms of teaching used in Australian universities up to this time – those of the large formal lecture, at times supplemented by individual tutoring in residential colleges. Although individual tuition in the residential colleges remained a desirable ideal well into the 1950s, residential tuition had become increasingly less important in Australian university pedagogy. This was partly because Australian universities had not followed the model of the 'community of scholars' associated with the Oxford or Cambridge systems of residential pastoral care. Unplanned factors such as the low number of early enrolments at institutions such as Sydney University, and the congregation of large suburbs around the metropolitan universities, encouraged full-time enrollees to attend as day students only.

For students outside the residential college system, however, pedagogic contact was minimal. In 1932, the English department at Sydney University had four hundred enrolled students, taught by two Professors and one Lecturer. By 1948, with the expansion of the state secondary school sector, student numbers in the same department had grown to 1,850 – a body taught

17 Anderson and Vervoorn note that, whereas in 1911, 5.4 per cent of male and 6.7 per cent of female 17-year-olds were school students, by 1958 this proportion had grown to 16.1 per cent and 9.1 per cent respectively. In 1980, the equivalent percentages were 28.2 per cent and 31.1 per cent respectively. See D.S. Anderson and A.E. Vervoorn, Access to Privilege: Patterns of Participation in Australian Post-Secondary Education (Canberra: ANU Press, 1983) 45.

18 For a description of early problems with the establishment of the University of Sydney and the relation between the circumstances of demographic growth and the ideal of a rurally-situated 'community of scholars' built around the residential college, see Alan Barcan, A Short History of Education in New South Wales (Sydney, Martindale Press, 1965) 111-8 and 155-64. For a description of the effect on the early universities of lack of funding, large distances, rudimentary secondary education and low student numbers, see also David R. Jones, 'A Century of Exotism: Australian Universities 1850-1950', Research Working Paper 83.11 (Parkville: Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne, 1983).
by only five permanent staff members and two junior Teaching Fellows.\textsuperscript{19} Although this lack of pedagogic contact was a matter for concern, this was not understood in terms of the need for intimacy in the classroom, but in terms of the marginality of the residential college system and the consequent failure to 'secure a corporate life by regulation and organisation'.\textsuperscript{20} By the mid to late 1950s, however, the terms of the problem had altered, with continuing rapid increases in the number of part-time students concentrated in Arts faculties. By 1957, eighty per cent of University of Western Australia Arts students were part-time or external – a shift regarded as 'quite alarming' in its effect on the 'general corporate life' of the university.\textsuperscript{21} Across the universities, this growth in the humanities was mostly due to the entry of large numbers of trainee teachers. Although in New South Wales and Victoria, teacher training was largely separate from the Arts degree programme, trainee teachers in South Australia undertook concurrent studies in universities and Teachers' Colleges, whereas in Queensland and Western Australia, many trainees completed degrees externally or part-time while employed as secondary teachers.\textsuperscript{22} In Adelaide, Queensland and Tasmania, a large proportion of Arts students were brought in as unmatriculated teacher trainees.

It is to these logistical and demographic circumstances that we can trace the emergence of the pedagogic relationships now regarded as so incalculably natural. The establishment of the tutorial was proposed as a pragmatic answer to specific problems, in particular to the 'uncomfortably high failure

\textsuperscript{19} A.G. Mitchell, 'The University Faculties', \textit{The Humanities in Australia} ed. A. Grenfell Price (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1959) 75.

\textsuperscript{20} A.G. Mitchell, 'The University Faculties' 75.

\textsuperscript{21} A.G. Mitchell, 'The University Faculties' 74.

\textsuperscript{22} A.G. Mitchell, 'The University Faculties' 93-5. For details of the expansion of teacher trainee numbers, see Anderson and Vervoorn, \textit{Access to Privilege} 59. They note that, while in 1951, there were 5,566 teacher trainees in Australia, there were 14,914 by 1960 and 55,262 by 1973. A growing proportion of these trainees were women: 56.2 per cent in 1951, 63 per cent in 1960 and 63.4 per cent in 1973.
rate and the competing attraction of the scientific and technical faculties.\textsuperscript{23} By 1960, the success of the tutorial was credited with making the difference between the pass and failure of up to twelve per cent of students.\textsuperscript{24} The tutorial was also turned to as a strategy for smoothing the transition from secondary schools, by providing 'more specialised and personal attention' for a newly prominent object of concern: the 'ordinary pass student', a figure explicitly associated with the teacher trainee.\textsuperscript{25} Because of these institutional connections, the personalised forms of discussion involved in the tutorial bore much more relationship to the regimes of the secondary school classroom and the Teachers' College than they did to the Oxford or Cambridge model of lectures and individual consultations with a residential tutor.\textsuperscript{26}

The tutorial as we recognise it in the Australian university context seems to have emerged within History and English departments, particularly at Melbourne University, which was comparatively well-funded and had had well-established small weekly discussion groups for some years before 1959.\textsuperscript{27} This was quite anomalous, however. At Sydney University, for example, voluntary tutorials had consisted of about three hundred students. By 1957, the same institution had small-group discussions only twice a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} T.J. Mitchell 49.
\item \textsuperscript{25} T.J. Mitchell 46.
\item \textsuperscript{26} See the discussion of this in Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, \textit{Teaching Methods in Australian Universities} (Sydney: Australian Vice Chancellors Committee, 1963) 180.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Mitchell 76. Heseltine also notes that Allan Edwards, appointed to the Chair of English in the University of Western Australia in 1941, was responsible for introducing the tutorial system of teaching in Perth, although his influence on Eastern universities was not direct. H. Heseltine, 'A Centre at the Edge: On Professing English in Townsville', Inaugural lecture presented at James Cook University of North Queensland, 7 June, 1978: 11.
\end{itemize}
year.\textsuperscript{28} By the mid 1960s, however, most Arts departments had incorporated the innovation of the 'discussion class'. Under the pressure of numbers, and the need to integrate large number of students from non-scholastic family backgrounds into university study, the tutorial had emerged as the privileged instrument of academic pedagogy. By 1978, Henry Heseltine could claim that 'intimate, face to face teaching ... is the nerve and muscle of academic English,'\textsuperscript{29} betraying little sense of the contingency of the historical developments on which his faith rested. In other quarters, though, this contingency was fully recognised. As late as 1967, the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee was still commenting on the probability that the 'present enthusiasm for "tutorials" could easily over-reach and destroy itself'.\textsuperscript{30} This was partly because of consistent difficulties with staff numbers and the growing size of tutorial groups. But it was also because the tutorial was becoming the focus of consistent questioning and refinement. The problem of the over-large group with the 'five sacks of potatoes' who will not contribute to discussion\textsuperscript{31} emerged alongside that of the over-individualised group: the one with the 'arrogant student intent on dominating the whole proceedings', the 'timid and shy' student who verges on neurosis, or the 'continuously lazy student'\textsuperscript{32}. T. J. Mitchell, for example, notes that each group 'develops a personality':

In one class, the students and tutor will feel relaxed and expansive, and the students will cheerfully discuss any problem tossed to them: another class may be nearly unbearable in its atmosphere of tension or timidity.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{28} A.G. Mitchell 76.
\textsuperscript{29} Heseltine 17.
\textsuperscript{30} Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, \textit{Teaching Methods} 8.
\textsuperscript{31} Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, \textit{Teaching Methods} 183.
\textsuperscript{32} T.J. Mitchell 47.
\textsuperscript{33} T.J. Mitchell 47.
A hybrid device, the tutorial was always difficult to conduct in institutions architecturally designed for the lecture,\textsuperscript{34} and it consistently had to be distinguished from 'coaching' or from supplementary lectures.\textsuperscript{35} Mitchell describes the model in these terms:

Generally the tutorial group consists of approximately ten to fourteen students, meeting once a week or a fortnight supposedly for the discussion of the more difficult or important sections of the course ... Ideally, each student comes to his tutorial fortified with a wealth of specific information and "evidence" and ready to argue out his viewpoint. The task of the tutor is less to "teach" than to assist the discussion by the critical interpolation of questions or suggestions. The tutor is not expected to be a mine of factual information, but an alert chairman of proceedings, who guides discussion and points out any errors in the arguments of his students.\textsuperscript{36}

However, tutorials took many forms. Like Arts faculties today, departments continued to make use of a diverse range of pedagogic activities: question and answer sessions based on lectures, the discussion of museum specimens or completed practical work or prepared questions, conversation periods in modern languages, the solution of exercises in supervised classes, informal discussions based on lecture course and readings, student presentation of critical summaries or papers, and so on.\textsuperscript{37} But, also like current pedagogic regimes, this variety was accompanied by the promotion of a normative model of the ideal tutorial, explicitly associated with exercises of emulation, correction and self-criticism, within a personal space of voluntary self-improvement:

They [tutorials] take all sorts of forms. The worst are first year discussion groups in which 12 students have read and thought so little that, in despair, their teacher lectures elementary information at them. The best are

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{34} Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, \textit{Teaching and Learning in the University} (Sydney: Macquarie University, 1967) 8. \\
\textsuperscript{35} A.G. Mitchell 76-7. \\
\textsuperscript{36} T.J. Mitchell 46-7. \\
\textsuperscript{37} Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, \textit{Teaching and Learning} 2.
\end{flushright}
long individual interviews in which a pupil and teacher dismember each other's work and discuss its subject matter. We have every variation between these extremes. The commonest form, though not a required one, has a group of 4 or 5 or 6 students who listen to a paper read by one of them, and then criticise it and discuss the problems it raises. We also have, for honours students, large discussion groups, generally held in their own houses after dinner, on books and themes which are not directly examinable in their courses.\textsuperscript{38}

While this evocation of salon culture seems quaintly remote from the average tutorial, it nonetheless displays the model of cultivation that informed the latter's pastoral relationships. In reality, of course, the tutorial's partner institution was not the literary soirée but the secondary school.

Early discussions of tutorial teaching thus provide clues to the currently close but uneasy relationships between university teaching and the secondary classroom. On the one hand, the tutorial became the surface which registered the deficiencies of the secondary classroom:

Some will have come from schools where discussion is encouraged, others from schools in which it is not encouraged; it may even have been positively discouraged. "Students are discouraged at school", we are told, "from using their initiative or questioning anything". They may positively dislike tutorials, preferring "someone with authority to tell them things". The "five sacks of potatoes" may be induced to sprout, but the task is by no means an easy one if for years beforehand every tentative sprout has been discouraged.\textsuperscript{39}

On the other hand, much tutorial teaching took its models directly from the secondary classroom. For example, Mitchell notes that 'many students need to feel they are personally known to the tutor before they will talk much at all', advocating that tutors learn names and use a 'continuous record sheet'.

\textsuperscript{38} Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, \textit{Teaching and Learning} 2.

\textsuperscript{39} Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, \textit{Teaching and Learning} 6.
containing information on the student's age, school, subjects and past results, in order to 'give the pass student at least some of the personal attention which the honours groups expect as their natural right'.

He notes that for first year students, 'the tutorial system may act as the happy medium of transition from the restrictions of school to the freedom of pursuing their own interests within the framework of their university courses'.

We can suggest, therefore, that the private and personal realm of the tutorial began life as a hybrid mechanism, designed to cope with the increasing impact of the secondary school and teacher training upon the university. If the current pedagogic forms of the university humanities tutorial were first improvised to manage an expanding secondary education system, they continue to bear the indelible marks of this genesis.

iii. Structured intimacy.

Increasingly, over the past twenty years, the university has become an extension of a governmental school system. As school retention increases and expectations of university entrance escalate, tertiary education institutions have been made more responsible for implementing equity policies and making pedagogic adjustments for students with special needs. Nor is this entirely an effect of the developments associated with the 1988 White Paper or with the reorganisation of the Federal Education Ministry. An indication of the longer-term nature of these developments is provided by *Success in Higher Education*, a 1987 Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission report on participation and equity.

This report, drawn from research conducted under the aegis of the Commonwealth Schools Commission and the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, makes forthright

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41 T.J. Mitchell 48.
statements concerning the university's duty to supplement government-sponsored equity programmes, by making it possible for students with marginal tertiary entrance scores to actually succeed at university. Noting that the techniques of learning required in higher education are different from those developed in the school system, it revives the long-standing proposal for a common university first year and for improvements to the training and monitoring of university teachers. Although it acknowledges the university's claim to autonomy, pressing its case for education equity, it offers little apology for treating first year university courses as extensions of the secondary school system:

According to normal course entry standards, such foundation courses could be seen as "remedial" in nature, and a violation of the culture of "high academic standards". This mismatch between student prior knowledge and staff assumptions of student prior knowledge is evident here. By changing the nature of the assumptions to make them more realistic, access to various higher education courses can be increased.43

Further, it is made clear that, unlike the secondary school system, the universities lack the pedagogic expertise to identify the learning needs of disadvantaged students.44 Consequently, the report advocates the development of forms of teacher training and student supervision and counselling similar to those developed in the secondary schools. University staff, it is proposed, should be encouraged to retrain themselves in making expectations clearer and more communicable. New care in marking, diagnosis and feedback is recommended, and tutors are encouraged to use extra support services to help them build programmes into their courses which might address more common student errors of expression.

43 Power, Robertson and Baker 42.
44 Power, Robertson and Baker 56.
Given the preceding historical sketch, it should come as no surprise that, in this 1987 report, particular emphasis is placed on tutorials, providing the key instrument for building tertiary-level skills and 'the most intense interface between students and staff'. The report recommends that the 'small group situation' should be used as a site to provide motivation and feedback, as well as skill-building, and staff are further advised to 'determine the nature of students' education and social background and therefore the problems that these students are likely to encounter during their first year of study'. Further, noting that tutors' effectiveness as teachers is often undermined by large classes and poor pay, the report advocates that tertiary teacher training be supplemented by the secondment of secondary teachers into universities as professional development, as well as the development of a team of tertiary teachers 'expert in their field of teaching'. Portrayed as travelling pedagogical advisers and consultants, such teachers would in fact be modern equivalents of an earlier educational exemplar, the school inspector.

Whether or not these recommendations have been acted upon – and many of them were far from new – they indicate the extent to which the tutorial remains a translation point between the pedagogy of the humanities academy and that of the school system. Currently, as in the post-war period of university expansion, the university teacher is being given more and more explicit advice on how to develop a specific pedagogic persona,
approximating the pastoral expertise and responsibility accorded to the popular school teacher:

Tutor acts primarily as a listener, refusing to lead, goad, probe ... or validate argument ... prepared to clarify, if asked. Nudges students into their own unhurried exploration of issues ... Gives students confidence to try and make sense of their own subjectivity and experiences in their own language.51

It seems that, if the university is indeed an extension of the school system, then it is one in some pedagogic disrepair.

iv. Concluding remarks.
In the light of the preceding historical argument, we are now better placed to understand current expressions of faith in the intimacy of the tutorial and its central place in the pedagogy of the humanities. We began by noting that recent defenders of the humanities buttress this faith by tying it to the formation of intrinsically human virtues and attributes. In the course of this chapter, however, we have tracked the pastoral intimacy of the tutorial to far more contingent and pragmatic historical sources.

In the first place, we have observed that the tutorial emerged in response to the rapid growth of universities, as they expanded to meet the influx of secondary school students. As a hybrid of secondary school, pastoral teaching and academic instruction, the tutorial emerged in response to specific historical pressures on the education system. Second, we have also seen that, as a result of this genesis, the tutorial emerged with a particular set of characteristics and problems. On the one hand, in requiring university teachers to occupy the role of pastoral supervisor, the tutorial provided an ideal space for the practices of ethical self-reflection and self-shaping which

51 Collier 10.
the humanities inherited from humanist ethics and aesthetics. On the other hand, the financial costs and pedagogical expertise exacted by the tutorial have made it a continuing focus for questioning and refinement.

In concluding the first of the three tasks we set ourselves – as part of our project to initiate a more pragmatic and empirical account of the humanities – we can also introduce our second task. In discussing the emergence of the pastoral tutorial, we have begun to situate the humanities academy in a context provided by the objectives of governmental administration and social development. Such objectives – participation rates and education outcomes, economic efficiencies and social equity – seem quite foreign to standard accounts of the humanities, whether these are conducted as a critique of intellectual elitism or as a celebration of critical reason and a common culture. In the next chapter, we will extend this recontextualisation of the humanities, by further exploring their links with governmental programmes and imperatives: specifically those related to the formation of individuals as citizens of social democratic states.
CHAPTER THREE: ACADEMY AND CITIZENRY

i. Introduction.
In ascribing to humanities faculties the task of realising the 'distinctively human', education critique invests those institutions with the highest possible expectations.¹ This helps to explain why, when it is not being eulogised as the vehicle of human self-actualisation, the humanities academy is just as often denounced for failing in this historic mission. Hence, where the humanities are not canonised for their role in making us human, they are criticised as bastions of class privilege. Where the humanities are not defined as the preserve of cultural privilege, they become the free space of democratic participation. And where they are not defended as a 'traditionally female' area, they are dismissed as a means to marginalise women into low status work. In each case, where the utopianism of the first claim is taken at its word, it often leads to the disenchantment of the second. Each of these general characterisations is uninformative and ahistorical, bearing only a limited relationship to the circumstances and the forms in which the humanities academy is embedded in the 'social' sphere.²

A good place to begin a description of these forms and circumstances is with those surveys through which governments have mapped the social contours of education systems – surveys of the social backgrounds of students being of particular importance. In fact, there have been few comprehensive studies of the actual socio-economic backgrounds of Arts students, past or present.³ Such studies are rare, mostly because they are

produced in response to specific bureaucratic inquiries into issues such as the prediction of student performance, discussions of retention rates, the provision of scholarships or the imposition of fees. For instance, the most authoritative statistical study of socio-economic patterns of higher education participation remains that conducted by Anderson and Vervoorn in 1983. They remark, however, that

...when it comes to questions of detail and precise measurement of participation in higher education by particular groups, we are immediately swamped by the bewildering array of formats and categories used by the investigators, particularly in connection with matters such as the classification of occupations as a criterion of socio-economic status.

The fragmentary and 'task-specific' character of data on the humanities' social and demographic context has reinforced the tendency for the debate to be pitched at a helpfully general level, bearing little relationship to the details of social distribution. A few points of reorientation are in order.

ii. The social distribution of culture.

First, it is worth establishing that, despite the specialised and marginal character of the empirical research, the issue of the social and political role

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4 See the discussion of the effect of these specific terms of enquiry in Anderson and Vervoorn 10.

5 Anderson and Vervoorn 16. The problems of defining socio-economic status are outlined in Anderson and Vervoorn 64 and those of using the categories 'upper class' and 'middle class' in Anderson and Vervoorn 148.
of the university humanities is no new concern. From their establishment, Australian universities encountered the criticism that they were 'the preserves of the upper class and the toys of the official and political cliques'. Rediscoveries of the relationship between university education, socio-economic background and cultural privilege have been regular and recurrent. Still, the fact that these concerns were expressed does not mean that the social role of the Arts faculty can be reduced to that of reproducing cultural privilege. In fact, even the earliest criticisms of the elitism of Australian universities co-existed with quite different indications about the social composition of these institutions.

One of the main problems of the early Australian universities was the lack of support from the upper strata of Australian society and the associated diversity of the social and cultural backgrounds of students. Of the 129 students enrolled at Sydney University from 1852 to 1862 – predominantly in classics – a small number were sons of landowners and pastoralists, but the majority had a professional or mercantile family background, and many were the sons of retailers, government officials or artisans. As D. S. Macmillan has put it, '[i]f the sons of landowners, professional men and high-ranking public servants were present in strength, so were the sons of small tradesmen, of draftsmen and of small farmers'.

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6 For a summary of early sociological studies of the demographic role of Australian universities, see Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 37-49 and Anderson and Vervoorn 1-15.
8 Since the 1920s, it has regularly been rediscovered that private school students are more likely to gain scholarships or entry to universities than those from state schools. Since at least the early 1960s, there have been consistent discussions of cultural privilege. Studies such as that conducted by A.P. Rowe in the 1950s investigated the social backgrounds of students using the indicator of the relation between the student performance and father's success, attempting to measure the 'general cultural standard' of students under the designation of an 'E factor', or type of cultural experience. See A.P. Rowe, *If the Gown Fits* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1960) and the discussion in Anderson and Vervoorn 7.
9 Anderson and Vervoorn 10.
By the 1920s and 1930s, it was clear that the Arts faculty was by no means the preserve of the elite or the privately-educated. The majority of pass-level Arts enrollees were likely to be from state schools, especially in those universities with a high concentration of trainee teachers. In the University of Adelaide from 1927 to 1937, for example, pass-level Arts tended to have the highest proportion of enrolment from state schools, apart from pass-level Science.11 Whereas the participation rate from state school students was 39.4 per cent across the faculties, the same grouping made up 71.2 per cent of enrolments in pass-level Arts courses, in which 24.8 per cent were from non-Catholic private schools and 4 per cent from Catholic schools, although the proportions were quite different at honours level.12

Subsequent shifts in the social composition of the Arts faculty occurred in the post-war reconstruction period of university expansion. With the entry of ex-servicemen and women during the 1940s and 1950s, enrolments across the university faculties spiralled. Tertiary participation jumped from 2.02 per thousand of the population in 1939 to 3.82 per thousand in

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11 J.A. La Nauze, 'Some Aspects of Educational Opportunity in South Australia', *Australian Education Studies*. 2nd series. Education Research Series 59. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1940): 48, cited in Anderson and Vervoorn 66. In La Nauze's study, the overall average of State school students from all faculties was 39.4 per cent, with 52.6 per cent coming from private schools and 8 per cent from Catholic schools.

12 La Nauze notes that the figures for students in honours-level Arts courses at the University of Adelaide were dramatically different. Of an admittedly small sample, 13.8 per cent were from State schools, 82.8 per cent from private schools and 3.4 per cent from Catholic schools (La Nauze 48). See also the summary of N.K. Henderson's 1939 study, which indicated that of graduates from Melbourne University in 1939 (across the faculties) the overall average of students from State schools was 24.3 per cent, with 75.7 per cent coming from private schools. The proportion of Arts graduates coming from state schools was 33 per cent in the case of pass students and 24 per cent in the case of honours graduates. See N.K. Henderson, *Your Child and His Future* (Melbourne: Left Book Club of Victoria, 1946), cited in Anderson and Vervoorn 67. Cf. Hohne's study of 1943 and 1944 entrants to Melbourne University: H.H. Hohne, *The Prediction of Academic Success* (Melbourne, ACER, 1951), cited in Anderson and Vervoorn 68.
1947. At this point, the social composition of the Arts faculty became even more disparate. While many students were still from professional and tertiary-educated families, there were growing numbers from non-professional white-collar backgrounds. Further, the previously-mentioned expansion of secondary schools and teacher training sent large numbers of teacher trainees into pass-level courses, particularly in Arts and Science.

The social and demographic patterns of participation in the Arts faculties have been equally diverse during the past decade. The available indications suggest that modern Arts faculties take in students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. In fact, Arts faculties have provided the main avenue to a tertiary-level education for a large proportion of school leavers and mature-aged students. This was certainly the case at the time of the Dawkins Ministry’s White Paper on higher education. In 1988, humanities students constituted nearly a quarter (24.1 per cent) of all students enrolled in the higher education sector and in February 1986, 158,000 people –

13 Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 18. Whereas in 1939, enrolments at all six universities totalled 14,124, by 1947 they had increased twice over, amounting to 29,075 (Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 17).
14 See Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 43-4 and Anderson and Vervoorn 140. Anderson and Vervoorn’s discussion of Katz, Barrett and Firth’s study of first-year students at the University of New South Wales, 1969 indicates that 19 per cent of Arts students were from backgrounds classified as professional, 25 per cent from managerial, five per cent from grazier, 13 per cent from small business, 14 per cent from skilled tradesmen, eight per cent from sales and clerical, seven per cent from service and transport, five per cent unskilled, with no information on four per cent. The largest proportion of these students (39 per cent) had fathers whose educational level was some secondary training only. See also Australia, Commonwealth Department of Education, Matriculation and After: A Survey of Pupils Who, in the 1957 Examinations, Qualified to Matriculate to Australian Universities (Sydney: Commonwealth Office of Education and Australian Council for Educational Research, 1961).
15 It should be noted that the proportion of secondary students who proceed to universities is still relatively low in Australia. Williams predicts that one-half of the next generation will not have completed secondary schooling (Williams 36), that four out of every ten will not have engaged in any formal education after leaving secondary school and that only one in seven will have ever undertaken a degree (Williams 37).
16 Australia, Department of Employment, Education and Training, A Fair Chance for All: National and Institutional Planning for Equity in Higher Education (Canberra: AGPS, 1990): 55. In 1988, 101,500 students were enrolled in arts,
more than 18 per cent of the tertiary-educated civilian population—nominated humanities as having been their main field of study. These figures suggest that the Arts faculty has been a central instrument of government policy for expanding the social base of participation in higher education.

Although it is difficult to obtain recent indications of the socio-economic background of students within particular faculties, surveys conducted during the past decade suggest some broad trends. For example, Don Anderson's 1980 summary of his extended research on Australian universities indicates that, during the past fifteen years, the socio-economic background of Arts students has become increasingly diverse. In 1976, for example, Arts undergraduates constituted 34 per cent of commencing humanities and social science courses throughout the higher education sector (DEET, *A Fair Chance*, 55). Of these, 66.8 per cent were women, comprising 67,800 students. (DEET, *A Fair Chance*, 57) Of Aboriginal students enrolled in higher education, 24.1 per cent were undertaking humanities degrees or diplomas, comprising 791 students. (DEET, *A Fair Chance* 58) See also Australia, Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Selected Higher Education Statistics 1988* (Canberra: AGPS, 1989), Table 11: 79. Of 420,850 students in all Australian higher education courses in 1988, 101,528 were enrolled in arts, humanities and the social sciences. Of this number, 81,391 students were enrolled in Bachelor of Arts degrees (78,590 at pass and 2,801 at honours level). These enrolments in the humanities have increased proportionally with the recent general rise in participation in higher education. In 1988, there was a seven per cent rise of some 27,000 Australian higher education students from 1987 to 1988, constituting the highest annual increase since the early 1970s (DEET, *Selected Higher Education Statistics 1988* 21).

17 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force Status and Educational Attainment, Australia, February 1986*, Canberra, 1986. These figures should be read in the context of a general rise in the post-secondary qualifications of the Australian population. Whereas in 1982, 32 per cent of the civilian population had a post-school qualification, by February 1986 this had risen to 34.8 per cent. In the period from 1982 to 1986, the proportion of men with post-school qualifications had increased from 38.4 per cent to 40.9 per cent, while the equivalent rise for women was from 25.8 per cent to 28.9 per cent: ABS *Labour Force Status* 3.

18 Perhaps the most recent comprehensive survey of socio-economic background and participation rates is provided by Williams, who does not specify differences according to faculty. He does note, however, that the socio-economic composition of student populations in higher education does not mirror the composition of the population as a whole (Williams 57). Two out of every three children from 'professional' families complete Year 12, while one out of every four of the children of unskilled workers reaches this same level of education (Williams 43). In higher education, there has been consistent 'imbalance', with four in every ten students coming from professional families and one in every ten from an 'unskilled' background (Williams 43).
university students. The majority (52.2 per cent) were from state schools, with the next largest number coming from the Catholic independent sector. These proportions were especially high in comparison with courses such as law or medicine. While a substantial number of Arts students were from wealthy and professional families, the majority were from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds. In both Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education, Arts and Education faculties were the highest concentration areas for students whose fathers were skilled and semi-skilled, with a high concentration in the bracket of intermediate and clerical occupations. Compared with law and science students, a much lower proportion of humanities students had university-educated fathers, while at the other end of the scale, far more humanities students had fathers educated only to primary level. Arts students appear to have come from backgrounds of average income: while a significant proportion had fathers

19 Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 25. This figure is composed of 13,250 Arts students, out of 36,871 new first degree university students in Australia.

20 Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 124-5. 21.9 per cent of Arts students were from Catholic independent schools and 17.1 per cent from the non-Catholic independent sector. In Metropolitan Colleges, the proportion of Arts students from government school backgrounds was even higher (59.1 per cent), with correspondingly lower proportions from Catholic independent, (18.5 per cent) and non-Catholic independent schools (15.3 per cent).

21 Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 125. Amongst university medical students, 44.4 per cent were from government schools, 22.1 per cent from Catholic independent, and 28.7 per cent from the non-Catholic independent sector. Williams notes that 'more than 80 per cent of independent school students complete Year 12 relative to 30 per cent of Government school students... more than half enter higher education compared with 15 per cent ... they enter university at half the rate' (Williams 79).

22 Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 82. Of Arts students, 9.1 per cent had fathers in the semi-skilled category, with 12.2 per cent classified as foremen and skilled, 4.1 per cent as clerical, and 9.4 per cent as intermediate non-manual. By contrast, in Law faculties, 4.4 per cent had fathers in the semi-skilled category, with 1.5 per cent classified as foremen and skilled, 3.3 per cent as clerical, and 8.8 per cent as intermediate non-manual. Across all university faculties, the corresponding average for those from a semi-skilled background was 8.7 per cent for men and 7.2 per cent for women (Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 79).

23 Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 76. In the case of Arts, 14.9 per cent had university-educated fathers: the respective proportions were 23.4 per cent and 17 per cent in the case of Law and Science.

24 After Education, Arts had the highest proportion of students whose fathers were educated only to primary level (26.4 per cent in the case of Education, 16.2 per cent in the case of Arts, as compared with seven per cent in the case of Law students). Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 76.
in the highest income bracket, most were concentrated in the middle to lower income range.\textsuperscript{25} Although most were from an Australian or Anglo background, a relatively high proportion had fathers of European extraction.\textsuperscript{26}

From this profile, it begins to appear that, during the past decade, Arts degrees have provided considerable social mobility within certain sectors of the population, although this mobility has been largely confined to a specific (non-professional) trajectory. Despite recurrent concerns about the role of cultural privilege and cultural capital within humanistic education, only a minority of Arts students have come from unequivocally privileged social backgrounds. In fact, the socio-economic profile of the humanities has borne more resemblance to that of the sciences and teacher training than to that of professional disciplines such as law and medicine.\textsuperscript{27}

Within the current debate on universities and equity, however, the issue that has received the greatest attention has been that of the proportion of women enrolled in Arts degrees – a consideration which, as noted above, has been treated with a certain ambivalence. The statistical data on this issue is

\textsuperscript{25} Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 87. While 12.1 per cent of 1976 Arts students had fathers in the highest income bracket of over $16,000 per annum, 25.4 per cent were concentrated in the brackets between $6,000 and $10,000 per annum. By contrast, 28.2 per cent of medical students had fathers in the highest income bracket, with 17.2 per cent in the corresponding middle-income category. The relatively large numbers of Arts students supported by the means-tested Tertiary Education Allowance Scheme in 1976, (31 per cent of University Arts students) indicates the generally middle-range economic background of Arts students over the past fifteen years, as does the high proportion of Arts students receiving bonded teachers' scholarships (in 1976, 10 per cent of Arts students in University and 12 per cent of Liberal Arts students in Colleges of Advanced Education). Arts and Education students were among those judged least likely to be able to afford tertiary fees. Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 166-74.

\textsuperscript{26} Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 96. 13.2 per cent of Arts students had fathers of European extraction, as compared to 8.3 per cent of medical students. 2.1 per cent were of Asian extraction, as compared to 5.5 per cent in Medicine faculties, 11.2 per cent in Engineering and 10.8 per cent in Commerce.

\textsuperscript{27} Across the universities, 17 per cent of Arts students came from an upper professional background, as compared with averages of 25.6 per cent for law, 29.6 per cent for medicine, 16.0 per cent for education and 19.2 per cent for science. Anderson, Boven, Fesham and Powell 82.
considerable, demonstrating that the majority of all commencing Arts students have been women, and that humanities enrolments have been responsible for much of the proportional increase of women students within universities over the past decade.\textsuperscript{28} Although general increases in women's tertiary participation have meant a proportional rise in female enrolments in 'traditionally male subject areas',\textsuperscript{29} the proportion of women enrolling in the humanities has also grown.\textsuperscript{30} From 1980 to 1988, the proportion of female students across the higher education sector increased from 48 per cent to 53 per cent,\textsuperscript{31} and across the same grouping in 1988, there were almost twice as many women as men enrolled in the humanities,\textsuperscript{32} constituting more than 67 per cent of first year Bachelor of Arts enrolments.\textsuperscript{33} At Honours and Masters levels, however, these proportions

\textsuperscript{28} For proportions of women bachelor students within various fields of study from 1950 to 1980, see Anderson and Vervoorn 53. Here, it is noted that whereas in 1950, 38.2 per cent of Humanities students were women, the same proportion was 63 per cent in 1980. This category excludes fine arts, where the equivalent proportions were 66.4 per cent and 64.9 per cent respectively, as well as social and behavioural science, where the proportions were 70.8 per cent in 1965 and 62.7 per cent in 1980. By contrast, law has seen a steep increase in female participation, from 5.5 per cent in 1950 to 34.6 per cent in 1980, while medicine has shifted from 12.4 per cent to 38.9 per cent.

\textsuperscript{29} Powles notes that between 1975 and 1982, women's participation in 'male-identified' areas in the university sector increased, rising from 23.4 per cent to 32 per cent, with an equivalent shift from 12.8 per cent to 25.4 per cent in the Colleges of Advanced Education sector. See Powles 79 and 83. For figures on the proportion of female higher education students from 1949-1981, see Anderson and Vervoorn 49.

\textsuperscript{30} Powles also notes that the proportion of women enrolled in humanities degrees rose markedly in the period from 1975-82, from 58 per cent to 64.8 per cent in the universities and from 55.4 per cent to 65.3 per cent in the Colleges of Advanced Education sector (see Powles 83 for universities and Powles 79 for Colleges of Advanced Education.). Calculating the proportional enrolment change, she indicates a swing of women towards traditionally 'male' courses of study of 51.7 per cent in the universities and 184.7 per cent in the Colleges of Advanced Education, and a swing of women towards 'traditionally female' courses of 32.9 per cent in the universities and 16.0 per cent in the CAEs. By contrast, she records disparities in male enrolment in the 'traditionally male' areas, with a drop of 1.7 per cent in the universities, and a rise of 23.5 per cent in the Colleges of Advanced Education. At the same time, there was a drop of 11.5 per cent in male enrolments in university 'female' areas, with a slight rise of 7.4 per cent in the Colleges of Advanced Education (Powles 79-83).


\textsuperscript{32} DEET, \textit{Selected Higher Education Statistics} 1988 74-7. In 1988, in humanities across the higher education field, there was a proportion of 67,828 women to 33,700 men.

shifted progressively in favour of male candidates, levelling out at the stage of Ph D candidature.\textsuperscript{34}

These facts of social distribution raise a series of difficulties, given the well-established nature of governmental programmes to redress gender imbalances in education and to alter patterns of participation in 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' areas.\textsuperscript{35} At the simplest level, however, it remains the case that Arts is the main area of academic training for a large proportion of women students. It is also evident that the Arts faculty provides tertiary training for a substantial proportion of the female tertiary-educated working population. Indeed, in 1986, the largest proportion of tertiary-educated women in all age groups across the country reported either Arts or Education as their main field of study, although growing proportions of women under twenty-four years of age nominated Science.\textsuperscript{36} Of all tertiary-educated women in the workforce, 28.8 per cent had humanities degrees,\textsuperscript{37} while 11.49 per cent of tertiary-educated men were trained in the humanities.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{34} DEET, \textit{Selected Higher Education Statistics} 1988 74-7. At Masters level, men provided 193 commencing candidates as compared to 1,143 women. The proportion of men rose at Ph.D level, with 258 men and 243 women commencing in all higher education institutions. In combined figures for commencing and continuing students however, the proportions are more marked. In 1988, there were 2,048 men and 2,668 women at Masters level throughout Australia, with the majority of women being enrolled in coursework degrees. At Ph.D level, the balance had shifted to male students, with 1,193 men and 1,044 women enrolled.


\textsuperscript{36} ABS \textit{Labour Force Status 1986} 5.

\textsuperscript{37} See ABS \textit{Labour Force Status 1986} 11 for details on the frequency of humanities training within particular age brackets, differentiated according to age and labour force status.

\textsuperscript{38} Nevertheless, since the bulk of these men were between 25 and 34 years of age, it appears that the proportion of male humanities-educated graduates is growing steadily.
Further, given the socio-economic profile already developed for Arts students in general, it seems that the humanities academy has provided a degree of social mobility for large numbers of women.\(^{39}\) While it is certainly the case that such mobility may not satisfy the more global goals of gender equalisation and balanced participation patterns, it does suggest that the Arts faculty is a key instrument of forms of social and vocational distribution which are in many respects consonant with equity goals. But while such mobility indicates that the social role of the humanities cannot simply be denounced, it does not necessarily give grounds for celebrating this role as self-evidently democratic. Instead, the role of the Arts faculty in shaping patterns of education participation is more complex and less global than such options allow.

Two preliminary conclusions may be drawn from this sketch. First, given that the humanities are neither the preserve of the privately schooled and economically privileged, nor the privileged space for democratic participation and educational opportunity, it should be possible for accounts of the humanities to move beyond the alternatives of eulogy or denunciation. While a more limited description of the humanities' social role and demographic context may not answer all the questions of those concerned with absolute ethical or political imperatives, it might provide a firmer basis from which to describe the place of the Arts faculty within equity-oriented policy objectives. Second, in drawing these connections between the Arts faculty and the processes of social distribution, we might begin to develop some doubts about the humanities' claims to a status removed from instrumental and governmental calculation. Instead, the

\(^{39}\) These patterns of social mobility have of course been affected by recent shifts in the patterns of vocational outcomes for humanities-educated women, especially the current decrease in recruitment to school teaching, which has been a particular vehicle of social mobility for women from backgrounds of lower socio-economic status. See Anderson and Vervoorn 63.
statistical maps linking the university to school and workplace suggest that there are a number of key intersections between the academy and social administration – intersections that are themselves the objects of administrative calculation and governmental intervention.

It is important, however, to stress the reciprocal nature of these exchanges. On the one hand, Australian Arts faculties have been altered significantly by governmental imperatives for managing a socially-diverse and expanding school-leaving population. On the other, training provided within Arts faculties has augmented the intellectual technologies in which governmental problems of social distribution have become thinkable. Equity programmes, for example, draw on political vocabularies and intellectual instruments developed within the humanities and social sciences. Similarly, we saw in Chapter One that strategies for promoting educational participation depend upon the formative machinery of the classroom and seminar, which makes it possible to foster the kinds of capacities and habits associated with 'self-determination'. In other words, far from having external governmental imperatives of 'equity' and 'participation' newly imposed upon it, the academy is already one component within an extensive governmental network. Hence, the political rationality of debates on 'participation' is actually constituted by reciprocal exchanges between the academy and the programmes of government. To further clarify the character of these exchanges, we now turn to the area of occupational outcomes, as an instance of the interaction between academic cultural training and vocational personnel requirements.

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40 On the question of the relation between ethical training, expertise and government, see N. Rose and P. Miller, 'Political Rationalities and Technologies of Government', *Politikā* 14.2 (1988) and further discussion of these questions in Part II.

iii. The personality market.

It has been suggested thus far that workable defences of the humanities are unlikely to be derived from existing rationales, with their unhelpful insistence on absolutist oppositions between culture and utility, or between liberal and vocational education. This becomes clearer when examining tensions within existing accounts of the vocational outcomes of humanities training. According to one of the standard defences, humanistic education is socially invaluable, since it alone is able to form social leaders schooled in responsibility and service to humanity.42 Associated with this is the long-standing tendency to regret the passing of the traditional link between liberal education and a vocation of public leadership, apparently lost in the long drift of the universities away from the 'community'. Of similar provenance is the call for the rediscovery of more general vocational goals for the humanities, whether in forming citizens, or in building 'humanity' within a broad workforce.43 Others, however, have been fastidious about even these broadly-stated vocational rationales, often regarding the student who is re-made in the vocational arena as only half-made as a scholar or, indeed, as a 'person'. According to such commentators, vocational outcomes bear only an indirect and incidental relationship to higher forms of ethical and scholarly reflection:

A training in English can make for improved writing of reports in the public servant or for more imaginative advertising copy, just as a training in philosophy can

42 See Jane Kenway and Jill Blackmore's argument that, through the 'gendered moral technologies' of the humanities disciplines, humanities-educated women provide the 'morality missing from the public sphere'. Kenway and Blackmore 51.

produce better policy analysis in a politician or better handling of complex "intelligence" material in a spy. Whether these are good things or not will depend on such matters as what is being advertised and who is being spied on for what purpose.\textsuperscript{44}

Despite efforts to produce more pragmatic rationales, current apologists for the humanities tend to repeat these circular claims and disclaimers. Aiming both to placate the academy and to impress policy-makers, they stress the co-existence of liberal and vocational elements within humanistic teaching, pointing out that it is quite possible for the scholarly ethos of the pursuit of truth to co-exist with vocationally-oriented pedagogic goals.\textsuperscript{45} After all, it has been argued, the humanities produce the majority of personnel within the public sector, whether as teachers, public servants or arts administrators. As Simon Marginson puts it,

\begin{quote}
There is no teaching and learning in higher education that is shorn of practical social purposes ... The vast majority of graduates in the humanities and social sciences enter administrative or middle management positions – mainly in the public sector – or specific professions such as teacher, welfare officer or journalist ... Training this large segment of the workforce has been the principal role of the humanities and social sciences for decades.\textsuperscript{46}
\end{quote}

However, this case has been weakened by the inclusion of more absolute claims for a unique and traditional link between the humanities and the vocation of public administration. In the context of such claims, evidence of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} C.A.J. Coady, 'The Academy and the State', \textit{Australian Universities Review} 31.1 (1988): 16.
\item \textsuperscript{45} See, for example S. Marginson, 'The Humanities in the Marketplace: Should We Defend the Community of Scholars?' Paper presented to the 'Humanities and Universities of Technology' Conference, June 1989. Recently, Marginson has directed his attention to detailed analysis of the vocational outcomes of humanistic education. See S. Marginson, \textit{Arts, Science and Work}. (Canberra: Department of Employment, Education and Training, Higher Education Division, Evaluations and Investigations Program, 1993).
\item \textsuperscript{46} Marginson, 'The Humanities in the Marketplace' 4. In earlier work, Marginson rejects the 1988 White Paper's comments on the vocational efficacy of the humanities as 'largely rhetorical'. See S. Marginson, 'The Federal Government's Marginalisation of Intellectuals: Towards a Strategic Response', paper delivered at the Institute for Cultural Policy Studies Conference, Griffith University, 1-4 December, 1988, 8.
\end{itemize}
increased recruitment of economics or business studies graduates into the public sector is interpreted as a threat to the latter's moral capacity. This encourages resort to global analyses such as Pusey's, characterised by inflated estimates of the social and vocational value of humanistic education, and portentous denunciations of 'technicism'.

The problem is that neither these optimistic claims nor their dystopian disavowal bear much relationship to the diversity of vocational outcomes from actual Arts faculties. A closer study indicates that, although both the public and the private sectors do make use of the capacities developed in the Arts faculties, the vocational links between the humanities and 'public leadership' are neither direct nor traditional. It is necessary, therefore, to discuss these links less as conduits for channelling morality into the world and more as contingent devices for aligning the outcomes of humanities pedagogy and the requirements of particular vocational domains.

There are of course routine links between the university humanities and vocational recruitment into a range of occupations. It is not hard to find testimonials to the marketability of 'personality' and to the vocational value of humanistic education. Most surveys of employer expectations of graduate recruits indicate a preference for a range of capacities which include 'personal' skills of written communication, logical thinking, ability to work with others and 'problem-solving', as well as emphasis on elements of character: decision-making, personal initiative, tenacity, enthusiasm, leadership and the ability to adapt, alongside numeracy, or 'understanding of business and work'.

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48 See, for example, W. Jones, Education and Employment: Expectations and Experiences of Students, Graduates and Employers (Hawthorn, ACER Research Monograph, 1981); I. Godwin, 'Recruitment a real chore for the smaller
assessment of skill levels and performance, such major industrial employers as BHP define 'interpersonal', 'personal' and 'people management' skills as half of their six-part catalogue of basic skill categories, equally weighted with technical, functional, business administrative and problem-solving facility. \footnote{49} The personal capacities listed include 'breadth of vision', 'judgement', 'earning and maintaining trust', 'self-supervision', 'willingness to accept responsibility for one's own actions', and 'evaluating and improving one's own performance'. \footnote{50}

Given that the ethos of most humanities disciplines incorporates exercises which promote flexible self-formation, cultivating personal attributes of sensitivity or rationality (as well as the specific capacities for problem-solving, group work and verbal and written rhetorical skills), it is not difficult to argue that Arts graduates are likely to have developed these vocationally desirable capacities. Indeed, this is a long-standing rationale for employing generalist graduates, used by employers in both the private and the public sectors:

a university can take a person of intelligence, teach him those principles, teach him to think and write,
broaden his outlook and send him out as a marketable commodity in his discipline, or for that matter, even when his particular subjects have no direct relevance. Employers, the Commonwealth included, will nevertheless recruit from a university when the particular subjects are of marginal value, because intelligence, a broad education and the ability to think independently and communicate effectively are, in themselves, highly marketable.\[51\]

Although such observations may seem limited in comparison with more ambitious claims concerning the humanities and vocation, they have the advantage of bearing some relationship to the actual vocational pathways attached to the Arts faculty. The available evidence on graduate outcomes from the humanities gives little substance to sanguine expectations of a direct link between humanistic education and public leadership, but it does support more modest observations concerning the flexible nature of humanistic training. Arts graduates are employed within a limited salary range compared with graduates of other areas. Further, they are less likely to be employed full-time and are more likely to be required to provide themselves with postgraduate vocational qualifications. But while Arts graduates may not proceed to the career destination of their first choice, they are far from unemployable, being recruited to an expanding range of occupations within the private and public sector.\[52\]

In 1992, 19.6 per cent of the previous years' humanities and social sciences graduates from all higher education institutions in Australia were seeking full-time employment, while 9.8 per cent were employed fractionally or part-time.\[53\] More than a third of these humanities graduates were pursuing

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52 For a more extended recent analysis, see Marginson, Arts, Science and Work.

53 Graduate Careers Council of Australia, 1991 Australian Graduates in 1992: A National Survey of Their Activities as at 30 April (Hawthorn, Vic: Graduate Careers Council of Australia Ltd., 1992) 37. Of humanities graduates, 24.8 per cent were in full-time work, with 18.1 per cent seeking full-time employment, and
further study, many of them supplementing their Bachelor of Arts degree with vocational postgraduate diplomas in teaching, librarianship, curatorial work, journalism or media production.\textsuperscript{54} Of the 1991 humanities graduates who were employed full-time, a small proportion were in occupations bearing some relationship to the content of their studies, in secondary and post-secondary teaching (2 per cent),\textsuperscript{55} in community services (1.1 per cent), in radio and television (0.5 per cent), or in 'private professional' areas (1.6 per cent).\textsuperscript{56} Overall, 11.4 per cent of humanities and social science graduates were employed within the private sector,\textsuperscript{57} compared with 9.3 per cent in the full-time study. Of social science graduates, 33.7 per cent were in full-time work, 29.9 per cent were seeking full-time employment, and 20.7 per cent were in full-time study. This compares well to overall figures of 1991 graduates seeking full-time employment (18.6 per cent) Graduate Careers Council\textsuperscript{CA 1992: 15.}

In 1992, 37.0 per cent of humanities graduates were studying full-time, 13.0 per cent in honours years, 4.7 per cent in higher degrees, 10.7 per cent in other degrees or diplomas and 6.2 per cent in teacher training. In 1989, only 6.9 per cent of the previous year's Arts graduates from all higher education institutions in Australia were seeking full-time employment, although 13.9 per cent were employed fractionally or part-time. A third of these Arts graduates were pursuing further study, many of them supplementing their Bachelor of Arts degree with vocational postgraduate diplomas in teaching, librarianship, curatorial work, journalism or media production. Of the 1988 humanities graduates who were employed full-time, some were in occupations bearing some relation to the content of their studies, such as those of teacher (12 per cent), social welfare worker or counsellor (6 per cent), journalist (2.9 per cent), social science researcher (1.8 per cent), manager (13 per cent) or clerk (11 per cent). Others had entered more diverse occupations, often within the private sector, as business professionals (5.4 per cent), sales representatives (3.9 per cent), or computer professionals (1.6 per cent).


\textsuperscript{56} Graduate Careers Council of Australia 1992 37.

Graduate Careers Council of Australia 1992 37. Graduates from some humanities disciplines are more likely than others to find employment within the private sector. Areas of the humanities with significant percentages of graduates entering private sector employment include communications and journalism (31.0 per cent: 8.1 per cent of these being in business and 8.1 per cent in manufacturing, with only 4.3 per cent in radio and television); film (19.8 per cent); library and archival studies (16.6 per cent); recreation studies (21.8 per cent); women's studies (13.5 per cent); visual arts (12.8 per cent); anthropology (7.7 per cent); archaeology (9.5 per cent); area and ethnic studies (8.4 per cent). This figure represents a recent decline in the proportion of humanities graduates entering the private sector, especially as compared with a marked increase in the eighties. In 1989, 18.7 per cent of 1988 Arts graduates were employed in the private sector, in areas such as manufacturing, trade (wholesale and retail), entertainment and recreation, radio and television and community services. The proportion of 'generalist' graduates employed in this sector increased from 3.1 per cent in 1972 to 13.4 per cent in 1988, as compared with 17.5 per cent of all graduates. This was in the context of
public sector (7.6 per cent in the case of humanities graduates, and 16.3 per cent for social science graduates).\textsuperscript{58} Clerical work constituted the single largest vocational destination for humanities graduates, (14.3 per cent for women, 13.8 per cent for men), while the second largest proportion were employed in management and administrative work (11.4 per cent overall: 14.2 per cent for men, 10 per cent for women).\textsuperscript{59}

Although the overall proportion of graduates employed within the public sector has fallen, partly as a result of recession and cut-backs, there have been strong links between humanistic education and the production of public personnel. In 1989, 13.1 per cent of 1988 humanities graduates were employed in the government sector,\textsuperscript{60} while in 1987, more than 40 per cent of full-time employed 1986 graduates from the university humanities were working within the broad sphere of government and semi-government employment: 21.3 per cent as either primary or secondary teachers and 12.1 per cent as clerical and administrative workers within the state or federal public service.\textsuperscript{61} Of 1988 humanities graduates, 6.2 per cent became teachers – 2.2 per cent in the public sector, 1.2 per cent in the private, and 2.8 per cent in higher education.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{58} Graduate Careers Council of Australia 1992 37. Of the total of all 1991 graduates, across the disciplines, 14.1 per cent were employed within the public sector and 19.7 per cent in the private sector. The highest proportions of government graduate employees were provided by vocational disciplines such as medicine (90.1 per cent) rehabilitation (60.5 per cent), nursing (44.4 per cent), urban and regional planning (43.6 per cent), social work (42.7 per cent) and aeronautical engineering (31.0 per cent). Of economics graduates, 10.7 per cent were employed by government agencies, as were 12.4 per cent of business studies graduates and 8.2 per cent of accounting graduates.

\textsuperscript{59} Graduate Careers Council of Australia 1992 15. Of social science graduates, the highest proportion (23 per cent) were employed in welfare work (25.4 per cent for women, 17.2 per cent for men), with 12.8 per cent in management and administrative work (13.4 per cent for men, 12.7 per cent for women).

\textsuperscript{60} Graduate Careers Council of Australia 1989 30.

\textsuperscript{61} Graduate Careers Council of Australia 1987 6.

\textsuperscript{62} Graduate Careers Council of Australia 1989 30.
In addition, the government sector employs high proportions of those graduating from humanistically-based vocational diplomas, especially those in conservation of art and culture (55.6 per cent), social work (42.7 per cent), library and archival study (28.5 per cent), political science and government (12.2 per cent), recreation studies (11.4 per cent), and counselling (25.5 per cent). Although this link between the vocational re-training of graduates and employment in the public sector is not peculiar to the humanities, longer-terms studies of graduate employment show that, compared with other faculties, the proportion of Arts graduates who enter the public sector within five years has been markedly high.

In the past decade, the humanities have provided a high proportion of all graduates recruited to the Commonwealth Public Service. In 1985, Arts students comprised 39 per cent of newly recruited permanent staff, and in 1984, 30.7 per cent of tertiary-educated permanent staff members had

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63 Graduate Careers Council of Australia 1992 34-7. In 1989, the equivalent proportions were as follows: art and culture (66.7 per cent), literary and archival study (42 per cent), recreation studies (34.9 per cent) and counselling (25.5 per cent). Graduate Careers Council of Australia 1988 25-28.

64 See P. Coyte, Graduates in the Labour Market – Graduates of Five Australian Universities Five Years After Graduation, May 1985 (Sydney: Careers and Appointments Service, University of Sydney, 1985): 35. In a study of career patterns of students five years after graduation, Coyte notes that by 1984, 56.4 per cent of his sample of 1979 graduates (drawn from all faculties) were employed within the public sectors. More than a third of the sample had become teachers, nearly a fifth were government employees, and about an eighth were working in private industry and commerce (Coyte 11). Nearly half were engaged in full-time study, most of them within teacher training. In 1979, of 1,126 recent humanities graduates, 43.9 per cent were engaged in further study, 11.2 per cent were employed by federal, state or local governments, 10.5 per cent were teachers, 4.5 per cent in professional practice, 8.1 per cent in industry and commerce, 11.5 per cent were unavailable for work, and 8.7 per cent were seeking full-time work. By 1984, 5.1 per cent of the same body of graduates were engaged in further study, while 19 per cent were employed in the government sectors, with 33.8 per cent in teaching, 12.2 per cent in 'industry and commerce' and 7.1 per cent in professional practice. 14.6 per cent were unavailable for employment and 3.5 per cent were seeking work (Coyte 38).

65 Australian Public Service Board, Australian Public Service Board Statistical Yearbook 1985-6 (Canberra, AGFS, 1986) 35. Of 3,199 new recruits in 1985, approximately 1,250 were humanities graduates: c. 750 women, and c. 500 men.
degrees or diplomas in the humanities. Of 2,982 graduates appointed to the Australian public service in 1987, 1,137 were humanities graduates. Many of these were women, although these proportions were not commensurate with the previously noted high proportion of women enrolling in Arts degrees. Nevertheless, in 1980, women constituted 40.7 per cent of all permanent graduate appointees in the Commonwealth Public Service and more than half of this number (55.9 per cent) had Arts degrees. These proportions increased during the past decade, as the narrowing field of recruitment to school teaching led many female Arts graduates towards clerical and secretarial work.

Further, within the last ten years, large numbers of public service employees undertook humanities courses as part of in-service education programmes. In 1983, approximately a quarter of the degrees and diplomas gained by permanent officers after their appointments were in the humanities. Of those permanent officers holding pass level Bachelors of Arts degrees, about a third had gained them after entry to the service. Despite a growing emphasis on the need for technical and professional training, the humanities provided a strong rival to economics and accountancy as a chosen area of staff part-time study. In 1985, for instance, the humanities outstripped

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66 Australian Public Service Board, *Australian Public Service Board Statistical Yearbook, 1984-5* (Canberra, AGPS 1985) 106. Of a total of 39,316 tertiary-qualified permanent staff members, 12,075 possessed degrees or diplomas in the humanities.


70 Australian Public Service Board, *Australian Public Service Board Statistical Yearbook 1983-4* (Canberra, AGPS, 1984): 127. This figure represents 2,476 of 10,052 degrees or diplomas gained.

71 APSB 1984 138. In 1984, of 8,990 Australian Public Service officers enrolled in assisted part-time courses, 1,072 were pursuing Arts degrees or diplomas, 1,036 were enrolled in economics or commerce, and 1,516 in accounting courses.
economics and administration in the area of in-service study, being second in popularity only to accountancy. 72

There are strong empirical grounds, then, for a case that the preparation of trained and partially-trained personnel for government and semi-government agencies has been a central function of the humanities. It is important, however, to note the distinct differences in the proportions of recruits from different disciplines. Those with a background in history, the social sciences or psychology have been most likely to be recruited, followed by those with language or political science training. 73 Although significant percentages of other Arts graduates have also been employed in administrative and clerical work, most notably those with training in welfare studies, sociology, political science, geography, psychology, communications, journalism and linguistics, 74 those who are most likely to receive rapid promotion also held law or economics qualifications.

Furthermore, quite different questions arise in relation to Arts graduates' success in promotion within the public service. Although in the past, Arts graduates have had significant success in entering the higher ranks within the Commonwealth Public Service, this has altered in recent years, with the rising emphasis on technical, managerial, legal and economic training. The

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72 APSB 1985 116. Of 7,573 Australian Public Service officers undertaking assisted part-time study in 1985, 951 took degrees or diplomas in Arts, 756 in Economics, 720 in Administration, and 1,303 in Accountancy.

73 APSB 1987 94. In 1986, from a total of 2,982 graduates recruited to the Australian Public Service, 1,137 were Arts graduates, 675 of them women. Of this body of recruits, 170 had degrees in social science, 101 in history, 103 in psychology and 91 in languages.

74 The more recent Graduate Careers Council figures on graduate employment do not make use of the category of 'administrative and clerical work' within the government sector. However, this category was in use within the 1989 publication (GCCA 1988 25-8). In 1988, 33.3 per cent of 1987 welfare studies graduates were employed in administrative and clerical work, as were 20.6 per cent from sociology, 17.1 per cent from political science, 16.7 per cent from geography, 14.1 per cent from psychology, 13.8 per cent from communications and journalism and 13.0 per cent from linguistics.
high proportion of Arts graduates working within the lower and middle ranks of graduate administration is not replicated in the higher ranks of the Senior Executive Service. As we shall see, recent reforms to this level have exacerbated this tendency, altering the previously existing ethos of the 'career service' – an ethos which the Arts graduate had inhabited with success for some decades. Consequently, claims concerning the direct connection between humanities training and public administration need to be qualified by reference to the differential character of recruitment to the bureaucracy.

There is little point then in repining over a lost traditional link between liberal education and 'public leadership'. If the claims to a connection between liberal education and government in contemporary Australia currently have an unsteady basis, the historical ground they stand on is even more shaky. Although there were well-established expectations that Australia might install the British Northcote-Trevelyan model of cultivated civil service, until the post-war period this model bore little relation to actual historical practice. Those who refer to the humanities' traditional mission to form the cultivated public leader are referring to a largely rhetorical figure.

A brief exemplification of the point is provided by a pamphlet of Sir Eric Ashby's, entitled *Universities in Australia* and published by the Australian Council for Educational Research in 1944. Here, Ashby argues for a closer link between liberal education and the formation of public administrators, offering an exemplary testimonial to the 'ideal pass graduate':

> His individuality has been developed. He knows where to go to find information. He can distinguish facts from opinions. He can bring together data about

almost anything, and lay them out and draw conclusions from them. He has a high standard of thoroughness. He can state his opponent’s opinion as fairly and sympathetically as he can state his own. He can dismantle a complex situation as a mechanic dismantles a car engine. He never accepts or rejects an idea through prejudice, in his work or in politics or in golf: he examines it first and accepts the conclusion even if it is distasteful.76

In this account, Ashby provides some useful clues to the circularity of the claims and counter-claims currently made with regard to the modern humanities. Like many critical intellectuals today, Ashby refers to an ideal relation between culture and government, citing, for example, Wentworth’s visionary speech on the founding of Sydney University, predicting that ‘from the pregnant womb of this institution will arise a long list of illustrious names, of statesmen, of patriots, of philanthropists, of philosophers, of poets and of heroes’.77 But he also makes it clear that, by the 1940s, this ‘rather florid’ ambition of a direct relation between liberal education and public leadership had never been realised. There was simply no bridge across which a university-educated cadre of graduates could march into the administrative arm of the public service. Indeed, Ashby is actually preoccupied with the disconnection between the Australian public service and the faculties of Arts:

If the common fault of professional faculties in Australia is that they stuff their students with facts and vocational technique at the expense of vocational health, the common fault of liberal faculties is that they do not realise what kind of intellectual health is necessary for our intellectual climate. In Britain, a classical education still has career value. A first in ‘Greats’ opens the door to the Senior Civil Service; though even this door is now open to men who have distinguished themselves in the social sciences. In Australia, it is otherwise. We recruit the bulk of our

76 E. Ashby, Universities in Australia (Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1944) 34.
77 Cited in Ashby 13.
Public Service from boys and girls of eighteen or less, with Leaving Certificate or less.\textsuperscript{78}

Casting ahead to the early 1960s, we find that the gap between the Faculty of Arts and the public service still yawned. In what was then the most comprehensive survey of Australian Arts faculties, the Academy of Humanities publication \textit{The Humanities in Australia}, no mention was made of a vocational connection between the Arts faculty and the public service. Instead, it was noted that, of the 'professional extensions of liberal education', the training of teachers 'bulks largest and has the biggest influence on the work of the Arts faculties'.\textsuperscript{79} The only other vocational areas mentioned as impinging upon the academy were librarianship and the Christian ministry – and these, it was noted, kept their distance as separate post-graduate diplomas.\textsuperscript{80}

These historical clues give rise to significant doubts that, in Australia, a traditional link between academic training and an administrative career structure ever existed.\textsuperscript{81} In fact, from the mid-nineteenth century, the public service maintained only occasional links with the universities, often using its own examinations to draw straight from the secondary schools.\textsuperscript{82} Following the Public Service Act of 1902, the recruitment of graduates was restricted by

\textsuperscript{78} Ashby 31.
\textsuperscript{79} A.G. Mitchell in Grenfell Price 93.
\textsuperscript{80} A.G. Mitchell in Grenfell Price 96-7.
\textsuperscript{81} For histories of graduate recruitment, see Caiden; Parker; Australian Public Service Board, \textit{The Public Service Board 1923-73} (Canberra: AGPS, 1973); and M.A. Stanton, \textit{The Merit Principle: Its History and Future} (Canberra, AGPS, 1978).
\textsuperscript{82} For an outline on the problems of public service examinations, see Parker 80-110. By the 1940s, a range of problems with the available methods of recruitment had emerged, partly due to the expansion of the secondary education sector and increased enrolments in universities. In addition, wider doubts about the efficacy of examinations gave rise to proposals to introduce interview-based selection and intelligence testing. See K.S. Cunningham, 'The Scientific Selection and Placement of Personnel', \textit{Public Administration}, IV.6. (1943): 262-268 and W.C. Radford, 'Problems and Techniques of Selection and Placement', \textit{Public Administration} 19 (1960): 81-99. For historical descriptions of the debates, see Parker 204-5 and Stanton 19-23.
quota, and arguments on the administrative value of a general university education were actively opposed, both on pragmatic grounds, (since inservice training was regarded as more efficient), and on the grounds of principle, (as part of an egalitarian rejection of cultural privilege). As G. E. Caiden put it, 'the emphasis in recruiting was mainly negative, namely, to prevent the unqualified, the unhealthy and unsuitable from gaining entry and to avoid favouritism, patronage and nepotism in selection'. If the universities – its critical intellectuals in particular – disdained a connection with the vocation of public administration, this distrust was certainly mutual.

Furthermore, when the public service did eventually look to the academy for expertise, it was not necessarily to the humanities that it turned. By 1942, in his review of recruitment in the Australian public service, R. S. Parker had reluctantly announced that 'it does begin to appear that administrative work is something distinguished and removed, and that the administrator needs to be a different sort of man from the clerk'. Here, he calls upon prevailing descriptions of the ideal administrator:

The efficient performance of administrative work calls in all cases for a trained mental equipment of a high order ... In some cases what is most wanted is judgement, savoir faire, insight and fair-mindedness; in others, an intellectual equipment capable of the ready mastery of complex problems in taxation or other economic subjects; in others, imagination and constructive ability...

But although Parker rehearsed arguments such as this, he went on to express a certain scepticism about the administrative usefulness of humanistic

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83 See, for example H.A. Scarrow, 'Further Comments Upon the Recruitment of University Graduates to the Commonwealth Public Service', Public Administration XIII (1954): 166-75.  
84 Caiden 24.  
85 Parker 234.  
86 Tomlin Commission (United Kingdom Civil Service, 1929-31), Appendix VIII to Minutes of Evidence, cited in Parker 245.
training, noting that, unless the service recruited a significant proportion of graduates with some previous administrative training, it would court the danger of discredit from 'the occasional netting of the scholarly duffer': 87

the ordinary public servant is naturally suspicious of the 'dreamy intellectual' who has not lived close to the soil of detailed departmental procedure, whose ideas have been got from books and whose cloistered training has unfitted him for dealing with the exigencies of real-life situations and for working with the average man, from whom he is separated by various forms of snobbishness on one side or the other. 88

As early as 1942, it was predicted that the claims of the generalist graduate would be 'elbowed aside' by those with professional training: 89

It is certainly questionable whether the Public Service can afford to regard 'liberal studies' as the best qualification of the future administrator. The time is coming when the administrator will be recruited as a sober professional practitioner, trained in the lore and techniques of administration... 90

Despite this lack of enthusiasm from both the academy and the public service, links between the Arts faculty and public administration were nevertheless forming. During the 1920s and 1930s, the number of graduates in the Commonwealth Public Service rose slowly, most of these recruits coming from a background in the humanities. Immediately following the war, there was an influx of graduates, mostly made up of women with Arts degrees. 91 By the 1950s, three in every five generalist graduate recruits were women. 92

87 Parker 270.
88 Parker 234.
89 Parker 265.
90 Parker 262.
91 Sol Encel comments that between July 1947 and June 1952, about 380 graduates took up positions in the Australian Public Service. Of the 219 for whom details were available, 102 were women, 95 of whom had Arts degrees. Among the men, 56 had degrees in the humanities, 31 in economics and 9 in law. However, he also notes that at the time, Public Service departments were actually asking for graduates in economics, law and accounting, with only marginal interest expressed in Arts graduates. S. Encel, 'Recruitment of University Graduates to the Commonwealth Public Service', Public Administration, (Dec., 1953): 229.
This trend continued during the rapid expansion of the 1960s, when the great majority of graduate recruits had Arts degrees.93

Nevertheless, ambivalence about the vocational usefulness of the liberally educated generalist graduate remained, strongly influencing the terms of the Boyer Committee of 1959,94 which reshaped administrative recruitment and training within the Commonwealth Public Service. The Report notes that the ideal administrator should have a 'cultivated mind', and should be 'able to view broad questions of public policy with a balanced perspective, and to distinguish the essential from the trivial in policy and administration', remarking that university liberal education is a 'straightforward means to this end'. However, the Report also states that it does not assume that university graduates of any faculty will supply adequate administrators, any more than it assumes that they will arise from a Service 'recruited as messenger boys and developed "the hard way" by a tedious ascent through the mill of routine or specialist work'.95

Nevertheless, by the 1960s, Arts had become established as the principal provider of graduate public administrators, even though departments had begun to ask for Economics and Law graduates in preference to those from the humanities. By 1970, the proportion of humanities-educated graduates entering the public service began to resemble current figures. Of 4,422

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93 For details on the expansion of graduate recruitment in the 1960s, see Commonwealth Public Service Board, Recruitment and Wastage of Graduates and Diplomates in the Commonwealth Service, Canberra, AGPS, 1970. By 1967, the Commonwealth employed approximately 10 per cent of the total output of 11,395 Australian university graduates, about 35 per cent of these being 'generalists'.

94 Committee of Inquiry into Public Service Recruitment, Report. Chair, R.J.F. Boyer. (Canberra: AGPS, 1959) (Boyer Report). Encel notes that, between 1934 and 1941, 67 graduates were admitted to the Public Service, out of 204 applicants - a number well below the prevailing quota of 10 per cent graduate recruitment. At the same time, several hundred new non-graduates were recruited into the Third Division. Encel notes that over half of this small number of graduate recruits had backgrounds in Arts. See Encel, 223-5.

95 Committee of Inquiry into Public Service Recruitment (Boyer Report) 30.
graduates recruited to the first three Divisions of the Commonwealth Public Service between 1961 and 1968, 37.2 per cent were humanities and social science graduates, with science graduates comprising 23.2 per cent and economics only 11.5 per cent.96

On the basis of this historical survey, it should be clear that there are significant disparities between the humanities' conceptions of their vocational role and the ways in which the vocational network surrounding the Arts faculty actually sprang up. Rather than being the product of a tradition, the kinds of exchanges occurring between the humanities and the public service were contingent and unpredictable, bearing little relation to the more global claims made for the vocational mission of liberal education.

iv. Concluding remarks.
We began this chapter by raising some questions about standard accounts of the social context and vocational outcomes of an education in the humanities. In developing our argument we have discovered that these accounts are far too wedded to moral principle to permit an appropriately empirical account of these matters. In the first place, we have discovered that, with regards to the issue of broader educational participation, the Arts faculty can neither be celebrated as a vehicle of cultural democracy nor denounced as a bastion of class privilege. The Arts faculty has made a limited but important contribution to the educational participation of previously non-scholastic social strata, through its role as a central instrument of government policy for

96 See Commonwealth Public Service Board, Recruitment and Wastage 4-6. Of 4,422 graduates recruited to the Public Service in this period, (the bulk of them in the A.C.T.) 1,648 were Arts graduates, 1,028 were from Science faculties, 511 from Economics, 419 from Engineering, and 313 from Medicine. In disciplines apart from Arts, the overwhelming majority of graduates recruited were men. During this period, Arts graduates were mostly recruited into the following areas, in order of frequency: Labour and National Service; Education and Science; the Public Service Board; the National Library; External Affairs; and the Statistical Branch of the Treasury.
an expanded tertiary sector. Second, we have discovered that there are good reasons for rejecting the notion of a traditional privileged relation between the humanities and the vocation of public leadership. The pathways that carry humanities graduates into the public sector are of recent construction and reflect personnel requirements rather than moral principles.

Clearly, if the unwarranted assumptions informing standard defences of the humanities are to be modified, it will be necessary to investigate the operation of those exchanges in a little more detail. That is the task of the fourth and final chapter of Part I. Here, we track the humanities graduate into the spheres of the private corporation and of public service employment. In this process, we begin to trace some mutually constitutive connections between humanities training and the various rationales, techniques and vocabularies which make up these vocational spheres.
CHAPTER FOUR: PERSONALITY AND PERSONNEL

i. Introduction.

We have established that, despite correspondences between employers' conceptions of desirable personal attributes and the capacities of flexibility and self-regulation possessed by humanities graduates, there are reasons to be cautious about claims to a direct correspondence between humanistic education and vocational outcomes. Exploring this disparity, we will find that there is a marked lack of fit between the ethos of the academy – with its models of the scholar, the critical thinker and the many-sided aesthete – and the norms used in graduate recruitment. For these reasons, it is necessary to describe the more specific and limited relations linking tertiary Arts training and the vocational sites that Arts graduates enter.

It is clear that humanities and social sciences graduates enter a significant range of vocational sites within the private sector. However, the connections between their higher education and the work that they do is far from direct. Employers' expectations and job-specific forms of assessment and training are often markedly different from the formative exercises of the Arts tutorial. In the process of graduate selection and retraining, the 'many-sided' aesthetic or rational personality is spread across a disparate range of statuses, acquiring many new attributes. This is especially marked in the private sector, where significant resources are devoted to retraining graduate staff. In BHP for example, 80 per cent of staff training and development is carried out on the

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job. Similarly, IBM has recently stated that 'being retrained is part of the culture of the organisation'.

This is not to say that those who recruit and train graduate personnel are unconcerned with individual differences: on the contrary, they often place surprising amounts of emphasis on 'personality'. For example, the academic qualifications of graduate recruits are usually taken only to indicate that 'they could learn and they have intelligence'. From the point of recruitment, management deploys its own programmes of personnel development, although employees are encouraged to 'own their personal performance and development plans'. This involves specialised exercises of self-scrutiny, although these are quite different from those of the Arts tutorial, building less on aesthetically-based self-reflection and more on a hybrid of psychologically-based management techniques. In some cases, these are formalised within 'self-assessment booklets' designed to facilitate work on the self:

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3 Dempster 5.
4 Marginson, in his interview-based comparison of universities' and graduate employers' expectations of graduates, notes that business places its highest priority on the following characteristics, in this order: communication skills; capacity to learn new skills; capacity for co-operation and teamwork; capacity to make decisions and solve problems; ability to apply knowledge to the workplace; capacity to work with minimum supervision, and so on. The priorities of universities were of a different order, giving 'theoretical knowledge in the professional field' the highest priority. S. Marginson, *Arts, Science and Work* (Canberra: Department of Employment, Education and Training, Higher Education Division, Evaluations and Investigations Program, 1993) 155.
5 Dempster 5.
6 Dempster 7.
In order to effectively focus on employee development you need to be concerned with the broad areas which define your self. They include; your priorities and interests ... your attitudes ... your skills ... your goals. When the self is defined and understood in these terms, you will be more able to plan your job, career and personal growth in an informed way.\textsuperscript{8}

In teacher training, there is a similar emphasis on reshaping the attributes developed in generalist courses, especially in the one-year Diplomas of Education undertaken by a significant proportion of Arts graduates. The 'general objectives' officially cited for teacher education include a strong emphasis on the need for exercises of self-examination and critical appraisal to be 'embedded' in the teacher.\textsuperscript{9} The prospective teacher is to know herself, to 'reach an explicit understanding of the values which guide behaviour and expectations'.\textsuperscript{10} In doing so, she will become an appropriate model of ethical self-reflection for children to emulate.\textsuperscript{11} But despite the resemblances between the norms applied to the trainee teacher and the humanities' exercises of structured self-scrutiny, the humanities graduate is not the teacher in embryo. The duties and competences of the teacher have their own specificity.

According to one blueprint, teachers must:

organise and manage effective learning situations for pupils ... participate as responsible members of a school's staff, the teaching profession and the community ... identify and relate significant theoretical knowledge and understanding to the kind of practical situations which will typically be met ... detect and to a limited extent, diagnose characteristic learning difficulties in students and, with guidance, select appropriate learning materials and strategies ... enter the teaching profession able and willing to sustain their own continuing professional growth and development.

\textsuperscript{8} Dempster 43.
\textsuperscript{10} Auchmuty Report 52.
\textsuperscript{11} Auchmuty Report 49.
... relate teaching and education to other dimensions of contemporary national and international life.\textsuperscript{12}

Similarly, within the public sector, there are some correspondences between the attribute-forming regimes of the Arts tutorial and descriptions of the characteristics required in public personnel. However, these exchanges are quite fluid and partial. The sense in which administrative training speaks of 'maximising the potential' of the generalist recruit is very different from the pedagogic ideals of the independent scholar, the critical thinker or the self-realising aesthetic personality. Here, for instance, is the listing of the 'core competencies' for senior Commonwealth Public Service officers, as defined in 1991:

* Understand and deal with context
* Achieve results
* Lead and manage people
* Manage change
* Demonstrate personal effectiveness.\textsuperscript{13}

Generalist graduates are recruited into the public service on the basis of their 'assessed general ability' and 'potential', rather than their scholastic disposition or aesthetic capacities. And once within the service, their performance is assessed within specialised normative grids.\textsuperscript{14} Instead of concentrating on forming the self, the recently employed graduate is to


occupy a clearly defined set of status-specific relations and is to perform a specific range of tasks. Through formalised processes of induction, supervision and retraining, she is enabled to enter the milieu of the workplace, and to undertake tasks such as drafting correspondence, acting as a minute secretary or personal assistant, co-ordinating conferences or workshops, and preparing material for reports and publications. This retraining is accompanied by elaborate injunctions for regulating habit:

Be methodical in your approach to any job ... give each task a thorough appraisal ... Study it until you understand it, then obtain any necessary background or relevant information ... take nothing for granted and check all information for accuracy... Ensure that all calculations are made very carefully... Set the problem out in logical steps then come to your conclusions and make your recommendations if these are required ... sort out your work into priorities, but let this be an indication of urgency rather than difficulty.

There is certainly a case to be made that the development of such work habits should require little adjustment from a good Arts graduate inured to scholarly work – a case which seems to be corroborated by the high number of Arts graduates within the middle range of the public service. Furthermore, many of the more humanist discussions of desirable qualities in senior public service personnel explicitly stress the value of liberal education. In such commentary, there is a strong emphasis on the distinction between mere training in management and regimes of 'real education', capable of forming conscientious and cultivated public servants. At the same time, however, there is a degree of vagueness about the means by which such persons are to be found. Ralph Chapman, for example, advocates that future executive public servants

should be exposed to good books or good music or any other study to enhance their capacity for wise

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16 Australian Public Service Board, Your Career Service (Canberra: AGPS, 1975) 7.
judgement, just before their admission into its ranks. On the other hand, before moving into middle management positions, those who are upwardly mobile must have undertaken courses in management techniques and leadership skills. By such combination of education and training ... individuals would become the fully rounded executive fulfilling the requirements of what Sir Frederick Wheeler called the Higher Public Service — "men and women with superior minds, superior educational attainments and with the motivation to pursue an onerous career involving much self-denial". 17

By contrast, John Uhr, while beginning from a similarly humanistic viewpoint, moves to a more pragmatic description of the means to 'stir the moral imagination'. 18 Such means are necessary, he argues, in order to realise Woodrow Wilson's vision of a civil service composed of 'public-spirited instruments of just government'. 19 As in Wilson's time, he argues, it is necessary to have a conception of ethics in public administration that goes beyond legal and quasi-legal prohibitions limiting impropriety, self-interest and partisan or political interference. Rather, programmes must install capacities of conscience and an ethic of true concern with public interest:

The bureaucrat is everywhere busy. His efficiency springs out of esprit de corps, out of care to make ingratiating obeisance to the authority of a superior, or, at best, out of the soil of a sensitive conscience. He serves, not the public but an irresponsible minister. The question for us is, how shall our series of governments be so administered that it shall always be to the interest

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19 Woodrow Wilson, 'The Study of Administration', 1887, cited in Uhr 112.
of the public officer to serve, not his superior alone but
the community also, with the best efforts of his talents
and the soberest advice of his conscience.²⁰

Uhr calls for the programmatic promotion of a professional ethos, one which incorporates the continuous conscientious exploration of 'the ethics inherent in everyday decision-making':

the ethical environment of everyday bureaucratic discretion in public policy, in which public officials translate government policy into effective programmes through their endless acts of advice, amendment, implementation, promotion and evaluation of public policies ... Such situations occur everyday, everywhere from the innermost sanctums of the most central agencies to the farthest reaches of street-level bureaucracies and line-operators ...²¹

But despite this insistence that public service work is constantly infused with ethical questions, it appears to be necessary to actually build this area of ethical expertise. And, in a statement indicative of the exercise in translation taking place, he suggests that the 'ethics cluster' may be located 'somewhere between narrow codes of conduct and broad works of literature'.²² Some idea of how such regimes might operate is provided in recommendations made by Peter Wilenski:

Acknowledge and have administrators acknowledge their power and the fact that exercise of that power requires choices to be made on the basis of personal values each and every working day ... what are the legitimate values in different circumstances and how are specific value choices to be justified? As a first step we might well require administrators to be far more explicit about their value premises and the implications of their decisions.²³

²⁰ Wilson, cited in Uhr 109.
²¹ Uhr 110.
²² Uhr 116.
Clearly, it would be a mistake to read these programmes as direct installations of humanistic models of self-reflection. Ethical ideals of character and conscience are not simply piped in from the academy to sweeten the air in the office. However, they do enter the workplace as disciplined forms of conduct, through quite regular mechanisms, and in relation to pragmatic problems.24

ii. Refining the generalist.

A key instance of this is provided by the protocols and vocabularies developed within the area of personnel policy itself. Until recently, one of the predominant influences within personnel policy has been the kind of humanistic programmes described by Uhr and Wilenski. Over the past three decades, these programmes have reshaped the existing career service ethos, through the promotion of professional self-development, often exemplified in the figure of the liberally-educated generalist graduate, with her well-developed capacity for self-reflection.

This emphasis on self-reflection and self-shaping is evident in staff developmental material such as that from the Personnel Management Manual – a nine-volume set of guidelines which, until recent reforms took effect, outlined the standard protocols of decision-making in personnel areas such as staff selection, appraisal and promotion. Staff appraisal reports, it was stated, should be 'objective', in the sense that they are directly observable, linked with work results and require no interpretation of 'deeper' qualities of staff members.25 The means to this end was routine and formalised self-

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reflection. The successful officer was depicted as capable of performing particular exercises of self-scrutiny, drawing up an internal balance-sheet of personal strengths and weaknesses. In some departments, the assessee was required to fill out an interview preparation form which tabulated and formalised this self-interrogation, requiring assessee to ask themselves

(i) What have I done best or with greatest satisfaction and why?
(ii) What have I done least well or with least satisfaction and why?  

In turn, the interviewing officers were required to perform their own exercises of self-reflection, scrutinising their personal capacity to locate individual difference within a consistent set of norms. Normative terms such as 'skill, care, diligence and impartiality' provided a grid on which to inscribe various forms of irregularity and reformulate that conduct. Specific problems of conduct were located – from poor supervision to discriminatory selection procedures or sexual harassment – and joint mechanisms of scrutiny and self-evaluation were deployed to adjust them. Through such means, the ethos of the workplace becomes the point of translation for the ethical norms of 'government' in a wider sense – a sense which includes wider social strategies such as those for eliminating discrimination or installing affirmative action programmes.

Although these protocols of personnel management are far removed from the forms of personal introspection used currently within the academy, they do indicate the extent to which humanistic techniques of self-scrutiny, ethical

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26 APSB, 'Design and Implementation' 43.
27 APSB, 'Design and Implementation' 19.
adjustment and person-formation have been transposed and translated into the
register of government. Nevertheless, to assume that the humanities alone
could provide the ideal attributes of the public servant is to underestimate the
complexity of the normative expectations established within the developing
personnel policy of the 'career service'.

An historical example will serve to make the point. Let me turn briefly to an
uncelebrated article from 1957, written in the burgeoning field of the study of
administration. The article, by Arthur R. Meadows, describes the 'personal
qualifications' required in an executive. The example – an early equivalent of
modern personnel documents – indicates the extent to which the model of the
liberally educated civil servant has been altered by the entry of social
psychological expertise. It offers a set of diagnostic norms on which aspiring
executives are invited to plot their own deficiencies. Superior executives, it is
noted, see themselves as 'energetic, loyal, kind, planful, clear-thinking,
enterprising, progressive, poised, steady, appreciative, responsible', and do
not see themselves as 'noisy, affected, shallow, unstable, nervous,
opinionated, self-pitying'. Inferior executives see themselves as 'ambitious,
dependable, jolly, resourceful, efficient, intelligent, thrifty, ingenious,
sociable, good-natured, reliable'. They do not see themselves as 'arrogant,
moody, stingy, frivolous, intolerant, pessimistic, hard-hearted'. For those
who are unable to recognise themselves in these subtle differentiations, the
implications are spelt out more fully:

The good executive sees himself as active and
purposeful, he puts his job and his company in the
forefront, views his job as a whole rather than a series
of assigned tasks, feels he must exercise some
independence of thought and action. He sees himself as
respecting the rights and dignity of others but is
somewhat reserved. He considers himself to be stable
with evenness of temperament and worthy of the respect
and confidence of others. The overall impression is one
of maturity and calmness.
The most outstanding self-perception of the poor executive is his "good fellow approach" to human relations. He desires to be well liked, but does not show any need to understand and respect others. His chief concern is to make the right impression. His narrow approach is emphasised by his desire to be highly skilled in carrying out instructions. Rather than lead others, he relies on his own ingenuity and intelligence to complete a job. He is self-orientated rather than job-firm-orientated. He believes, however, that he possesses qualities that management could well use to advantage.²⁹

Here, at the point where the modern technology of personnel policy emerges, we find the co-existence of aesthetic and psychological techniques of self-shaping. Far from bureaucracy being stripped bare of humanistic or ethical considerations, hybrids of aesthetically and psychologically-based techniques of person-formation proliferate in its undergrowth. This is certainly ironic, given popular complaints about the 'impersonality' of bureaucracy. Even more ironically, it appears that bureaucratic concern with personality and personal evaluation is so well-established that, over the past decade, a great deal of administrative effort has actually been put into limiting its influence, preventing decisions about personnel from being made on the basis of assumptions about 'character' and 'potential'. Here, the problem is one common to institutionalised assessment systems: that of giving adequate attention to differences in employees' performance, while producing comparable norms applicable across a range of statuses and a large number of employees.

In the 1982 Personnel Management Manual, for instance, nearly all federal departments made strong statements concerning the inequity and impossibility of assessing an individual's 'personality' or 'potential'.³⁰ At this point, apart from the Department of Foreign Affairs, which still maintained an emphasis


on impressions of 'personal characteristics' and on appraisal of the 'whole person', many departments noted that personalised norms of assessment were being replaced with 'performance-based factors'. Since then, Australian public administration has been extensively remodelled by systems of performance-based appraisal, closely linked to new managerial programmes.

These policy moves have generally been understood in terms of the effects of 'corporate managerialism' and of the 'colonisation' of the career service by economics graduates and business management specialists, concerned only with private sector models of efficiency. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest that the degree of open-endedness remaining within performance-based appraisal systems using norms such as 'analytical ability', 'decisiveness' and 'communication' may indicate that the humanist principles

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31 It should be noted that Foreign Affairs has a history of quite different systems and norms of graduate recruitment from that of other departments. As early as 1954, H.A. Scarrow noted that External Affairs (as it was then entitled) was the only department in the public service 'in which a university degree per se is specifically valued and in which a broad cultural background is preferred to narrow specialisation'. See H.A. Scarrow, 'Further Comments Upon the Recruitment of University Graduates to the Commonwealth Public Service', Public Administration XIII (1954): 172.


vested in older schemes of personal evaluation have a strong residual presence.\textsuperscript{34}

What appears to have occurred within the implementation of personnel policy is a process of adjusting existing vocabularies and protocols, modifying them in relation to alternate programmatic schema. As in the 1940s and 1950s, the residual model of the liberally educated public servant provides a flexible alternative to that of the professionally trained administrator. This is a tension played out even in the most celebrated and controversial example of the 'new managerialism' – the reform of the highest-ranking administrative echelon, now re-titled the Senior Executive Service (or SES).\textsuperscript{35}

Installed in Australia by the Public Service Reform Act of 1984, the SES reforms were adapted from American private sector models. The scheme is designed to develop norms of selection, mobility and development which are to be quite different from traditional public service norms of 'programmatic knowledge and skill'.\textsuperscript{36} Characterising existing personnel procedures as laborious and unwieldy, 'seeking a rule to offer in every eventuality', these programmes emphasise a more streamlined range of policy objectives.\textsuperscript{37} Executives' skills and competitiveness are to be built through continual mobility and reassignment, as well as through explicit and complex systems of performance appraisal. These programmes are to be developed, it is announced, through the entry of a 'rather different type of person into the

\textsuperscript{34} Australian Public Service Board, 'Staff Appraisal Schemes' 10.

\textsuperscript{35} Public Service Commission Advisory Committee.


personnel area' – one trained in techniques able to produce 'measurability in human resources' and 'hard evidence of performance.' Since this time, the executive's performance has been assessed according to tabular 'objective assessment criteria': norms such as 'human relation skills', 'negotiation/conflict resolution', 'representing and liaising', 'leadership', 'interpersonal skills', 'strategic view', 'conceptual and analytical skills', 'creative skills', 'adaptability and flexibility', and 'achievement orientation'.

These programmes may have had rather less impact than predicted – particularly in regard to open recruitment, job mobility and participation in training. Nevertheless, they have generated a significant degree of protest, partly because of their erosion of industrial conditions through the introduction of contracts, performance pay and merit pay, and partly due to the values of 'neutral competence' that have been ascribed to them. These values, it is argued, bear little relationship to either the humanistic ethos of the pre-existing career service or to more progressive goals of improved political responsiveness and accountability.

We have already seen an instance of this in Pusey's denunciation of the professional ethos which makes senior public service committed to giving priority to technical and procedural considerations rather than to personal values or principle. We are now in a position to return to that account.

38 Baker 13.
39 N. Cherry, Appraisal: How to Kill It and How to Make it Work (Canberra: AGPS, 1989) 15.
41 Renfrow 'An Assessment' 8-13.
42 Renfrow 'An Assessment' 6.
iii. The imperatives of office.

Pusey's account of the infection of Australian higher education and public administration by economic rationalism is in fact one of the more detailed of recent accounts of bureaucracy as an ethical zone and as a field of person-forming practices. But the descriptive yield in the material is limited by factors which undermine the usefulness of the empirical case study. One factor is the presumption that officers' opinions come directly from their social backgrounds and academic training, as evidenced only by patterns of recruitment. Another involves some standard problems with the interview-based methodology used.43

Pusey, it will be recalled, sets out to demonstrate the conservatism of today's Senior Executive Service officers by means of questionnaires and interviews. Gauging senior officers' position on various political questions, he finds that these senior officers have little or no commitment to central government and state intervention, oppose unionism and support free market economics.44 They are preoccupied with economic, utilitarian and technical concerns, at the expense of broader social principles. Furthermore, they deny that their professional work is shaped by personal values or principles, insisting instead that the protocols of their professional lives are politically neutral.

43 The project largely scorns the 'positivist' protocols of avoiding subjective elements in the design and interpretation of questions, opting instead to 'allow the structure of the sample and of the interviews, to do the work of defining and in a non-empirical sense, of "representing" what is happening'. One result of this is that, although many of the political and ethical questions posed are very complex, responses which are not couched in the terms of humanist sociology become characterised as ones which assent to a 'classically technocratic and positivistic view'. Pusey 70.

44 These include such questions as their position on the deregulation of the Australian dollar and of the Australian capital and financial markets, their judgements about the distribution of GDP, their attitude to unions and their attitude to the deregulation of the labour market. Pusey 44.
These responses are taken as symptoms of a more fundamental problem: a rejection of the key values of the social democratic 'people-serving' state.\textsuperscript{45}

For Pusey, the most disturbing characteristic of the senior public servants interviewed was their tendency to draw distinctions between their personal commitments and their adherence to bureaucratic procedure. The conservatism of the young 'econocrats' is demonstrated, for instance, by their preparedness to agree with the interviewer's proposition that in contemporary affairs 'it is desirable that technical considerations be given more weight than political factors'.\textsuperscript{46} Even more telling, for him, are their responses to questions asking them to weigh the respective role of principles, values and technical considerations in the performance of bureaucratic work. Asked whether there are times when the technical concerns of government predominate over value and principle, most respondents agree that there are.

For Pusey, this spells moral bankruptcy:

\begin{quote}
our respondents are not just saying that coherent government is such a complex matter that it needs some buffering from the knee-jerk reactions of politicians: they are also bolting the door against the sort of value commitments – to social justice and to participatory democracy – that underpin the welfare state and ... pluralist-progressiver, social-democratic politics.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

'Facts', it seems, must not be separated from values, and nor must one renounce the imperative to make the operational norms and technical calculation of government completely consonant with 'value' and 'principle' – either the values installed in the ethical codes of bureaucratic conduct, or the principles espoused in the democratic discourse applied within sociological studies of bureaucracy.

\textsuperscript{45} Pusey 44.
\textsuperscript{46} Pusey 125.
\textsuperscript{47} Pusey 125.
But the issue of how to understand these answers goes beyond the obvious methodological one of whether the interviewer is simply refusing to recognise the obtained responses if they are not couched in the terms of humanist sociology. A more important problem is a lack of attention to the ethical and intellectual components of bureaucratic life. For instance, little consideration is given to the fact that the respondents' comments are made when occupying the persona attached to a particular status, that of a senior public servant, inducted into the ethos of bureaucratic decision-making and the protocols of administering these decisions. The account quite fails to conceive of a separation between what individuals' might say and do in their capacity as public servants and their conduct in other social capacities. Yet the ethos of the bureau itself establishes a particular ethical ordering here.

At points, Pusey does mention the 'person-forming' effect of bureaucratic *habitus*, referring for instance to the way in which shared responsibility can build the norms of professional life, including those of loyalty to colleagues and commitment to the work in hand. But this is interpreted as 'compliance' with the instrumental norms of the workplace, which cannot allow the full flower of personality to open. The bureaucratic sphere excludes the 'whole person':

> Policy-making, top management and higher administration are labels that we apply to a form of work in which the individual's total consciousness (and unconsciousness) – knowledge, "ideas", values, and attitudes – are turned into what these actors themselves recognise as another more impersonal and objectified universe of policies, formal structures and organisational processes.

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48 While the possible effect of years of service on public servants' attitudes is mentioned, such descriptions of the effect of 'place and structure' are dismissed as functionalist, being unable to incorporate a full sense of the dialectical tension between structure and agency. Pusey 77.

49 Pusey 68.
Read against the grain, however, Pusey's material can be read to suggest some of the more complex aspects of bureaucratic ethos and instruments. In the respondents' wary reactions to the interviewers' questions concerning the day-to-day business of 'weighing technical considerations against political factors', we can gain some sense of the complexity of the bureaucratic ethos, and of its distinctive combination of the intellectual, the technical and the ethical.

Interviewees were asked to respond to a series of statements, such as the proposition that 'there are times when the technical concerns of government predominate over value and principle'. Most respondents agreed that there were. Similarly, we have seen that, most agreed that in contemporary affairs 'it is desirable that technical considerations be given more weight than political factors'. These are complex political and ethical propositions – and it is worth noting that more often than not, respondents agreed or disagreed with certain statements only 'with reservations'. Although we learn very little about the reservations which these senior social administrators might have had about a hard and fast answer to the propositions put to them, it is clear that, for many of them, the day-to-day business of weighing technical considerations against political factors was quite a complex matter. Some in fact identify themselves as 'administrative intellectuals':

if we then confront them with what we might take to be their own admission, namely that they are, by this reckoning, high "technocrats" whose work "mainly involves the application of higher expert – technical – value-free knowledge to particular problems" only just under a quarter of them will agree, and the others will say this is not an appropriate description... [they] say that it is their intellectual breadth and their broad analytical skills which distinguish them from the "technocrats", whoever they may be. So here... the

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50 Pusey 125.
SES want to stress the intellectual character of their work... 51

Indeed, even as he objects to the arbitrary and normative nature of policy goals, Pusey does suggest something of the intricacy of the 'machinery of government':

What counts, further, is the speed, elegance and agility with which one can create a purely formal and transcontextual commensurability of reference across goals that are then treated as the objects of decisions that will be made on extrinsic criteria ever further removed from real tasks and situations52

Pusey refuses to recognise bureaucratic work as 'principled' reform, since the targets are too limited to come within the scope of intellectual critique. Even while it is acknowledged that governmental programmes depend upon a process of translating social or political goals into the norms and targets of governmental programmes, the assumption is that such processes of translation are necessarily sinister. But is it really possible to imagine programs of social reform which do not rely on setting goals and targets and making them the objects of decisions? Neither social democratic nor 'conservative' political forces would be able to govern without recourse to abstract and formalising instruments of government, whether statistical, demographic, economic or sociological. And it is hard to conceive of any programme of equity-related social reform that could dispense with means to identify goals and objects of decisions, without making use of formal means to establish 'commensurability of reference'.

Surely a routine part of bureaucratic work is the creation of categories of need or performance that could be applied across an often scattered array of sites,

51 Pusey 71.
52 Pusey 11 [emphasis in original].
practices and statuses. While the norms, inscriptions and targets used by social administration might be more or less sensitive to particular cases and contexts, they are necessarily formal and abstract. In what way, then, is it useful to criticise social administration for using abstract, formal and systematic procedures or for conducting itself within the ethos of disinterest? To put the question another way, is it realistic to suggest the possibility that the criteria used in social administration could be organic to 'real tasks and situations'? This is equivalent to imagining modern government without statistics, censuses and demographic information – or any other of the instruments and techniques on which the organisation of modern life has relied since the great bureaucratic achievements of seventeenth century government.

We will return to the point in subsequent chapters. But for now, what we can observe is that government involves processes that are both intellectual and technical, both ethical and instrumental – and that social administration involves kinds of training and conduct which are in many ways quite distinct from both democratic discourse and the ethos of cultural criticism. For these reasons, bureaucratic decision-making is far too complex to be dismissed in the sweeping terms currently offered by critique.

iv. Personnel and programmatic purposes.

Already, we have begun to locate some points of exchange between the formative environment of the 'critical academy' and the vocational sphere of public administration. These exchanges are mundane and pragmatic, with far less 'moral' import attached to them than critical intellectuals might wish to believe. Nevertheless, observing them provides us with a more concrete conception of the vocational role of the humanities, and of the ethical constitution of the bureau. Some clarification of the latter point is provided
by Martin Painter, who depicts current debates on performance and efficiency as 'many-sided', arguing that it is quite possible for different and equally 'principled' arguments to co-exist and be effective programmatically.\(^{53}\) Making this point within a more general argument on the problem of the relationship between the formulation of administrative principles and the conditions of their implementation, he argues that, within the history of Australian public administration, the implementation of institutionalised values such as equity and efficiency has involved constant redefinition, as policy principles are reshaped by contingent demands and pressures. Policy is depicted as made up of continual balances and compromises between 'multiple and often conflicting values'.

Painter describes the current promotion of administrative models of efficiency, which he notes are drawn largely from the management models developed in private industry:\(^{54}\)

"results management" is the clarion call of the "new managerialism". Managers are called on to draw up corporate plans, "manage by objectives", and engage in program budgeting. The "model" organisation is no longer one that puts primary emphasis on control, task specification and supervision, but one which devolves responsibility to achieve agreed objectives, and monitors performance through evaluation based on indicators of output as well as input.\(^{55}\)

He goes on to argue, however, that this 'bureaucratic cultural revolution' has involved the joint adoption of both a 'managerialist philosophy' and of more 'humanistic' elements, including what Anna Yeatman has described as a 'growing attachment to individuality, personal autonomy and self-consciousness', which 'leads people to think critically about the personal,


\(^{54}\) Painter 79-80.

\(^{55}\) Painter 88.
social, and political implications of their work.56 This latter tendency, Painter argues, sits uneasily with the more technocratic orientation of some aspects of the 'new managerialism'. He further cites Wilenski's argument that:

The message of the business management texts is clear: hard times demand a complex and subtle blend of qualities – of self-knowledge and determination, of creativity, flexibility, intuitive decision-making and a nurturing disposition – rather than the ruthless simplicity of a Rambo or a Gordon Gekko.57

Stressing that strategies often have effects that are contingent and unexpected, Painter warns against the tendency to read the history of public administration as 'a simple tale of development and progress'.58 These new programmes of efficiency and performance appraisal, he suggests, could well result in new forms of control rather than improved autonomy, but they could also lead to improved focus on 'human resource development, client responsiveness, industrial democracy, and more collaborative, participative structures of decision-making'.59 While the first result may be the more likely, he stresses, this is due to contingent circumstances such as a political context of public concern with waste and inefficiency in the public sector, rather than with a necessary and inevitable triumph of 'managerial' over 'humanist' principles:60

58 Cf. the outline of the various co-existing options in personnel policy in Baker 1-2. These include the options of basing reforms on reviews of existing practices; on models drawn from comparative studies of Westminster-based systems of public administration in other Commonwealth countries; on those drawn from comparative studies of the non-Westminster systems; on those developed in the form of theoretical constructs and abstract principles; and on those derived from the 'best of private sector resource management'.
60 Painter 90.
The new managerialism is not simply a step forward, and future steps will not necessarily be along the same path. It is likely to result in a new set of distortions to the efficiency principle, and in structures and procedures that will, in turn, need to be overturned. Values that are not emphasised in the current wave of reform will be re-asserted at a later date ... this opens the way for a further round of debate and conflict over a diverse set of values, rather than simply being a tool for the pursuit of efficiency.\textsuperscript{61}

From this perspective, it is less easy to dismiss the emphasis on 'personal development' within new managerial policy proposals as being merely cynical or self-interested. Just as arguments on promotion by seniority are equally as 'principled' as arguments on the need for equity and mobility, so the 'new managerialism' is as concerned with building 'ethos' and 'culture' as the older-style personnel programmes of the 'career service'. This is partly because the techniques and vocabularies drawn on in new programmes for installing ethical habits or building an 'organisational culture' are unlikely to be entirely new. The process of translation between a new and an established vocabulary is clear enough in programmatic descriptions of the exemplary executive. Eschewing the older model of 'management', now associated with the mundanity of mastering routines and insisting on efficiency, the executive is to find within herself the ethical qualities of 'vision' and 'judgement'.\textsuperscript{62} In appraisal processes that 'can empower you and energise you as a person', she is required to internalise exercises of self-scrutiny, modelling her own performance and capacities against that of the ideal 'leader':\textsuperscript{63}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Managers} are people whose focus is on doing things right.
\textit{Leaders} are people whose focus is on doing the right thing.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{61} Painter 93.
\textsuperscript{62} Baker 18.
\textsuperscript{63} Cherry 2.
\textsuperscript{64} Baker 17 (emphasis in original).
\end{flushleft}
In this way, in both the public and the private sector, the residual technologies of humanist person-formation are adopted and translated into different programmes, which are equally psychologised and equally imbued with techniques of ethical self-formation, but which emphasise measurable performance rather than character or potential. Deploying an amalgam of techniques, these newer programmes draw on the diagnostic and classificatory methods used in psychologically-based management courses as well as on social science-based techniques of tabulation and on humanistic regimes of emulation, correction and self-cultivation. Flexibly combined, these intellectual technologies provide the means to connect forms of self-government with the administrative objectives of conduct, efficiency and equity. Such schema make it possible for particular kinds of conduct to become personally as well as institutionally desirable, linking the self-actualisation of the worker with the advancement of the company or department.

Through such practices, it is possible to build the 'ethical environment of everyday bureaucratic discretion', as Uhr puts it.

These observations certainly do not provide grounds for the claim that humanistic education has a unique and irreplaceable role in forming public servants. But they do indicate the extent to which humanistic education is

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67 Uhr 116.
routinely connected to public administration and its routines. These connections take two interrelated forms. In one, humanistically-trained graduates enter the public service in large numbers, adjusting and reworking at least some of the habits, capacities and attributes that their academic training has developed. And in another less direct kind of exchange, such graduates provide some of the key elements of the programmatic schema that shape the sphere of public administration itself, translating into a different register the political vocabularies, ethical techniques and rhetorical formulations developed in the academy. While these are partial and contested exchanges, they do exemplify the constant and reciprocal nature of interchanges between the academy and administration.

v. Conclusion.

This exploration of one of the vocational arenas attached to the Arts faculty has provided us with a particular instance of the routine connections between the Arts faculty and areas of social administration. At the same time, it has also exemplified the partial and piecemeal nature of such connections, which are far from resembling grand and global antagonisms between liberal education and utilitarianism, or between culture and utility. Such rhetorical formulations bear little relationship to the demographic or historical composition of this sector of the public education sphere. Instead, it has been argued that the Australian faculty of Arts is only one component within a widespread governmental network, including elements as diverse as an expanding school system and a reorganised system of public service recruitment.

Through a review of three main areas, we began to map the field on which it is possible to locate the pedagogic, social and vocational effects of the humanities. This field, it has been argued, is made up of regular and
reciprocal exchanges between the academy and social administration. These exchanges are of two kinds. The first is a demographic and vocational connection, traced through the exits and entrances of a university-educated population, in and out of various social institutions. The other is a programmatic connection, as particular forms of training provide points of translation between the intellectual technologies of the academy and the rationality of governmental programmes such as those for monitoring participation or forming conscientious public personnel. On the one hand, the pedagogic regimes of the humanities have adjusted to a range of demographic shifts and vocational connections, linking the university to a governmental network. On the other hand, governmental regimes and rationales are by no means independent of the expertise provided by the humanities. If the liberal arts faculty has been partially 'governmentalised' in adjusting to the requirements of social administration, so the sphere of government has been 'liberalised' to some extent, through the adoption of the expertise and ethical regimes developed within the Arts faculty.68 At the same time, it would be a mistake to treat these exchanges as smooth or inevitable, on the one hand, or dialectical and contradictory on the other. Such models fail to take account of the partial and delimited nature of such interchanges, which are actually a matter of minute practical adjustments in the mechanisms of translation between very different registers.69

Mapping these connections is unlikely to provide a unified conception of the social function and rationale for the modern Australian humanities. But even


this preliminary investigation of the 'outcomes' of academic training in the humanities provides some correctives to the prevailing global and oppositional rhetoric applied to the workings and effects of what is, after all, a large and complex sector of the higher education system. But having charted these specific kinds of exchanges, we can begin to locate more limited, intelligible and useful grounds on which to assess the social role of the humanities and on which to describe the flexibility and limitations of the modes of person-formation assembled within Australian faculties of Arts.
PART II

CITIZENSHIP AND COMPETENCE
CHAPTER FIVE: BUREAUCRATIC AMBITIONS

i. Introduction.

In 1991, a leading expert in youth welfare announced that Australian education was about to be reshaped by a new 'coalition of industrial and political forces' set on 'shaking the established educational world to its foundations in its search for a "productive and flexible culture"'. According to John Freeland, the nation was 'closer to the possibility of developing ... democratic and vocationally relevant education than at any other time in our history'.1 The occasion for this comment was the release of a report entitled Young People's Participation in Post-compulsory Education, produced by the Australian Education Council and commonly known as the Finn Report.2 Along with the Mayer and Carmichael Reports,3 this is one of a series of policy documents designed to reform Australian post-compulsory education.4 The reforms are built on the notion of 'pathways' provided by a new system

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of credentialling linking schools, Technical and Further Education (TAFE), private training institutions and workplaces within the one national training system. This new system of credentialling is based on the assessment of individuals' possession of 'Key Competencies' regarded as essential for participation in the workplace.

The Key Competencies comprise the core component of the proposed Australian Vocational Certificate Training system. Under the proposed programme, credentials would no longer reflect the number or duration of courses that an individual has taken. Instead, they would assemble information on the skills or knowledge possessed by the student, no matter where these capacities were learned. The Mayer committee has suggested the adoption of a 'nationally consistent approach to assessment', providing a uniform method of certification and a means to register national levels of skill. This would involve developing a common and nationally-consistent format for records of performance. The new Australian Vocational Certificate is conceived as sitting beside the existing assessment schemes of the various States, with a database of information on levels of competency being compiled from the assessment records maintained within the various State-based assessment schemes, by means of statistical sampling. This database, it is suggested, could also provide information on the educational

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6 Finn Report 1-14.
7 Mayer Report 1.
8 Such proposals are by no means new. See R. Harris, 'Spring or Indian Summer: Competency-based Approaches in Australian Postsecondary Education', Australian Journal of Adult Education 22.2 (1982): 3-11, which suggests the use of 'competencies' in TAFE-based assessments of skill. See also C. Parkinson, 'The Role and Purpose of Education in Australia: The Challenges for TAFE and Training', Youth Studies and Abstracts 7.3 (1988): 17-19.
10 Mayer Report 37.
performance of equity 'target groups', as a means to 'determine the extent of
disadvantage and to monitor the effectiveness of programmes intended to
redress inequalities'.\textsuperscript{11}

Profiles based on the common norms of the Key Competencies would be
nationally portable across schools, workplaces and training institutions,
bypassing local and State-based differences in education systems and
providing 'some common language, some common framework of description
of outcomes that can operate in all education and training institutions and in
the workplace'.\textsuperscript{12} The assessment of common 'competencies' would provide
a means to build these pathways, enabling individuals to move between
schools, training sites and workplaces throughout the country, while
providing employers with reliable information on the capacities of prospective
employees and on educational standards. Running from school to the
university and on to the professions, or from school through vocational
training to university, these 'pathways', it is hoped, would streamline the
public education system, providing a choice-based system of transport
through it. Such at least is the objective.

The ambitious nature of this reform scheme should not be underestimated.
Even the design of an integrated training programme of this scope represents
a considerable governmental achievement, entailing an unprecedented degree
of co-ordination between the education bureaucracies, employers, industry
bodies, unions and professional associations, as well as between federal and
State governments.\textsuperscript{13} Its construction has depended on at least a decade of

\textsuperscript{11} Mayer Report 39.
\textsuperscript{12} Mayer Report 95.
\textsuperscript{13} See ACTU/TDC Mission to Western Europe, \textit{Australia Reconstructed: A Report
by the Mission Members to the ACTU and TDC} (Canberra: AGPS, 1987) for a
seminal discussion of the need for such co-ordination.
concerted administrative effort on the part of a number of bodies. As a key component of a major reform of workplace training and industrial relations, it is one of the most ambitious and long-term governmental programmes of the postwar period. If the programme is implemented as proposed, then it will require Australian education and training to transform itself from within, a feat that will require considerable flexibility. The exercise has already begun to develop the musculature of the education system, as various parts strain against one another.

Although the building of a national system of training and credentialling has been in development for many years, these strenuous exercises have largely been conducted away from the public eye. More recently, however, the release of the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports has sparked fierce public debate on the implications of the competency proposals and of their likely impact on the school system, on the problems of young people, on social distribution and on social justice. In the process, a significant gap has opened up between the expectations of the 'critical academy' and the ambitions of the education bureaucracy and the various stakeholders consulted by it.

These are some of the developments that we will be addressing in the following four chapters of Part II. The present chapter sets itself the task of describing the complexities of the bureaucratic reform scheme, giving some indication of the kinds of expectations attending its construction and of the range of responses to the reforms. Following this, Chapter Six addresses

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some of the difficulties that 'critical' academic responses to the reforms have encountered, in their efforts to apply 'principled' analyses to the programme. Here, it is argued that these principled analyses both expect too much and too little of government. In their concern with the opposition between the principled and the instrumental, they fail to perceive the rarity and fragility of the instruments available to government. By the same token, they fail to appreciate the complexity of the kinds of co-ordination and negotiation entailed in articulating and implementing bureaucratic ambitions of this kind.

This point is pursued in Chapter Seven, which describes the dense and overgrown terrain that provides the site for the construction of the proposed national assessment programme. This chapter surveys the field of existing practices and programmes in school assessment, describing the tangled root systems of pedagogic commitments and institutional arrangements that the reforms will have to reshape. This survey is offered as a corrective to the prevailing 'critical' tendency to underestimate the technical, ethical and political complexity of the bureaucratic ambitions propelling the reform of post-compulsory education. Finally, in Chapter Eight, I provide a brief genealogy of these bureaucratic ambitions, placing the formation of 'schooling for national purposes' in the context of governmental imperatives that have shaped the management of the Australian education system since at least the turn of this century. This genealogy provides a number of lessons for those critics who assess the education system against its capacity to realise absolute principles vested in human rights and potential. Such expectations, I argue, exhibit little sense of the historical achievements entailed in the establishment of mass education, of commonality in education provision and of equity-based education policy.
ii. Pathways to equality.

Let us turn then to current expectations of the reform of Australian education. These expectations have polarised into utopian hopes and dystopian fears. For John Freeland, for instance, the new complex of 'pathways' through the education system represents the promise of realising some long-standing social democratic goals. With the new flexibility opened up by the assessment of competencies, he argues, improved educational access and equal opportunity will become achievable. The programme will make it possible for individuals to be assessed on the basis of what they can actually do, rather than on the strength of paper qualifications. Recognition will be given to 'prior learning' and to previously 'uncredentialled' skills and occupations, removing existing barriers to a 'more genuinely meritocratic labour market'. Most importantly, for him, the programme presents a chance to break the long hold of the universities upon the school system. Significantly for our argument, Freeland associates the hegemony of the university with a familiar (and in his view unhelpful) set of ethical oppositions between the liberal and the vocational, the human and the technical:

These untenable distinctions have been the essential foundation for both the conservative lobby which seeks to preserve the privileged position of select forms of knowledge, and the liberal progressives of the 1970s who sought the development of education in its own right. The divisions have thwarted every attempt to introduce a comprehensive curriculum into Australian schooling systems. They continue to give a false legitimacy to the notion that a high level of abstract mathematical knowledge is an essential characteristic of an educated person and an essential life skill, when in fact the vast majority of educated people get by quite well with just the rudimentary mathematical skills.15

Freeland sees these oppositions as the disguised reflection of a socially and vocationally differentiated education system that requires reform. In place of

15 Freeland, Dislocated Transitions: 220.
a system split between the academic and the non-academic, the liberal and the vocational, it will be possible to develop forms of schooling suited to the whole population, while offering enough commonality in education provision to promote a meritocratic system of access to prestigious destinations via the universities. In this way, the competencies programme promises to reconcile the mental with the manual and the academic with the vocational – a goal long promoted by social democratic bodies such as the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Not only this, it promises to converge with parallel campaigns for democratic reform in the adjacent sphere of industrial relations.

In expressing this hope, Freeland speaks as a participant in the process, having been engaged as an academic consultant on equity and disadvantaged youth to the committees formulating both the Finn and Carmichael Reports. From this perspective, he urges progressivist educators to give pragmatic support to the competency programmes, in the interests of forming 'a new integrated provisional settlement in the conflicts over macro-economic, industry, labour market and educational policies':

There is a peculiar coincidence of interests between progressive democratic educators, those seeking greater equity in labour market access, participation and returns and those seeking a fundamental restructuring of the economy based on the principles of co-operative tripartite

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16 As instances of this liberal democratic tradition, Freeland cites the Transition Education Program and the Participation and Equity Program of the 1980s. In his account, these established a broadened perspective on the educational needs of an expanded population, enabling the political left to make alliances based on support for a vocationally relevant curriculum. But these were uneasy compromises between the liberal progressive emphasis on pluralism and school-based reform. More recent reforms, including the 1985 Blackburn Report in Victoria and efforts associated with the Victorian Certificate of Education, promise to put into place a 'democratic progressive' set of educational principles building on local and central reform initiatives, with both core and optional curriculum components. See Freeland, 'Education and Training' 74; Victoria, Ministry of Education, Ministerial Review of Postcompulsory Schooling Chair, J. Blackburn (Melbourne: Ministry of Education, 1985) (Blackburn Report). On the effects of the Blackburn report and the Victorian Certificate of Education, see J. Cuming, 'Blackburn Report: Battleship or Tugboat?', The Victorian Teacher June (1985): 11-13; K. Cove, 'The Links Between Schools, TAFE and the VCE', Education Victoria 5.5 (1990): 8-10.

17 Freeland 'Education and Training' 85.
planning. Aligned against these interests are the educational conservatives and radical free marketeers seeking to structure education, the labour market and industry on models thrown up by theoretically rugged neoclassical ideology.18

As it turns out, commentators have not aligned themselves so neatly. A number of prominent progressivist educationists and critics have publicly opposed the competency reforms in the strongest terms.19 For Paige Porter, Bob Lingard and Fazil Rizvi, for instance, the programme represents the latest in a line of regressive bureaucratic interventions in the education system, one motivated merely by economic objectives and serving only the interests of industry and the economic rationalists who have overtaken public policy. These commentators greeted the competency proposals as 'the most systematic attempt ever seen to restructure education provision in Australia around a set of principles which are fundamentally governed by an economic discourse':

What is being proposed is a new vocationalism, a new way of viewing the relation between education, training and work. In ways that are unprecedented in Australia's

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18 Freeland 'Education and Training' 86.
history, educational and industrial relations issues and components are being brought together in the language of skill training. Competencies are constructed as a unifying principle which will pull together the microeconomic reform and industrial relations components of the solution to Australia’s economic malaise. In our view, the most disturbing aspect of this agenda is its essentialism, which reifies Australia’s economic context. There is no role left for competing constructions of the problem ... The language of the report commands and instructs rather than invites dialogue ... Their economic analysis is couched in terms that assume a wide variety of cultural and social practices and institutions are non-economic and somehow secondary, and are to be reconstituted in order to serve particular national economic ends. The implementation of the proposals is assumed to be simply a rational matter, applying means to ends determined elsewhere. However, the problem is not simply that of means but of the kind of life young people are to inherit.20

Once again, it appears, the education bureaucracy has shown itself to be incapable of understanding the importance of the cultural and the critical in education, being unconcerned with the real ends of collective self-determination and interested only in means to the limited end of improved economic outcomes. Accordingly, these critical intellectuals have rallied opposition to the competency programme, on the basis that it is unable to comprehend the broader social, cultural, moral and spiritual purposes of education. The full weight of academic educational critique has been brought to bear on the programme, in public denunciations of the reductive, technocratic and vocationalist character of the reform proposals.

Freeland, it is worth noting, anticipated these objections. Early in the debate, he urged progressive educators to give pragmatic support to competencies, forming an alliance with the 'technocratic left' within the unions.21 In a paper published in 1991, he warns that such an alliance is crucial to overcoming the resistance of the universities, of 'educational conservatives',

21 Freeland 'Education and Training' 79.
of employers and of free marketeers within industry. He also notes that this alliance will require educationists to suspend their professional suspicion of credentialling and assessment and their reflex reaction to the 'technocratic' and 'reductionist' character of each of the available schemes of educational assessment. The commitment to this critique, he argues, is often misguided and politically unhelpful, making little connection with wider social democratic and industrial struggles. Surely, he asks, the rejection of credentialling and assessment on equity grounds actually serves to disadvantage those students most in need of equity programmes? If the argument is that capacities cannot be assessed by standardised norms, how does this accord with political-industrial campaigns conducted by the unions? Organised labour, he contends, has traditionally based its campaigns to secure work conditions on the argument that 'the specific tasks involved in a particular production process can be learned most effectively on site, and not in formalised classrooms'. The success of such campaigns depends on building confidence in the possibility of reliably registering the acquisition of these skills – a confidence which can only be undermined by progressive educationists' hostility to certification in general.

Evidently, debate on the issue has been polarised. On the one hand, the reform programme is perceived as an example of principled and progressive bureaucratic reform, thwarted by the opposition of conservative interests in the universities and industry. On the other, the reforms are seen as a bureaucratic imposition, incapable of fully realising the greater end of collective realisation – whether this is understood in terms of equality and commonality, or in terms of difference and identity. In the first case, the state is seen as a vehicle for humanist expectations of self-realisation. In the second, it becomes a 'cold monster' with its face implacably set against
principle. In the combined area of academic and applied reflection on the 'policy process', the debate on competencies has been conducted in these now-standard terms.

There are, however, many points in common across the debate. Most importantly, both the defence and the denunciation of competencies stem from a 'principled' conception of the state and, more broadly, of government. By this, I mean that in each case, the success or failure of social policy is assessed against the expectation that the state could or should be informed by certain fundamental principles. It is also assumed that, once it is informed by these principles, the state possesses the means to realise them, at least in theory. This expectation encourages announcements of the arrival of a new democratic era in education policy, just as it elicits lamentations over the departure of principle from education and public policy.

iii. Competencies and citizenship.

In many ways the competency debate invites these hopes and fears. It involves no more and no less than the bureaucratic ambition to establish commonality in the basic competencies possessed by an Australian workforce and provided by the Australian school system. Part of what is involved in this process is the task of identifying the basic capacities required for participation as a worker. At the same time, however, this task is explicitly linked to discussion of the broader capacities required for participation as a citizen. The Finn Report, for instance, uses the following terms in attempting to reassure teachers and educationists that the reforms need not entail a

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'narrowing of the broad social, cultural and individual goals currently served by post-compulsory education':

School education has a range of purposes: the development of young people as individuals, as citizens and as participants in the world of work (as workers or employers or entrepreneurs) ... Although the employability related competencies identified ... are broad they cannot and should not be equated with the overall purposes of school education ... Nonetheless the committee believes that there is a great deal of overlap between the requirements for an effective and satisfying life as an individual or as a citizen, and the requirements for a productive and satisfying life at work in today's world. The committee found that once it had identified what it regarded as essential competencies for the world of work, it had also incorporated many of the attributes required for individual well-being and for citizenship.23

This ambition to identify the 'essential competencies for the world of work' is a significant undertaking, and not only because it marks a considerable effort of co-ordination between the education bureaucracy, industry and training sites. What is notable about the Finn committee's statement is its careful identification and linkage of two areas of responsibility vested in the school system: that of forming workers capable of conducting 'a productive and satisfying life at work in today's world' and that of forming individuals and citizens capable of meeting 'the requirements for an effective and satisfying life'. Note the pragmatic tone here. There is no room, in this statement, for the assumption that the school system should simply allow the child to express herself more fully. Neither is society seen as the collective form of self-realisation. On the contrary, the committee is in no doubt that the individual's access to 'well-being' and to a productive working life depends upon the social formation of definite attributes. Nor does it show any doubt that it is possible to locate the basic sets of attributes required for citizenship, work and 'life', even if this will require considerable negotiation.

23 Finn Report 55.
The Finn committee's careful distinction between the overlapping body of competences required for work and those required for citizenship has largely been ignored by commentators. Much discussion of the issue has tended to treat the competency reforms as if they involve a wholesale revision of the purposes of education and training, and as if they require an elaborate philosophical clarification of the relationships between education and training, of the nature of culture, or of the principles of democratic citizenship. Perhaps this is not surprising. After all, the appearance of terms such as 'citizenship' and 'participation' usually gives the cue for a certain kind of critical investigation, one in which the policy developments are assessed against their potential to assist or frustrate in the realisation of various ideal principles.

The standard debate is that between liberal and marxian philosophical modes of reflection, applied to the relationship between government and the rights-based claims of subjects.24 Liberals typically treat citizenship as a contract in which individuals trade certain minimal rights in order to secure the basic social conditions ('negative welfare') required to pursue their own interests. Marxist assume that, once government recognises the social contract of citizenship, it possesses the capacity to remove inequalities through economic planning and public expenditure.25 For Marxists and for many feminists, the contract of citizenship serves as little more than a myth, shoring up the authority of a state which operates as a vehicle for capitalist or patriarchal interests.26 It is not hard to see how the programmatic statement

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from the Finn committee might seem to be amenable to critical interpretation in terms of each of these positions. For liberals, the question might be the extent to which the 'requirements' of government will allow 'effective and satisfying life as an individual or as a citizen' to be truly individual. For liberal progressives, it might be whether 'the attributes required for individual well-being and for citizenship' can be so loosely aligned with 'essential competencies for the world of work'. Finally, for those suspicious of liberal assumptions, the issue might be the ways in which 'young people' are addressed 'as individuals, as citizens and as participants in the world of work'. Surely, such critics would say, this conception of citizenship has bleached out the distinctions of class, race, gender and ethnicity. Does the policy acknowledge government's responsibility to make 'participation' equally possible for each and for all? To what extent does it promote full participation? Is this participation fully critical?

Needless to say, the competency programme fares badly at the hands of these dedicated inquisitors. To begin with, 'citizenship' is addressed only vaguely, while 'participation' is understood in terms which bear little relationship to liberal, marxian or feminist conceptions of political participation. Instead, the Finn Report statement signals a number of normative assumptions about 'productive and satisfying life' as an individual, as a citizen and as a worker. Occupying each of these statuses involves the acquisition of certain 'attributes', each of which the school system must be capable of teaching and of assessing reliably. If such attributes are difficult to locate, this is not because they are incalculable, but because they vary depending on the local 'requirements' of the workplace, the home or civic life. Nor is there any expectation that efforts to build the attributes of the citizen or worker will culminate in forming more 'complete' human beings. Instead, it is made quite clear that the programme addresses the purpose of 'developing young
people as workers', although it is not indifferent to wider claims on its attentions.

This is by no means to limit analysis of the questions of rights raised by the reforms. On the contrary: one of the most interesting and most neglected aspects of the programme is the extent to which it expressly cuts across distinct zones of rights, if only by virtue of the number of social, educational and social welfare sites incorporated in the reforms. Each of these sites – from the various 'worlds of work' to the schoolroom, the workshop, the youth refuge, the union meeting room, the home, and the university seminar – can be seen as representing a distinct social sphere. In each sphere, the formation of capacities linked to a status is mirrored by a claim to a social right made by a citizen. Under these circumstances, the language of 'rights' can become misleading. Its universalism and essentialism can lead to claims whose absolutism is blind to the relation between rights and the statuses under which they are claimed and exercised. This can in turn lead to claims that are both incommensurate and apparently non-negotiable. For instance, in encouraging schools to treat young people as workers, the programme runs counter to pedagogic conceptions of the child's right to self-expression and self-development, free from the constraints of the vocational. Furthermore, in requiring employers to treat young employees as trainees, it encounters at least two different kinds of rights-based objections: one in terms of the industrial rights of young workers, and another in terms of private employers' rights to conduct private negotiations with staff members. Similar encounters between rights-based claims occur in relation to tertiary entrance. On the one hand, there are those who claim that the programme undermines the right of all those who complete Year 12 to gain university entrance; and efforts to promote increased enrolments in TAFE are seen as undermining this right. On the other hand, this claim meets trenchant
opposition from the older universities, which have strenuously denied that such a right exists. Instead, the universities tend to regard efforts to build closer links between TAFE and higher education as an abrogation of their own right to select students on the basis of academic merit.

Academic analysis seems to be confident of its ability to arbitrate between these conflicting rights-based claims on the basis of principle – even though these claims are themselves made in the name of principle – and assumes that government has a similar capacity. Once informed by the principles of democratic self-determination or equality, it is assumed, government has the capacity to reform society, the economy or the education system in such a way as to realise such ends. This expectation is at the basis of the accusation that the governmentally administered education system has failed to realise these goals.27

But could it be that these expectations overestimate both the unity and the reach of government? As a result, might they not significantly undervalue the actual achievements of bureaucratic reformers? In short, do they show a sufficient appreciation of the reality and the limits of bureaucratic programmes? How sensitive are they to the fragility and the intricacy of the instruments available to government in developing reform programmes of this kind? These are the kind of questions raised by the following case study. But before pursuing these inquiries, we require a more detailed account of the policy programme and reactions to it.

iv. The construction programme.

It is important to stress that the ambition of building a common national system of credentialling is by no means new. In fact, the Finn Report's view

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27 See Hindess, *Freedom, Equality* for the characterisation of these standard problems in debates on social welfare policy.
of the relationship between work, citizenship and personal satisfaction is quite consistent with thirty years of national policy making in Australian education, as well as with a number of international developments. The national co-ordination of curriculum and assessment is of course relatively recent, being contingent upon the development of the Commonwealth's new resolve to centralise education planning and policy, while retaining a degree of autonomy for the States. Nevertheless, the calculation of 'national needs' in educational provision has been a standard element in the forms of educational planning and funding calculation conducted between the State and Commonwealth education departments throughout the postwar period, even before the Commonwealth School Commission undertook the planning of national co-ordination in the 1970s. The bureaucratic construction of national co-ordination in assessment and certification intensified during the early 1980s, with the Commonwealth Schools Commission's development of schemes for the national registration of 'competencies'. This latter development was attended by a number of policy battles – especially between the Schools Commission and the new directions taken by the reformed Department of Employment, Education and Training. However, the concept of the national co-ordination of curriculum continued to be linked to that of the national certification of 'competence'.

28 As models for the Australian reforms, the Mayer report cites a number of programs carried out by the OECD, as well as work on the definition of competencies carried out in the United States by the Secretary of the Department of Labour's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) and in the UK by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, as well as work in New Zealand as part of the development of the national curriculum. See Mayer 1992 10. Marginson and O'Hanlan note that the competency approach was influential in the United States in the 1970s, and a small number of higher education institutions developed competency based liberal education studies. The United States Department of Labour has defined five basic competencies and a three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities needed for job performance. The framework, known as 'SCANS', is to be adopted in all US schools, and it is recommended that employers use it in their human resources programmes. S. Marginson and S. O'Hanlan, Generic Competencies. Occasional Paper 4, Higher Education Series (Canberra: Department of Employment, Education and Training, Higher Education Division, June 1993) 2.

29 On the goal of establishing a national curriculum, see B. Wilson, 'Curriculum Corporation and the National Agenda', Curriculum Perspectives Newsletter ed.
Throughout this period, the debate on the national curriculum and on competencies has consistently been dominated by the conventional distinction between the 'instrumental' and the 'non-instrumental' purposes of schooling, between the school's responsibility for forming citizens with vocationally-specific capacities and with 'practical living skills'.30 In other words, despite the sense of crisis accompanying current debates on the 'new instrumentalism' in Australian education policy, the ambition to develop national credentialling of competencies is not a recent development. Nor, for that matter, are the difficulties attending the project. For some time now, debate on 'national goals' in education has been hamstrung by tension between two main formulations about the purposes of public education. On the one hand, schooling has a responsibility to develop specific economic and social capacities in a citizenry and a workforce. But on the other hand, schools are also expected to be the site for child-centred activities whose only

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end is that of self-development and self-expression. For most policy programmes, the rhetorical effort is to combine co-existing and often contradictory goals: that of encouraging authentic self-development in students, and that of training a population in specific economic and social skills.

There are, however, two new elements in the current policy proposals. The first, as we have seen, involves a shift away from the policy rhetoric concerning the need to balance the goals of general and vocational education against one another. The present competency programme seeks to separate these goals from one another, assigning them to separately assessed programmes, some conducted under the aegis of the school or state education system, and a distinct element being concerned with vocational development. This is connected to the second major policy change, which involves the establishment of a new set of alliances between the federal education bureaucracy, industry and the larger unions, one that entails a greater role for industry in the definition of educational goals.31

Each of these developments is the result of extensive negotiations at the local and national level, co-ordinated by the the Department of Employment, Education and Training. During the early 1980s, a series of access and equity programmes was established at a national level, in the context of a developing debate on the need for national education programmes.32

the aegis of the Australian Education Council, extensive negotiations were conducted between State and Commonwealth education departments, culminating in the release of the programmatic statement *Strengthening Australia's Schools*.[33] This document set a number of goals, chief amongst them the increase of school retention rates (bringing Australia more in line with OECD levels), the building of closer links between schools and industry, the establishment of national curriculum and assessment frameworks, and the promotion of particular equity and participation targets. It stressed that the need was not for increased funding to education, but for improved forms of national co-ordination. It also acknowledged, however, that since decisions on education funding and programmes remained in the hands of the States, the Commonwealth did not possess either the means or the right to enforce a nationalised education system, as it had been able to do in the case of higher education. Instead, the rhetoric was that of 'inviting participation' from the States in a process of national planning. Similarly, the document also expressed the hope that the independent school sector would also take up the invitation to participate in centralised Commonwealth education planning.

Only some of these goals were met – and even then, the outcomes were not always as expected. School retention rates, for instance, increased dramatically in the five years following the release of *Strengthening Australia's Schools*.[34] But this achievement brought unexpected problems.

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[34] In the early 1980s, Australia was ranked fourteenth of the eighteen member countries of the advanced industrial countries in the OECD, with only 59 per cent of 17 year olds enrolled in post-compulsory education, as compared to 80 per cent or higher rates of Year 12 retention in the top six OECD countries. But by 1990, the target set by the 1986 Quality of Education Review Committee (that of achieving a national rate of 65 per cent retention to Year 12 by 1992) had been met. By 1991, the target had been exceeded, in an overall pattern of 71.3 per cent retention to year 12, despite wide differences between the States and Territories. Carmichael Report 36. For further details, see Finn Report Appendix 1(A), 'Report of the Working Party to Establish the Agenda and Scope for an AEC
To begin with, the increase has been caused by long-term youth unemployment stemming from the virtual disappearance of a sector of unskilled work once taken by young school leavers. As a result of this, school leavers without Year 12 qualifications face the prospect of either permanent dependence on social security or confinement within a limited labour market of intermittent, part-time or casual work. Consequently, the education system has had to adjust to a larger and more diverse student population retained in courses originally oriented to forming a minority for university entrance. In addition, even those who remain to the end of Year 12 have no guarantee of either employment or a place at the crowded universities. As a result, the Commonwealth is left with the political

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36 The Carmichael Report notes that in May 1991, almost 19 per cent of 15 to 24 year olds who left school in 1990 were not participating in further education and training and were either unemployed or outside the labour force. The problem is exacerbated by the proportion of school leavers under 19 years old who are marginalised in low-paid, unskilled part time or fractional work. In August 1991, approximately 16 per cent of all 15 to 19 year olds were not participating in schooling or full-time tertiary education and were either employed part-time, unemployed or not in the labour force. See Carmichael Report 96.

37 See P. Mageean, From Senior Secondary to TAFE: Curricular Implications for TAFE of Increased Retention to Year 12 (Adelaide: TAFE National Centre for Research and Development, 1991).

problem of meeting the increased electoral pressure to provide more university places – a demand increasingly claimed as a right of all those who complete Year 12.\textsuperscript{39}

The competency programme is designed to allay these difficulties of low economic performance and low rates of training and youth unemployment, as well as the associated problems of the disconnection between the schools and industry and the need for more consistent means of decision-making and monitoring of school performance.\textsuperscript{40} The objectives pursued follow directly from these problems. They include the short-term political goals of allaying the electorate's concerns about the number of unemployed young people, of adjusting the official level of unemployment, of lowering Commonwealth expenditure on higher education, and of demonstrating the government's success in meeting OECD standards of training, as well as goals related to the needs of industry.\textsuperscript{41}


\textsuperscript{41} This range of objectives was explicitly outlined in J.S. Dawkins, 'Post Compulsory Education and Training: The National Challenge', \textit{Unicorn} 18.1 February (1992): 6-12.
To meet its primary objectives, DEET has developed a dual tactic of deflating overblown expectations of university entrance, while promoting TAFE as a pathway to university. The problem is that, in comparison with the newly consolidated higher education sector, TAFE remains unattractive to students and their parents, mostly because of its lack of connection to the more prestigious professional career paths controlled by the universities. In this respect, the Australian TAFE sector is far less effective than vocational training systems in other OECD countries, especially those such as Germany and Sweden, which maintain popular and vocationally effective national systems of 'polytechnic' institutions, closely connected to both secondary schools and industry. In Australia, the existing forms of vocational training are scattered between a number of sites, from the poorly-administered and State-run TAFE sector to private training institutions, and to apprenticeship and other trainee schemes, each of which has little connection


43 In early 1992, for instance, Dawkins noted that the level of interest in university was more than double that for TAFE. Despite a proportional increase in university enrolments and in school retention since 1983 (from 6.5 to 10.6 per cent), the proportion of enrolments in TAFE had remained stable, with young people from 15 to 24 preferring to stay on at secondary school rather than go to TAFE. See Dawkins 'Postcompulsory Education' 6-12. Richard Sweet, in his study of school-TAFE transitions, argues that the problem is not a decision to delay entry into TAFE from school: it is a decision not to go to TAFE at all. He traces this to the problem of TAFE's poor image in school students' eyes. Sweet, 'The Youth Labour Market' 31-36. See also A. Ruby, M. Cashman and M. Byrnes, 'Targets, Competencies and Australia's Teachers', Unicorn 18.1 February (1992): 23-30; and Joint Commonwealth/State Steering Committee on TAFE-Higher Education Access Project, Interim Report (Melbourne: Victorian Post-Secondary Education Commission, Victorian Office of Higher Education, 1991).

to either the senior secondary schools or the universities. Few of these training schemes are perceived to offer school leavers or their parents an attractive alternative to university entrance.

In response, the federal education bureaucracy has identified TAFE as the new target for federal education policy. In doing so, DEET has pursued a now familiar dual strategy of centralising funding and planning and devolving decision-making. In 1991, the Commonwealth promised to undertake full financial responsibility for publicly-funded vocational education beyond Year 12 or equivalent, making increased education funding for the States conditional on their co-operation in implementing new Commonwealth guidelines and in providing information on performance levels. This centralised control of funding was accompanied by an elaborate apparatus of negotiations and state-based agreements, facilitated by the establishment of new consultatory bodies. The general pattern – familiar from the existing


48 Commonwealth/State Training Advisory Committee, Competency-based Training in TAFE: An Inventory and Report of Competency-based Approaches in TAFE (Adelaide: TAFE National Centre for Research and Development, 1990);
strategy of devolution – has been one in which the federal government has offered funding incentives for the States, in return for co-operation in the implementation of reforms and in the development and application of common performance measures.  

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In 1989, a National Training Board was established as a joint venture between the Commonwealth and State governments.  

This body was responsible for co-ordinating national training and credentialling standards in the professions, in industry and in secondary schooling. It undertook the task of providing a consistent framework of standards in industries regulated by industrial awards and co-ordinating the definition of work-related competencies, developing an eight-level Australian Standards Framework,

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stretching to senior professional skills. Stretching to senior professional skills. Under the separately established Industries Training Board, employers and private training providers have also become involved in identifying the fundamental skills or competences required for particular kinds of work. A National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) was also established in 1989, and has proceeded to systematise competency standards in the professions, in consultation with professional bodies, universities, registration boards and industrial parties. Finally, a series of Special Premiers Conferences was held over 1990 and 1991, exploring ways to establish a national framework for the portability of both goods and occupational qualifications. The result was the acceptance of the principle of 'mutual recognition' to free up the movement of products and people across state borders.

These developments in State-Commonwealth co-ordination were cemented by the reports of the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael committees, released in quick succession between 1991 and 1992. The first of these committees was chaired by Brian Finn, a former Managing Director of IBM, and comprised of members from the ACTU, the Business Council of Australia and DEET. Proposing an 'education and training guarantee', it recommended both the establishment of a unified system of credentialling and the extension of compulsory school attendance to at least the end of Year 10, with all young people subsequently being guaranteed a place in school or TAFE for two

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51 Discussion of a co-ordinated national training system emerged from the 1988 national wage case, which introduced the Structural Efficiency Principle, intended by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to tie wage increases 'to improvements in productivity brought about by real improvements in the skills of the workforce'. In 1989, a special ministerial conference began the move to Competency Based Training (CBT) and set up procedures by which industry would take the lead in identifying appropriate competency standards for individual industries and their attached training schemes. For a clear discussion of this, see Johnston 'The Universities and Competency Based Standards' 2. For an indication of the kinds of mechanisms used, see P. Bruhn and H. Guthrie, Designing Learning Guides for TAFE and Industry (Leabrook, SA: TAFE National Centre for Research and Development Ltd., 1991).
years of full-time education and training or its equivalent. It also provided a provisional definition of the Key Competencies to be used in the new credentialling system. They included the following categories: 'Language and Communication', 'Mathematics', 'Scientific and Technological Understanding', 'Cultural Understanding' and 'Personal and Interpersonal' competence.

Subsequently, Laurie Carmichael, a prominent member of the Finn committee, went on to chair the committee of the Commonwealth's Employment and Skills Formation Council, which had the task of deliberating on the standardisation of training. The main focus of the Carmichael Report is those young people currently unable to gain entry to either higher education or full time study in TAFE. The Report proposed that by 2001, 90 per cent of all 19 year olds should have completed Year 12 or an initial post-school training or would still be enrolled in education and training. Employers of Year 10 or 11 school leavers aged between 15 and 19 years would be required to enter into a training agreement with young employees, guaranteeing the availability of time for training. New systems of certification would be extended across a national system within the one competency-based Australian Vocational Certificate Training System, incorporating both apprenticeship and traineeship schemes and courses taught in schools, TAFE, private training institutes and workplaces. Students would gain this certificate by undertaking training across these different sites on either a full-time or part-time basis, developing both the Key Competencies and particular vocational competencies. The acquisition of these competencies would be evaluated within work-based assessment.

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52 Finn Report 1.
schemes certified by 'qualified assessors', on the basis of comparisons between work-based standards and individuals' performance in specific tasks. The proposals are presented as 'a move away from a culture of failure, to a training culture in which each and every individual is challenged to meet or exceed specified standards of performance'.

At the same time as the Carmichael Report proposals were being formulated, the task of defining the Key Competencies begun by the Finn committee was pursued by a follow-up committee set up by the Australian Education Council and the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET). Chaired by Eric Mayer, this committee had the task of clarifying and elaborating the Finn committee's definition of Key Competencies, in consultation with educationists, industry groups and major employers. Various industry groups were asked to take each of the competencies and to devise a ladder of the performance standards particular to their field of work, identifying for each some appropriate means of assessment. Supplementing these Preliminary Industry Validation studies with material on equivalent competency-based initiatives in other OECD countries, the Mayer committee revised the preliminary Key Competencies nominated by the Finn Report, elaborating them into a different set of common generic competencies divided into occupationally specific ladders of performance standards. In its final report, *Putting General Education to Work*, it announced the decision to exclude 'Cultural Understanding' altogether, along with others that had also been canvassed for inclusion, such

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54 Carmichael Report 25.
56 Mayer Report 5.
as 'Ethics' and 'Family and Household Management'. Instead, the Key Competencies were defined as the following: 'Collecting, Analysing and Using Information'; 'Communicating Ideas and Information'; 'Planning and Organising Activities'; 'Working with Others and In Teams'; 'Using Mathematical Ideas and Techniques'; 'Solving Problems'; and 'Using Technology'.

For critics responding to the policies, the decision to exclude 'Cultural Understandings' has been taken as revealing a bureaucratic indifference to questions of culture and to pedagogic principle. Once again, it is argued, the education bureaucracy has shown itself capable of dismissing all that cannot be measured. And once again, it is the study of the humanities that suffers.\textsuperscript{57} The point has excited a good deal of indignation, particularly on the part of academic commentators. For a number of critics, the exclusion represents all that is most dubious about the competencies schema, particularly in its focus on the vocational, the technical and the measurable at the expense of 'real educational principles'. As we shall see when we return to the issue in Chapter Nine, the matter is considerably more complex than this, involving more tortuous relations between technical, ethical and political considerations. But for now, let us turn to the terms of the more general debate on the competencies reforms.

\textbf{v. Compulsory criticism.}

The effort to establish co-operation in the design of Key Competencies has involved intensive negotiation with the 'interested parties' of State education systems and the various teaching bodies within them, as well as with employers, universities and industry bodies. Following the release of the

Mayer Report, the policy programme entered the stage of extensive negotiation within the different State education systems, beginning the process of registering differences within and between existing curricula and assessment systems, and establishing a round of meetings and consultancies designed to establish some consensus between different educational sites, interests and kinds of expertise. The immediate end was the identification and State-based approval of Key Competencies and the development of plans to shape existing pedagogic practices and assessment schema to the new system.

The strategy has been one of enrolling the interested parties within a co-operative system conducted from Canberra but relying upon the identified needs of the various constituencies, addressing the requirements of employers and parents, maintaining the goodwill of teachers, and obtaining State-based agreements on national curriculum and assessment systems. One of the principal needs is to enlist the support of teachers and school principals for the reforms. Teachers, as Minister Dawkins put it, are asked to 'take on the challenge' of enabling parents to understand what TAFE can offer and encouraging them to question 'the misplaced notion that university is the dream to which all young people must aspire'.58 This strategy hangs upon convincing educational administrators, teachers and parents that it would be possible to adapt the new competency-based procedures to existing curriculum and assessment schemes, while also persuading them to alter those schemes on the basis of rapidly changing guidelines.

However, this tactic has met with resistance on a number of fronts. In the round of public meetings accompanying the negotiation process, teachers and educational administrators have strongly objected to the requirement to adjust

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58 Dawkins, 'Post Compulsory Education' 8.
their assessment routines to incorporate the Key Competencies. Teachers have argued that the competency scheme would do little more than increase teachers' workloads, complicating the already complex routines of school-based assessment and course accreditation only recently established within the reorganised decision-making structures of the different State education systems. They have also been particularly concerned that the introduction of competencies will open the classroom to the entrance of mass standardised testing.

Academic educationists have been amongst the harshest critics of the programme, dismissing the scheme as reductionist and behaviourist. They argue that those responsible for implementing the reforms have largely ignored educational advice and information on learning patterns. The Finn, Mayer and Carmichael committees, they point out, largely drew their conception of competencies from working models developed in other OECD countries, as well as from advice from 'entrepreneurial' research bodies such as the Australian Council for Educational Research. From the point of

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60 The Mayer Report addresses a number of teachers' objections, contending that the Key Competencies are not intended to lead to significant changes in the curriculum. It is also made clear, however, that implementing the Key Competencies will entail considerable effort to provide professional development programmes for teachers, establishing new routines for assessment, for instance, which will build school-based procedures for making the criteria for the Key Competencies explicit. See Mayer Report 42.

61 The Finn Report, for instance, cites 'international realisations' about work as the basis of its stated concern that the school system must take into account the 'skills requirements of individuals as workers and active participants in modern society', enabling future workers to become 'multi-skilled, creative and adaptable', and
view of those engaged in a professional polemic against educational measurement, such models are immediately associated with reductive behaviourist doctrines, and with various notorious schemes from 'Taylorism' to 'Fordism'. Accordingly, the programme has been attacked as vocationalist and anti-educational. For one thing, the critics insist, individuals learn at different rates. For another, learning outcomes cannot be separated from the conditions in which the learning experience takes place. Such outcomes must therefore be understood in terms of social context:

Do competencies in different contexts actually have the same meaning? More importantly, can they be assessed independently of their context? For example, to consider one of the proposed Mayer competencies such as 'Language and Communication', is it actually possible to assess meaningfully the 'acquisition' of skills in this area in ways which consider performance separately from: social background, age, developmental level, opportunities, geography, individual needs, individual differences, community background, ethnicity, gender, prior knowledge, prior access to provision and equity of present provision? ... Of interest here are issues of knowledge, issues of consciousness, and issues of transferability ... In general the competencies agenda ignores these substantial aspects which lie at the heart of teaching, learning and knowledge issues.

These concerns have not been allayed by the public reassurances of representatives of the policy-making bodies, who have strongly denied the suggestion that competencies correspond to behaviourist conceptions of skill.

At the same time, equally vehement objections to the competency reforms have emerged from within the sphere of youth policy and youth welfare. Here, once again, the programme encounters a semi-complex of expert rationales, routines and commitments which are just as well-established as

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63 Porter, Rizvi, Knight and Lingard 56-7.
those of teachers, and just as difficult to alter. From the point of view of youth workers, the competency programme looks very like a series of similar efforts to address the problems of unemployed youth by providing 'transition education' and training programmes. Such programmes have long been pronounced a failure within this field. Critics point out that there is no guarantee that reforms to 'credentialling' will provide more jobs or relieve the structural problems of youth unemployment. Nor is there any way of ensuring that employers will use the skills developed by training. Even if large-scale enterprises co-operate with the training schemes, small employers may be unable or unwilling to enter into training agreements or to co-operate with the extensive bureaucratic requirements of competency assessors and trainers. The bleakest scenarios associate the proposed reforms with British programmes of competency-based training, in place since 1986. Rather than improving access to job opportunities, it is argued, these schemes increased credentialling, causing an oversupply of skilled work and a


66 In fact, many employers have denounced the reforms as an instance of state intervention and the erosion of liberal freedoms and civil privacy. Tim Duncan, the business reporter for the Australian, for instance, characterised the competency agenda as using business 'as a stalking horse for a reform that it did not initiate, does not control and would not have designed had it had the chance'. Australian 12 August 1992: cited in S. Taylor and M. Henry, 'Equity and the New Post-Compulsory Education and Training Policies in Australia: A Progressive or Regressive Agenda?' Journal of Educational Policy, forthcoming.
depression of craft wages, thereby undermining the bargaining power of unions and doing little to alter patterns of long-term youth unemployment.\textsuperscript{67}

Other objections from within youth work stem from longer-standing objections to training programmes as a solution to the problems of young people. Here, some standard arguments against the training strategy have been played out. Youth advocates argue that not only will the competency proposals fail to provide young people with jobs, but they will also scapegoat them for this failure, by presuming that the problem lies with school leavers' lack of skills. In the standard phrase, these programmes 'blame the victim'. Instead, it is said, the problem is that social institutions have failed young people and have produced the 'at risk' youth, disconnected from school, family and work and permanently marginalised within the job market.\textsuperscript{68} Youth workers claim to have developed a complex of practical strategies for building the self-esteem of 'at risk' youths, forming capacities which could enable them to find an identity independent of the normative environments of school, work and family.\textsuperscript{69} For those imbued with these psychologically


\textsuperscript{68} See Sobski; and Cooper.

oriented commitments to 'self-esteem' and 'self-determination', the bureaucratic effort to identify early school leavers as a 'problem population' looks clumsy at best.

Equally serious doubts have been raised about the reform schemes' promises to build 'pathways' leading to university and the prestigious professions. Simon Marginson, for instance, has argued that expectations of achieving educational commonality through certification are politically naive at best. It is most unlikely, he predicts, that the established universities could be persuaded to accept systematic connections with TAFE. Nor are they likely to incorporate the assessment of competencies within their degree programmes, particularly within the high-prestige professions. If the universities refuse to co-operate, he warns, then the progressive rationales for the reforms will become pipe-dreams. Worse, the effect of the reforms will be socially regressive. Without the co-operation of the universities, the implementation of competency-based assessment will produce system-wide educational streaming. The established universities will continue to draw predominantly from middle-class and private schools, while working class students will be marginalised within vocational and technical education.70 Far from freeing up the education system, the competency reforms will serve to promote centralised bureaucratic control of the curriculum, enabling industry in turn to implant a restrictive 'skills agenda' within the schools.71

vi. Political dilemmas

As it turns out, a number of these predictions have been fulfilled. To begin with, the reaction of the universities has indeed been negative.72 The

70 Cooper 42.
72 B.F. Lawrence, Universities' Responses to the Training Guarantee Scheme (Canberra: AGPS, 1992)
Australian Vice Chancellors' committee announced that the "higher order intellectual skills" developed by the universities are quite distinct from training and cannot be classified as competencies. While competencies may be appropriate as measures of learning within TAFE, it was maintained, they are quite inappropriate within universities. The resistance has been on two fronts. On the first, DEET's tentative efforts to persuade the universities to install competency assessments as a component of professional accreditation have been met with strenuous resistance. Some professional disciplines, including Nursing and Engineering, have agreed to co-operate with professional associations in identifying competency measures that could be incorporated in professional accreditation. But other disciplines remain staunchly opposed to the suggestion. Nor, on the second front, have universities been amenable to the suggestion that competency measures might

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74 There has been some support from within the personnel and teaching development wing of the universities for developing norms of 'competence' as a means to measure outcomes from tertiary education. See for instance P. Ramsden, G. Masters, J. Bowden and E. Martin, Assessing the Elements of Competence: A Relational Approach (Parkville Victoria: University of Melbourne, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, 1987). This is an instance of a long-term investigation of first-year assessment at Melbourne University, aimed at finding ways of integrating methods of learning with the assessment of competence. However, its terms of reference are strikingly different from those of the Fin, Mayer and Carmichael Reports, defining competency in terms of a 'view of leaning as a qualitative change in a person's conception of some aspect of reality'.


be incorporated within tertiary selection procedures. The established universities have treated such suggestions as a threat both to university autonomy and to cultural standards.

At this point, the negotiations have become caught within a number of well-established tensions between the universities, and both State and federal education bureaucracies – tensions which extend beyond the 1988 reforms of higher education and incorporate at least a decade of debate on standards and certification. Relations between the universities and the education bureaucracy have become more uncomfortable, as the tactic of treating higher education as one part of a notionally unified national education system has met with increasingly insecure claims to a traditional autonomy. A comment by H.N. Johnston, a Deputy Secretary within DEET, is indicative. There is no intention, he remarked, to impose the competency-based approach on schools, universities and TAFE in a uniform way. Such a prospect 'stretches the imagination, although it would not be unreasonable'. Nevertheless, he added, universities must take their place within the 'education and training sector':

There has always been ... a two way relationship between education providers and industry, particularly in relation to requirements for the professions ...

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78 This reaction has not of course been uniform. Despite the uneasy response of many postsecondary institutions, a number of newer universities are developing programs which articulate on-the-job experience with in-house training programs. See R. Bishop, 'Towards a Skilled Australia: National Standards to Provide Aussie Joe and Aussie Joanna with Flexible, Transferable Skills', paper presented to the International Meeting of the Modular Training Systems Conference, Washington DC, May 11-12, 1992.

Universities and industry will need to respect each other's requirements and the expertise underpinning them ... governments also have a major interest in this relationship as it is the primary source of funding for universities ... Essentially competency standards provide a framework for a three way "dialogue" between the interested parties. This should have a regard for the legitimate interest of each.\textsuperscript{80}

In response, the universities made it clear that, for all the range of economic incentives and penalties at the state's disposal, they have the means to refuse these injunctions.\textsuperscript{81} As the Vice Chancellor of the University of Queensland put it, 'All children, whatever their intellectual capacity, have the right to attend primary and secondary school. No such right currently exists to continue into higher education: only those who meet the standards for entry are accepted.'\textsuperscript{82}

This context has presented academic educationists with some dilemmas, caught as they are between habitual distrust both of university administrations and of bureaucratic purposes. On the one hand, given the long-standing criticism of university elitism, it is difficult to support university administrations in their rejection of the right of qualified citizens to university entrance. On the other hand, criticism of university autonomy might mean supporting an education bureaucracy capable of claiming that business, government and universities have an equal 'legitimate interest' in higher education.

vii. Academic Oppositionalism.

Reactions to this political dilemma have varied. Some critical educationists have given cautious support to the competency reforms, especially those

\textsuperscript{80} Johnston 10.
\textsuperscript{81} B.G. Wilson, 'Higher Education', \textit{Higher Education and the Competency Movement: Implications for Tertiary Education and the Professions} (Canberra: Australian National University, Centre for Continuing Education, 1992): 57.
\textsuperscript{82} Wilson, 'Higher Education' 55.
disturbed by the elitism of the academy's response. For these cautious supporters, the policy programme presents some political opportunities, particularly in its emphasis on the recognition of prior learning and the redefinition of industrial classifications of skill. If Key Competencies can be made pluralistic enough to incorporate cultural, ethical and expressive capacities, it is argued, then there is some prospect that the programme could serve progressive ends. However, most academic commentators have been less optimistic about these possibilities. In fact, in an influential early critique of the competency reforms, Paige Porter and her collaborators argue that the most striking characteristic of the reforms is their political and economic naivete in expecting so much from the single mechanism of 'competency'. The competency scheme, they contend, relies on ludicrously over-inflated expectations, particularly of education's capacity to reform the economy:

Hanging all reform on a single organising concept through which all education and training in Australia is to transform itself into worker productivity and career advancement, as well as national economic development, is a rationalist's dream which is unlikely to come true.

Setting out to deflate the 'rationalist's dream', these critics have drawn on some long-standing critical tropes and argumentative moves. The most familiar is the critique of the liberal assumptions informing the reform rationales. Rather than offering a solution to educational inequality, it is argued, these liberal assumptions are part of the problem, serving to mask the real effects of political, ideological and economic conflict. According to this logic, splits between the mental and the manual can hardly be papered over by means of common credentials, since they are merely symptoms of a deeper split between class interests, fractured in their turn by gender and race. Expectations of a bureaucratically-organised détente between these class

83 Taylor and Henry 6-8.
84 Porter, Rizvi, Knight and Lingard 58.
interests only reveal the extent to which right-wing forces have been able to 'rearticulate oppositional ideals and popular sentiments so that they are made to serve ... the domination agenda'.\textsuperscript{85} This agenda is not one of liberal democratic reform, but one dictated by the doctrines of economic rationalism and corporate managerialism, a combination which serves the interests of private enterprise, but which has lodged itself in the heart of public policy.

The story told is now very familiar one to us. It is the story of the decay of democratic values in Australian public life, of the colonisation of the state by economic rationalism and of the spread of 'corporate managerialism' within public administration. The federal education bureaucracy has been infiltrated by 'neoliberalism', a hybrid of classical liberal political theory and neo-classical economics.\textsuperscript{86} Mated with corporate managerialism, this has produced an 'economic rationalist' strategy combining interventionist state activity with the stripping back of state funding and services. With devolution, policy has been centralised by the neo-corporate state, while the burden of implementation is assigned to those at to the state and local level, as part of the strategy of 'corporate federalism'.\textsuperscript{87} But for all the rhetoric, devolution is hardly democratic. Rather, it is a process by which the 'bottom-up' processes of democratic participation and community decision-making have been replaced by 'top-down' reform.\textsuperscript{88} This, so it is said, provides a means for the education bureaucracy to ensure that education is

\textsuperscript{85} Porter, Rizvi, Knight and Lingard 54.
\textsuperscript{87} Sachs 125.
geared to the needs of industry, remodelling education to fit the 'post-fordist' workplace:

Throughout its period in office, the Federal Labor government has insisted that radical measures are needed in order to make the Australian economy more export orientated and internationally competitive. Having deregulated the economy and surrendered some of its policy options, Labor has now turned its attention to microeconomic reforms. Its major strategy has been to use new corporatist policy-making structures, involving a reconstituted federalism, to create a national economic infrastructure. This is a statist solution and essentially a policy alternative to privatisation. It is as part of this strategy that an attempt is now being made to create an integrated educational and training and labour market programme.\textsuperscript{89}

Accordingly, the critique of 'managerialist discourse' means that negotiations carried out between the federal education bureaucracy, the ACTU, unions, employers and teachers are perceived as no more than a process of co-option within a corporate model of consensus.\textsuperscript{90} As education comes more firmly under the authority of government, it is argued, it becomes possible to introduce common policy approaches across all education sectors, even when that policy consists of reducing the role of public policy and public planning.\textsuperscript{91} Furthermore, the influence of economic rationalist theory has ensured that the common policy approaches enforced are ones drawn from economistically-based conceptions of education, notably those of 'human capital theory'. Aroused from its historical bed in the 1950s by the economic rationalists, human capital theory walks again. Educational principles have been left trailing in the wake of its inexorable march across the school system.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{89} Porter, Rizvi, Knight and Lingard 51.
\textsuperscript{91} Marginson, 'Economic Rationalism' 7.
\textsuperscript{92} S. Marginson, Education and Public Policy, 31-54.
Part of the managerial strategy, it is argued, is to build worker commitment and motivation through the technology of 'human resources management'. In fact, devices such as 'multiskilling', performance monitoring, professional development and consensus decision-making have reprogrammed worker autonomy as compliance, uniformity and standardisation. The vocabulary of 'competencies' provides a new instrument in this strategy, offering to extend the techniques of the 'post-fordist' workplace to the school system:

What is at stake today is work of a particular kind. Controlled flexibility is seen as the key to industrial performance. Competency-based reform has in its sights the modernized, universal, polyvalent worker whose desire for autonomy and control is restructured as the desire for an individual career, based on a history of compliance and programmed responses. Trade union leaders are the experts in practical industrial psychology best equipped to guide this transition.

The predictions have been dire. For Simon Marginson, for instance, the competency programme represents the clash between 'two worlds in collision'. At the political level, the shift is from centralised political authority to devolved markets. At a philosophical level, it is from developing the equal political participation of citizens to promoting 'market participation and individualised consumption'. For the economic rationalist, students 'can only exist as economic factors, as consumption or investment'. In turn, students have come to treat themselves as 'investors in their own human capital, their own future earnings'. Political citizenship has been traded for consumer sovereignty.

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94 S. Marginson, 'Competent for What?' 37.
95 Marginson 'Economic Rationalism' 14.
96 Marginson 'Economic Rationalism' 18-19.
vii. Conclusion.

Clearly, the debate has drifted some way from Freeland's early and optimistic prediction of a 'coincidence of interests' between progressive democratic educators and administrative intellectuals working within the industrial relations complex. Instead, the reaction to the reforms has seen various makeshift alliances between progressive academic commentators and 'educational conservatives'. This alliance has been made with some anxiety. Marginson, for instance, has discussed the difficulties entailed in supporting the universities' rejection of the competency programme. On balance, however, he advocates joining the universities in a last-ditch defence of the 'liberal academic curriculum' and the liberal principle of autonomy. For all its individualistic and meritocratic assumptions, he argues, the traditional liberal academic curriculum was at least reconcilable with a liberal democratic conception of citizenship and the 'self-governing community'. It is therefore necessary to defend it, even if it is itself instrumentalist and reductive (and therefore responsible for the decay of social principle that has allowed economic rationalist values to take hold of the public consciousness).

What remains is the task of defending 'culture' and 'critical reason', while attempting to find an alternative set of values that could counter those of economic rationalism.

Various commentators have responded to this call. Paige Porter and her collaborators, for example, made a public appeal to educators to commit themselves to a vision of education as oriented not to industrial ends but to an awareness of the 'cultural contradictions of the post-modern condition' confronted by the young. Education, they proclaimed, should provide young people with skills 'of a critical kind, designed to enable them to examine the relationships between society and the industrial sector, with a focus on 'social

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literacy' rather than 'technical work-related competencies', and should discuss 'the problematic nature of new information technology, as well as how to utilise it effectively'. 'Critical education' constitutes an end in itself to which all programmes of reform must be subordinated:

Corporate managerialism in the public sector, together with economic rationalism, portrays itself as concerned simply with more cost-efficient means to democratically determined ends, but actually frequently determines the ends, not just the means.\textsuperscript{98}

The political ambiguities of this 'oppositionalist' posture deepened, as the competency programme encountered other sorts of obstacles. As the consultation process wore on, spokespersons from the universities publicly attacked the initial attempts to define the basic competencies to be built into the national General Maths and Science curriculum.\textsuperscript{99} The attack, ironically enough, was made on the grounds that the curriculum outlines were over-preoccupied with 'socially critical' and 'oppositional' pedagogic objectives, at the expense of analytical skills and technical information.

These attacks were influential, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, whose governing parties had significant sway within the multi-State Australian Education Council, the body responsible for negotiating the definition of competencies within the different State education systems. Their impact on the development of the competency schema was significant. During 1993, the development of the competency programme at a national level was effectively stalled by the Australian Education Council's refusals to approve the initial definition of the national curriculum guidelines. In effect, this produced a deadlock between the States and the Commonwealth, that

\textsuperscript{98} Porter, Rizvi, Knight and Lingard 55 (emphasis in original).
blocked the development of national 'profiles' and the identification of competencies for central school subjects.

One of the main stumbling clocks to reaching an accord was the issue of the definition of Key Competencies. Queensland, in particular, made it clear that its co-operation depended on the inclusion within the list of 'Cultural Understanding' and of Languages Other Than English (LOTE). At a joint meeting of the Australian Education Council and the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training in July 1993, this stipulation was met. Ministers agreed that the list of Key Competencies as identified by the Mayer committee should be amended to include 'Cultural Understandings', and Queensland was given the responsibility for defining it within a set of applicable performance-based norms. Subsequently, a consortium coordinated by the Centre for Workplace Communication and Culture was contracted to develop 'Cultural Understandings' as a Key Competency, in association with an Interim Key Competency Advisory Group and a Cultural Understandings Reference Group drawn from the different States and Territories. The process continues.

Despite these shifts and delays, it still remains unclear that the Key Competencies reforms will be implemented at a national level. In the wake of the recalcitrance of the universities and the States, the debate has been left in some disarray. At the point of writing, the political position remains unclear. On the one hand, the sheer complexity of the programmes already established suggests that the goal of building a national curriculum is likely to continue – adapting to changed circumstances – within the State education systems, TAFE, universities and the professions. What remains is the effort to salvage some of these goals, while negotiating the definition of Key Competencies within the remaining States. This will involve various projects of field testing
and 'benchmarking' the locally-designed competency schemes as they are developed. 100 Efforts to link competency based training to industrial award classifications within various work sites are also likely to continue. 101 However, the conception of a national curriculum and a national form of credentialling remains in doubt. The process of negotiation is likely to be protracted, and its outcomes are unlikely to meet the expectations which accompanied the initial announcement of competencies, proving to be neither as revolutionary nor as regressive as its commentators have imagined.

For some, the virtual abandonment of the competency agenda can be read as a progressive victory, even if it involved some compromises. For others, it represents the obstruction of a decade of painstaking labour. If the programme does not continue at a national level, some argue, the opportunity of achieving the pluralistic and egalitarian vision of 'pathways' and 'bridges' will be lost. For these proponents of the reforms, the real disappointment is the recalcitrance of 'principled' and 'progressivist' educationists, and their unwillingness to engage more pragmatically with constructive social reform.

Of course, as the critics of competencies claim, it may be that the proponents of the scheme are themselves prey to a form of romantic utopianism in their expectation that these bureaucratically-driven reforms could advance the education system towards equity goals. Perhaps the central lesson to be learned, however, is that as the debate has unfolded, it has become more and more difficult to distinguish between pragmatism and utopianism, or between 'progressive' and 'conservative' positions. Clearly, to benefit from this


lesson, we must rethink the relations between the programmes of bureaucratic reform and the principles of intellectual critics. That is the task of the next chapter.
CHAPTER SIX: CRITICAL EXPECTATIONS

i. Modes of critique.

We turn now to a closer examination of the terms in which the competency debate has been conducted – a debate which, as we have seen, has encouraged commentators to take a stand on the side of either romantic utopianism or pragmatism. In doing so, many have found themselves adopting uncomfortable ethical postures, or in uncongenial company. In these respects, the controversy seems like a restaging of the humanities debate – and in fact some of the original cast have stayed on in the new show. However, the change in roles is significant. Many of those involved in the previous debate have shown little interest in further developments within education policy, especially as the scope shifted from concentration on the universities. As the debate has moved on, it has drawn in a wider range of commentators, many of them administrative intellectuals positioned between the academy and public administration. One effect is that this debate has occurred in a somewhat different, if adjacent area of public discussion, one less concerned with 'culture' than with debates on citizenship, schooling, social welfare and the state. Observing this requires us to recast our description of the relationship between critical reflection and the bureaucratic rationality into a form more suited to the competency debate.

In this instance, our object of interest is a mode of critique and commentary at once 'aesthetic' and 'expert', at once specialist and broadly distributed. We can pinpoint the difference by observing that a number of the key

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protagonists, such as John Freeland and Simon Marginson, are engaged both as academic commentators and as consultants to those formulating policy. One effect of this is that their comments on the policy development contain a characteristic mixture of expert empirical description and specialist ethical reflection. In other words, in shifting between their statuses as commentator and consultant, they also shift between different registers – between the modes of expert policy appraisal and the oppositional posture of critique. In doing so, they exhibit a characteristic ambivalence towards the technical and routine character of bureaucratic concerns. At some points, they show the capacity to engage in the precise task of bureaucratic planning and review, setting targets or devising means to identify outcomes or performance levels. At others, they focus their gaze on a higher plane, taking a lofty view of the 'instrumental' concerns of bureaucratic calculation.2

In the latter mode, much of the available range of commentary is sceptical, if not completely dismissive, of the rounds of negotiation and consultation that have accompanied the development of the competencies programme. Where this programme fails to approximate the absolutist ideal of popular democratic political participation or of equality, it is treated as if it were void of either political competence in or commitment to social equity. If individuals are not to become mere consumers, then they must be encouraged to develop more collective forms of identity. The ideal means for this is through democratic political participation. Such participation is conceived of both as an end in itself and as a means to a greater end. Apparently, the transformative experience of participation 'makes it possible to transcend the individualistic liberal conception of citizenship, reintegrating individual struggles for rights within a collective form of emancipation capable of realising an ideal

This common romantic republicanist tendency makes it possible for Marginson to describe the development of 'pathways' in terms of a general trade-off between citizenship and 'consumerism', just as it prompts Freeland to herald them as the precursors of a fully democratic education system.

Within the critical academy, as we have seen, such reflections on the higher ends of democratic participation and educational enlightenment have been developed as part of a specialised ethos of suspicion. Consequently, those who engage in policy consultation often exhort themselves and one another to conduct themselves in such a way as to pursue the higher end of principle, rather than treading the morally vacuous path of expediency. Many of those engaging in the negotiatory and consultatory processes stemming from the post-compulsory education reforms have found themselves disappointed. The complaint is that the discussion has left 'little room for an oppositionalist politics. While it has been possible to argue about some of the details, the essentialist structure of the Mayer proposals do not permit radically different analyses of the problems confronting the Australian economy and their relation to education and training.4 On this basis, it is argued that the public discussion of the reforms has been 'undemocratic' and that the programme represents a 'bureaucratic and managerial solution to the problems Australian education faces.5

Part of the problem is that many academics enter the bureaucratic environment wearing the moral persona of the critical intellectual, expecting governmental processes to be transparent to theoretical analysis and democratic decision.

5 Porter, Rizvi, Knight and Lingard 53.
However, this expectation significantly underestimates the circuitous character of governmental architecture, made up as it is of corridors and corners. No theory equips the critic to see around these corners. But does this necessarily mean that government is undemocratic? Or is it that critics have overestimated their own importance and powers of observation?

Perhaps the rhetoric of critical protest is misleading. Do academic commentators really imagine that it would be appropriate to enter the meeting rooms in which the competency programme is being negotiated, drive out the moneylenders and speak in the person of 'critical reason'? In such an imaginary moment, the critic might plan to pronounce in public the words of Gramsci, as Marginson does on paper:

\[\text{Democracy, by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every 'citizen' can govern and that society places him [sic], even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this...}^{6}\]

But having performed this gesture, she would no doubt find herself in the wrong room for this display. The meeting might remark, for instance, that its task on that occasion was not to meditate on the nature of democracy, but to work out means to distribute a definite range of capacities to a population and a workforce. Entailed in that task is the discipline of eschewing the invocation of abstract 'general conditions', giving serious attention instead to the business in hand – identification of the actual circumstances in which an 'unskilled worker' might achieve the status of being 'skilled'. It is this task to which the competency reforms are addressed. Our task in this chapter is to distinguish between the imaginary role of critical reflection and the more routine exchanges occurring between expert academic advice and bureaucratic

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calculation. Let us now proceed to unthread the relationship between the expert empirical components of these modes of critique, and the inflated ethical postures to which they are attached.

**ii Expertise and introspection.**

We can begin with the range of materials written by critical intellectuals for an academic audience. Here, the analysis often incorporates a bulk of expert empirical description. But this work of description soon slides into the activity of critique, concentrating on locating deeper principles of intelligibility that unify the elements described. This is most marked, as we have seen, in the prevailing tendency to interpret education policy developments in terms of doctrines or 'discourses' such as 'corporate federalism', 'corporate managerialism', 'economic rationalism' or the spread of 'human capital' assumptions. As we have noted, these formulations have been extremely influential in shaping responses to the competency programme, just as they now organise much of the existing field of critical policy analysis of Australian education.

Marginson's account of the spread of 'market principles' in Australian education policy provides a recent example. In his substantial contribution to the competencies debate, published in 1993 as *Education and Public Policy in Australia*, he provides an admirably detailed account of the field of policy developments and debate on training, on private schools and on higher education. However, the account also doubles as a theoretically-based diagnosis of the general ills of Australian education. One symptom of these ills is a 'depoliticised' bureaucracy. Another is the swing towards private schooling and consumerist approaches to education. But the real ailment is a long-standing infection, caused by the contamination of education by

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7 Marginson 66.
economic discourse and by the interests of industry in staving off the instability of advanced capitalism.

In this text, Marginson draws on a now-standard form of critical analysis, which combines detailed empirical description of educational policy developments and patterns of employment and industrial production with a theoretically-informed critique of the ideological underpinnings of educational and economic doctrines. The goal of this combined analysis is to reveal the internal incoherence of these doctrines, breaking down their claims to intellectual authority and objectivity. Marginson moves with some dexterity between detailed description and moral denunciation. He is at some pains, for instance, to show that human capital theories deployed in education policy-making are plagued by empirical problems.\(^8\) Human capital theory, he argues, has failed to find factual grounding for its key proposition – that 'education determines productivity, productivity determines earnings, and therefore education determines earnings'. This has led to the assumption that if the competencies of workers are increased, then their productivity will rise, along with their contribution to wealth creation and measured economic growth. There is little connection however, he argues, between educational outcomes and economic productivity. In fact, statistical evidence indicates that existing skills are under-used in the workplace.\(^9\) Furthermore, the theory relies on the assumption that it is possible to identify educational outcomes reliably, linking them to demonstrable effects on productivity. But human capital theories were discredited some decades ago, he argues, partly on the basis that they were unable to demonstrate a clear link between education and performance, or between education and earnings.\(^10\) In each case, those attempting to apply the theories found that educational performance could not

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\(^8\) Marginson 51-2.
\(^9\) Marginson 102-121.
\(^10\) Marginson 31-54.
be distinguished from social background or the effects of 'informal learning'. On this basis, Marginson characterises human capital theory as a discredited doctrine and a failed strategy. How is it then, he asks, that governmental and industrial interventions into the education system can justify themselves by calling on the rationale? In his account, the answer lies in the political and administrative expediency of the doctrine and the political interests which it serves.

These interests, he argues, have been promoted by events occurring on another plane, that of the history of ideas, of ideological processes and of 'discourses'. The major event on this plane has been the alliance between the 'master discourses' of liberal individualism and economic discourse. Each of these has acted from above to structure the education system into oppositions between human needs and the market (on the one hand) or between individuals and society:¹¹

if market liberalism has turned "the economy" and "the market" into absolutes, in isolation from the historical and social conditions under which they are sustained, educational liberalism has made "the individual" into the absolute horizon of social policy, so that education policy has become reduced to the production of ideal individuals who are separated from the social relations that sustain them ... the two forms of liberal individualism function as two sides of the same coin, arranging the education systems around the binary divided between academic elitism and economic rationalism: liberal studies and training ... in such a system the debate between the two forms of liberalism in education becomes merely ritualistic...¹²

Forced on to this higher plane, human capital theory throws off its dowdy disguise as an out-dated theory and is revealed as 'market-based calculation'. This is a force which claims the mantle of 'value-free rationality' and which

¹¹ Marginson 233.
¹² Marginson 235.
possesses the discursive power to reduce 'the human substance of "society"
to a mere object of appraisal':

Unlike machines or properties, human beings have conscious preferences and varying motivations. They seek non-pecuniary as well as pecuniary benefits and might acquire human capital in order to provide consumption goods for themselves, goods that would never be sold in a market.13

In turn, then, the origins of these discursive battles are located on a higher plane of dialectical oppositions between class oppression and resistance, between labour and production, between human needs and the technical and between citizenship and consumerism.14

The rapid rise from the field of policy formulation to this plane of higher analysis might well give us vertigo. Viewed from this higher plane of analysis, reforms to post-compulsory education in Australia become part of a pattern of class-based conflict that spreads across the historical horizon. But haven't some important ground-level features been flattened out in our ascent to these heights? How much of the labour of concrete empirical description has been lost in the shift to a higher mode of analysis?

Part of the problem here is that the degree of moral conviction displayed in the discussion is often accompanied by a corresponding degree of vagueness

13 Marginson 53.
14 Marginson's counterposition of consumerism to citizenship is consistent. Here, the model of democratic political participation is treated as if it should be applicable to relations of market exchange – partly on the basis that in each case, a rational individual is concerned in a transaction. Due to the rights vested in the rational individual, the exchange automatically becomes 'political' and interpretable in terms of conceptions of democratic political participation. Thus Marginson argues that the user or consumer of public services can determine these services only in two ways: by means of political participation; or by the act of consumer choice, the latter being the choice provided by the economic rationalist doctrine of 'consumer sovereignty'. The problem with the latter doctrine, it is argued, is both that it entails an unequal distribution of 'consumer power' and that the 'empowerment' of consumer choice is traded against the real power of political citizenship. Marginson 19.
about its object. At some points, the term 'economic rationalism' is used to
describe the expert deployment, in some zones of the bureaucracy, of
particular 'neo-liberal' economic doctrines. Here, the emphasis is once again
on revealing the epistemological limits of this 'rationalism'. Once again, the
account rises from description to philosophical analysis, carrying its object
with it. On the higher plane of analysis, both economic rationalism and
bureaucratic rationality are placed in the purer light of critical reason, and
revealed as both irrational and uncritical – and therefore as illegitimate.

This universalising form of reflection on policy may be distinguished from
more particularistic ways of describing political rationalities and programmes,
forms of description that might inform us about precisely how these
rationalities are put to work in the process of installing intellectual
technologies such as new assessment systems. The difference, in this
instance, is in the philosophical preoccupation with principles such as 'critical
reason'. Too often the concern with the 'rationality' of government takes
place as part of a moral-philosophical reflection on the (non)realisation of
'subjectivity' in 'society'. Such reflection is simply too remote from the
domain of government as a sphere of hopeful programmes and limited
instruments.

One of the first tasks of description required, then, is to distinguish between
the ethos of academic reflection and the political rationalities deployed within
apparatuses of government. Often, they take themselves for one another.
For instance, it may well be the case that some rationales deployed within
bureaucratic public planning are indeed 'rationalist', in the sense that they
over-theorise and idealise both the market and the state, treating each as 'an

15 On this question, see D. Burchell, 'Economic Government: Economic Rationalism
essence or inner principle that produces necessary effects simply by virtue of its presence'. As Hindess has pointed out, however, this tendency is by no means restricted to the philosophies of the political right.\textsuperscript{16} Rather, both liberal and marxian discussions of the problems of public planning within the modern welfare state tend to share an 'essentialism of the market', although in one case the market is 'an index of freedom', while in the other it is a 'a sign of exploitation'. In each instance, the economic calculation and planning activities of the bureau are treated in rationalist and philosophical terms, as if they were the actualisation of political doctrines or economic theories.\textsuperscript{17} These kinds of academic reflection on economic activity tend to shirk the more plodding description of the non-ideal circumstances in which particular markets operate. By the same token, they also tend to ignore the non-ideal and often \textit{ad hoc} circumstances in which governments arbitrate between competing policy and funding priorities.\textsuperscript{18}

As Hindess remarks, both liberal and marxian analyses of social welfare policy share the tendency to treat social programmes as if they were actualisations of economic or political theories.\textsuperscript{19} The standard accusation that the social welfare state has failed – a comment heard from both forms of commentary – often draws upon such assumptions, taking the social welfare state to task for failing to realise ideals of 'freedom' or 'equality' associated with the principles of the market or of social redistribution. In the latter case, as Hindess notes, the problem with such analyses is their equation between an absolutist ideal of equality and government's actual capacity to allocate social goods and social statuses. The expectation is that, once government recognises the principle of equality, it is capable of intervening in social

\textsuperscript{17} Hindess 8-9.
\textsuperscript{18} Hindess 150.
\textsuperscript{19} Hindess 48.
welfare arrangements and making them more egalitarian. The problem here, however, is that the modes of planning that organise social welfare provision are more limited, piecemeal and more ad hoc than this. Hindess's example, in making this point, is the limits of social welfare programmes for alleviating poverty. The endemic problem for such programmes is that of identifying 'poverty' as a norm on which welfare planning could be based. Part of the problem is the reliability of categories such as 'quality of life', 'lifestyle' or 'relative deprivation' – categories that are often unable to distinguish between 'the effects of difference in taste from those of differences in income', and that are unable to identify whether these differences have a cultural or an economic basis.\(^{20}\) Accordingly, the definition of poverty (and decisions on the distribution of scarce economic resources) remains a matter of identifying a threshold of governmental tolerance and allocating resources accordingly.\(^ {21}\) We can draw a parallel here with the problems that plague programmes for identifying and removing educational disadvantage. In each case, the definition of norms, thresholds and standards of 'disadvantage' is contingent upon 'value judgement or political decision'. In each case, the effort to redress particular disparities is likely, in its turn, to lead to other disparities. In neither case are the results likely to resemble theories of state-based economic redistribution, any more than they will be able to realise 'principled' expectations of social equality.

Having measured the distance between 'theoretician' conceptions of the market and the state and the programmatic means available to government, it becomes easier to see the problem with 'theoretician' critiques of governmental programme, especially those that presume that these programmes are the instantiation of political or economic doctrines. These

\(^{20}\) Hindess 37.

\(^{21}\) See also N. Rose, 'Socialism and Social Policy: the Problems of Inequality', *Politics and Power* 2 (1981): 111-137 for a comparable discussion of the problem of defining 'poverty'.
problems are particularly marked in current accounts of the 'amoral' educational bureaucracy. Let us take, for instance, the assertion that the bureaucracy's use of the political vocabulary of 'economic rationalism' reveals its 'depoliticised' character. Pusey's polemic against the loss of 'democratic values' is recognisable here, as is the tendency to assess the bureaucracy in terms of the gap between democratic values and bureaucratic norms, a gap registered as the absence of 'principle'. We have already characterised this account as a phantasmatic projection of a moment in which the domains of 'democratic citizenship', 'politics' and 'bureaucracy' were joined within the ideal 'polis'. This model can tell us little about the actual relationship between the 'political' and the 'bureaucratic'. As discussed above, the account provides some information about the bureaucracy, but because it conflates 'politics' with the general sphere of 'democratic values', it manages to be quite uninformative about the sphere of politics, and about the relationship between 'politics' and bureaucracies.22

In fact, as we have seen, the disjunction (observed in the last chapter) between the bureaucratic competencies programme and the political problems of its implementation demonstrates the extent to which political leadership operates within a technical and ethical zone distinct from that of the bureaucracy. Although the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports address a number of immediate electoral considerations, the competency proposals developed from long-standing bureaucratic programmes oriented to solving technical problems. The political struggle between the Federal Education Ministry and the 'vagaries and petty parochialism of State premiers'23 has in


fact helped to undermine these long-standing bureaucratic negotiations. Furthermore, as we shall see, these political difficulties threaten to cut across a long history of bureaucratic efforts to build a common national school system – efforts that have been pursued since the turn of the century. In short, it is unhelpful to collapse bureaucratic administration into (electoral) politics, by presuming that both are (flawed) expressions of democratic principles. In order to obtain more useful descriptions of these complex developments, we require some forms of analysis that are less principled and more differentiated in their description of modes of government.

iii. Means of government.

There are of course other forms of political analysis which can assist with the task of describing the current reorganisation of Australian education. Those which will prove most helpful have largely weaned themselves of concern with vast oppositions between the state and the market, or between ideology and truth. Instead, they have concentrated on a more particular historical description of the contingent circumstances in which modern forms of government emerged. Part of the process has been a shift away from the preoccupation with the state and the market as unified agencies. Instead, modern modes of government have been understood as an assemblage of diverse forces. The 'will to govern' is spread across a number of disparate

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sites and types of function. While there may be some functions that are centralised – such as the management of foreign affairs, or the existence of a central executive – the various functions of governing have been undertaken by a range of departments spread between the 'public' and the 'private'. These include various sectors of 'the social', such as families, schools, workplaces, universities, professional organisations and unions. Each of these has its own forms of organisation and norms of operation. Where these are centrally co-ordinated, this is achieved by means of alliances and connections which are painstakingly built, constantly maintained and subject to breakdown. In other words, in describing the kinds of relations occurring within the reforms of post-compulsory education, it is not a question of distinguishing between the state and the market, the public and the private, the interventionist and the non-interventionist, the state and civil society. Instead, it is a matter of tracing the implementation, effect and limits of various governmental programmes and strategies.

Typically, the effectiveness of such programmes depends on the extent to which government is capable of drawing public and private forces into some sort of collaboration. This rarely occurs through compulsion – more often, it


relies upon incentives and enlistment, upon means to adjust choices and aspirations, to enlist co-operation and to build alliances. The main mechanism involved in building up the alliances so central to modern 'liberal' government, according to Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, is the setting up of points of translation between governmental objectives and semi-autonomous social, industrial and legal sites. In this account, 'liberal' government is understood not as the activation of a political philosophy, but as an historically specific form of governmentality, one that enables the centralised elements of government to shape the activities of sites, agents and institutions, both 'public' and 'private'. For Miller and Rose, the key element of this governmental strategy is the development of methods of rule that establish regimes of self-government within semi-autonomous sites, co-ordinating and structuring their activities without resort to coercion or heavy-handed legislation. Here, they emphasise, it is important to understand the role of particular kinds of expertise. It is expert knowledge and advice (statistics, sociological analysis, social psychology, anthropology and so on) that provide the forms of inscription and the technical vocabularies deployed in managing these different sectors. Expert forms of advice serve to alleviate the tensions of difficult decisions involved in centralised allocation and arbitration, identifying problems, setting priorities and testing the success of programmes.

One implication of these analyses is that critique of the competency programme may be fundamentally misguided in taking as its targets state power and bureaucratic instrumentalism. Government simply cannot function without instruments, since it is only able to operate on its domains though specific means. The problem with the idea of a completely planned economy, for instance, is the complex range of obstacles with which public planning has

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29 Miller and Rose, 'Governing Economic Life' 19.
30 We can understand this as part of the strategies of the welfare state, with us since the point at which governmental tactics such as social insurance were established. See Donzelot, 'The mobilisation of society'.

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to contend. Government economic management is concerned with 'the aggregate behaviour of legally autonomous agents' and has no guarantee of compliance. Attempts to build sustainable growth, to improve international competitiveness and reduce unemployment, for instance, involve securing the co-operation of bodies including unions, the ACTU and senior management in the public and the private sector. Government has a range of instruments at its disposal to secure this co-operation, including tax, legislation, the offer of grants, and the promotion of private investment. But more often, operationalising governmental objectives entails a range of indirect relations of regulation and persuasion, assembling agents and institutions within governmental networks built not through legal or institutional ties, but through common goals, vocabularies and constructions of problems.

These points can be of some assistance in clarifying the often complex relationship between expert vocabularies such as 'human capital theories', political rationalities such as 'economic rationalism' and the kinds of processes involved in installing governmental technologies such as new systems of certification. What happens if we apply these terms to Marginson's account of the revival of 'human capital' doctrines? In suggesting that his analysis may be missing the mark, there is no need to dispute his description of the use of the political vocabulary of 'human capital' in various forms of planning. Apparently, the vocabulary has been

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31 Hindess 150.
32 Hindess 67.
33 Hindess 26.
34 Miller and Rose 'Governing Economic Life' 10. For an instance, see K.E. Sinclair, Aiming Higher: Business/Higher Education Round Table 1991 Education Surveys: the Concerns and Attitudes of Leading Business Executives and University Heads to Education Priorities in Australia in the 1990s (Camberwell, Vic: Business/Higher Education Round Table, 1991) and the discussions reported therein. The example is not unusual, but it provides an instance of the process of 'translation', a process in which chief executive officers from business and vice-chancellors from universities were invited to express and expound their 'educational attitudes and beliefs' on key educational 'issues', in a context designed, simultaneously, to elicit efforts to adjust and adapt these attitudes, shaping them to a common normative register.
called upon in discussion of national industrial performance, productivity and training levels, in efforts to promote the participation of industry in training, in rationales for governmental spending on training and in debates on strategies for combatting long-term unemployment. In these instances, Marginson may be quite correct in observing that the vocabulary provides the bureaucracy with a degree of credibility, based on an apparently expert prediction of likely economic and industrial outcomes from the adjustment of educational participation levels and from increased industrial investment in training. He may also be right in contending that, in certain instances, public administration has taken on vocabularies developed within the private corporation. Do these developments mean, however, that we are seeing the expansion of a discourse or an ideology directly linked to hegemonic political and economic interests? Do they add up to the conclusion that the sphere of private economic interests has taken over the public sphere? Might they not indicate, instead, that relations between the public and the private are more mixed than this?

In fact, if recent historians of national planning are to be relied upon, the capacity to conduct national planning depends in fact on a complex set of exchanges between the private corporation and emerging national bureaucracies, exchanges that were in fact informed by elaborate modelling of the ethical environments of both the firm and the bureau. These achievements depended not on the take-over of the public by the private, but on the construction of each of these zones. The development of private enterprise as we now know it actually made possible the existence of elaborate new systems of national statistics and record-keeping which we now associate with the instruments available to the 'public sphere' of the

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state. Nor are these developments easily understood in terms of the standard distinction between the ethical imperatives attached to the 'public sphere' and the ethical void of private interest. To begin with, the 'private' firm developed by means of highly organised modes of ethical governance. Furthermore, it seems that state-based systems of national accounting developed as government modelled its activities on the managerial regimes of the private enterprise. How recent, then, is the 'corporatisation' of the public sphere? To what extent, furthermore, are the 'private' and the 'public' distinguishable? In fact, the introduction of a bureaucratic schema designed to enlist employers in registering their staff's level of competency against a common scale is only one instance of a variety of ways in which private enterprises are governed through a combination of direct legislation, financial incentives and penalties. Surely the strategy could just as easily be described as one of the 'governmentalisation' of the corporation, as well as the corporatisation of government? But once again, we require a denser mode of description before we could claim to perceive how this is occurring.


39 In many respects, the reform programme fails to accord with the critics' conception of the opening of the unregulated market. Instead, there is a more reciprocal governmental process of canvassing the opinions of 'business', but also intervening to reshape the business environment. See for instance M. Thompson, Key Competencies in Small Business: Focus on Communications and Maths (National Centre for Vocational Education and Research, Leabrook 1992) which shows how the application of competencies research leads to calls for the reform of
Similar observations could be made about Marginson's warnings that the expansion of the 'private' sphere of domestic and familial choices has made public education into a 'marketplace'. Here, the work of description has already been done. Bruce Smith has argued that, in fact, the policy emphasis on the importance of parental choice hardly demonstrates the supposition that education should be determined solely by market demand. Instead, the emphasis has been on altering parents' ambitions, students' choices and the patterns of educational enrolments. These processes actually take place not in a 'free market' but as part of governmental systems for allocating resources and for planning the provision of educational services – a process entailing considerable public regulation. Although such programmes certainly involve efforts to enhance the autonomy of family life, by establishing systems of self-regulation, this does not make this sphere less governable. In fact, what we have seen over the past two decades is the establishment of a 'government-made market', in the governmental regulation of private schooling and of the provision of privatised modes of training. The 'privatisation' of these private spheres is best seen as a matter of developing tactics in self-government and in the management of the family, rather than as a process that frees the private sphere from government, splitting political citizenship from 'consumer small business, and for the development of workplace-based vocational education and training, as well as for the establishment of state-sponsored small business corporations and centres. In other words, far from being simply 'industry-driven', the reforms provide an opportunity for small business to reorganise itself according to governmental imperatives.

Smith argues that educational critics' conception of a clear opposition between the public and the private sector are not borne out either by the composition of the Australian educational market or by the historical relationship between consumerism and government. It was government, he argues, which created the educational marketplace and which provided parents with the means to conduct themselves in it as conscientious consumers. In a history of the consumer ethic and its relation to practices of self-formation, he goes on to provide a genealogy of the modern responsible parent, possessed of the capacity and the desire to choose the right school for his or her child. See B. Smith, 'Educational Consumerism: Family Values or the Meanest of Motives?', Child and Citizen: Genealogies of Schooling and Subjectivity, ed. D. Meredyth and D. Tyler (Brisbane: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, 1993) 181-206.
sovereignty', as Marginson would have it. Across the various sites involved in these reforms, then, private industry and private ambitions are 'governmentalised', being drawn into programmatic ambitions through indirect means of shaping and normalising, means made available by particular forms of expertise.

Having made these points, we are now in a better position to appreciate the intricacy of the bureaucratic tasks involved in implementing the competency programme. Clearly, the territories covered by these reform programmes are extensive, ranging from the family to the workplace, the universities and the social welfare sector. Implementing these programmes will entail considerable negotiation with a diversity of sites and kinds of expertise. Each of these has discretionary powers, codes and habits that are not likely to be reordered by governmental decree. Setting up the kinds of training agreements envisaged, for instance, will involve substantial liaison with employers and unions, and this will necessarily draw in a range of questions about young people's industrial rights as workers. Enlisting parents in different vocational ambitions for their children will require adjustments to conceptions of social rights, particularly in lowering expectations of immediate access to universities as the mark of social mobility within the family. Although the state has access to tactics such as raising the legal school leaving age, it will also be necessary to employ more delicate tactics in order to adjust the choices and vocational aspirations of students and their parents. Furthermore, the strategy of building a co-ordinated national training and education system depends upon making connections between the objectives of different wings of the State and federal bureaucracies, from economic planning to policy on job creation, youth, social

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42 On the governmental role of expertise, see Miller and Rose, 'Governing Economic Life', 8.
security, family welfare and industrial relations. If these territories are widespread, they are also solidly rooted in the soil of institutional social welfare arrangements. Each is dense and self-regenerating, with stubborn root systems built up over decades.

Government has a number of instruments capable of cutting through these root systems – including direct intervention by means of legislation or funding mechanisms. But as the previous chapter's description of reactions to the competency programme indicates, such tactics soon encounter significant resistance on the part of semi-autonomous sites and institutions such as the universities, schools or workplaces. On the ground, paths through these tangled social networks are being cut with fragile and fallible instruments, such as the intricate mechanisms of institutional articulation, the adjustment of industrial awards and the design of data bases and assessment systems.

If we adopt this mode of description, does this mean that we are taking a 'technocratic' approach to educational governance? Are we too concentrated on an immediate and utilitarian means of reform, at the expense of higher political ends such as equality, freedom or self-realisation? In fact, the criticism implied in these questions assumes too readily the separability of the ethical and the technical, and of the political and the governmental. Instead, it is possible to propose that the bureaucratic character of the competency programme is not a flaw but a condition of its possibility. Furthermore, the problems that these measures address are unlikely to be transcended by the forms of critique at the disposal of academic commentary. Such critique typically ignores the fact that the work of bureaucratic planning has ethical components of its own. Understanding this will make it easier to appreciate both the endemic nature of the 'failures' of bureaucratic planning and its technical, ethical and political achievements. More importantly, it will enable
us to situate the competencies agenda in its correct political and technical context.

iv. Principles, aims and targets.

We have noted the ambitious nature of the reform objectives and the range of territory that they encompass, from secondary schools to workplaces, TAFEs, training sites, universities, union meeting rooms and so on. Implementing these programmes entails linking the reform objectives to a variety of institutional interests, finding common registers in which to construe problems, set targets and identify failures. The effects of these developments have to be understood in terms of the complex relationship between academic critique and the expert vocabularies, intellectual technologies and political rationalities deployed in governmental programmes.43

A striking instance of the complex relationship between critique, expertise and programmatic planning can be provided if we return to the figure of John Freeland, a figure who exemplifies the plurality of statuses and ethical stances available to critical intellectuals, as well as the extent to which academic advisers are engaged in programmatic planning and expert negotiation. Freeland, it will be recalled, was one of the early proponents of the competency programme. When addressing himself to an academic audience, he did so as a pragmatic advocate of reform, urging the need for 'progressive' educationists to limit their more romantic criticisms of assessment and certification, and to engage more pragmatically with the political opportunities presented by the post-compulsory education reforms. However, he also acted in another capacity, as an expert adviser on youth welfare issues to the Finn committee, producing a report on equity and

43 Rose and Miller, 'Political Rationalities'.
disadvantaged youth later published as an appendix to the report. Here, Freeland was operating outside the academy, within the network of consultancies and funded research that links the bureaucracy and the social welfare sector to the universities. Interestingly enough, for all his emphasis on pragmatism elsewhere, his submission expresses highly 'principled' expectations of what the reform programme may be able to achieve.

Freeland's expert advice to the Finn committee on the equity issues affecting young people incorporates a series of reflections on the nature of democracy and on the principles which should inform Australian education. Like a number of commentators, he assesses the competency debate in terms of the extent to which it presents the possibility of realising visions of a fully democratic education system. And like the opponents of the competency programme, he associates the achievement of democratic education with the possibility of reconciling deep divisions within the individual and within society — divisions between the liberal and the vocational, the human and the technical. If Australian education is to be democratic, he argues, then government must also pursue a number of goals. It must reduce 'external socio-economic-cultural barriers' to access and participation in the compulsory and post-compulsory years of schooling. It must ensure equality of general educational resources for all, and an enhanced provision for structurally disadvantaged students. It must also break down the centralised bureaucratic control of schooling and facilitate teacher, student and parent participation in educational decisions. Finally, it must radically deconstruct and re-construct both the school curriculum and the nature of teachers' work.44

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Note the curious range of elements which Freeland nominates as ingredients for democratic education. While calling for parity in resources, he advocates special provision for disadvantaged students. While urging extensive governmental intervention, he advises administrators to reduce central bureaucratic control. And while calling for greater autonomy for families and schools, he advocates the system-wide monitoring of inequities due to socio-economic background and family context. Each of these imperatives can be identified with a standard ambiguity within debate on education and equality, one which is characteristic of more general confusions in conceptions of democracy. To begin with, the provision of commonality within a comprehensive education system is understood as the means for the education system to realise democratic principles, recognising the social rights attached to citizenship. 'Active democratic citizenship', in turn, is understood as 'full participation by all in the private domestic, and the public, social, cultural, political and economic life of society'.\footnote{Freeland 221.} It is conceded, though, that democratic citizenship is dependent on limited and definite competences acquired in particular circumstances. Moreover, it is government that has the responsibility for determining the capacities that a citizenry requires. Government is called upon to make these decisions by determining 'what competencies are desirable for an active democratic life'. In other words, the 'grassroots' of democracy can only flourish if its seeds are first planted and nurtured by governmental action and educational provision. But at the same time, it is also assumed that both government and schooling should spring from the organic political will of the people.

Having offered this rationale for the reforms, Freeland then goes on to develop some concrete recommendations for governmental action. This takes the form of a suggested method for identifying special educational needs and
redressing them within remedial programmes. Here, Freeland draws on his expertise in youth welfare in order to offer a definition of disadvantage. This is derived from a discussion of the extent to which young people are placed 'at risk' of failing to achieve this goal of 'full participation', due to economic and cultural and ideological barriers that block their transition from dependent childhood to adult independence. 'Adulthood' is defined as equivalent to full participation as a citizen in various aspects of work and 'life'. Those who are unable to make a successful transition to adulthood in this sense, he suggests, should be regarded as 'disadvantaged'. This amounts to the ambit claim that all teenagers who leave school early should be classified as disadvantaged, since in risking unemployment and the inability to participate in work, they risk being unable to attain adult status. He estimates that, in February 1991, approximately 16.3 per cent of 15 to 19 year old males and 20.3 per cent of 15 to 19 year old females were 'at risk in their transition to adulthood'.46

Freeland's model for intervention is acknowledged within the final report of the Finn committee, as part of the following summary:

It has been argued, with some justification, that all those teenagers who leave school early and who do not continue in any form of education or training should be classified as disadvantaged. Comparisons of the educational and employment outcomes of Year 12 achievers with those who leave school before Year 13 make this clear ... Using employment and educational participation data, Freeland estimated an 'at risk' group in August 1990 of about 14 per cent of the teenage population.47

However, few of Freeland's formulations or recommendations were taken up. For instance, the committee chose to put aside his recommendation that 14 per cent of the teenage population should be regarded as 'at risk' or disadvantaged. Instead, it set a more limited target for remedial action:

46 Freeland 190.
47 Finn Report 133.
...this review committee decided that this chapter would focus on a smaller sub-group of the 'at risk' group identified above – those who would be classified as deeply disadvantaged in relation to their educational participation – aboriginal youth, some NESB young people, some young women, the homeless, the long-term unemployed, those in isolated communities, young offenders and disabled young people.\(^{48}\)

Noting that the recommendation of the Report itself were designed to 'address the educational problems of those teenagers who might be included under broad definition of disadvantage', the committee recommended that the reform programme directly address only specific forms of 'deep disadvantage', setting numerical targets for raising levels of educational retention within particular 'at risk' groups.\(^{49}\) The focus of this target-setting was quite tight. Rural and isolated young people were identified as being 'at risk' of educational marginalisation, while young women were not, except insofar as they figured within equity programmes designed to shift them in different vocational directions.\(^{50}\) Similarly, the educational participation of young Aboriginal people was a prime concern, while that of young people of non-English speaking backgrounds was not.\(^{51}\) Nor was low socio-economic status registered as a 'deep disadvantage', on the basis that education provides 'one of the most powerful mechanisms for ameliorating social and economic disadvantage over the course of a generation'.\(^{52}\) The rationale given for this decision was that a number of equity-based programmes

\(^{48}\) Finn Report 134.

\(^{49}\) Finn Report 134. Here, the Committee drew on advice from the Australian Council for Educational Research, contained in Appendix 2(B), 'Participation by Disadvantaged Young People in Post-Compulsory Education and Training', Finn Report 47-160.

\(^{50}\) The Finn Report noted that on the criteria used to define disadvantage for its purposes, gender was not to be regarded as an indicator of disadvantage, though, it is noted, there are 'equity issues associated with gender which remain to be addressed in the education system'. The factors cited are those of the 'balance of courses taken by male and females students' and 'imbalances in vocational training arrangements'. Finn Report 137.

\(^{51}\) Finn Report 138.

\(^{52}\) Finn Report 140.
designed to address particular forms of disadvantage were already in place throughout the country:

In particular, given the enormous range of detailed policy and programme work around the country, the Committee has focused its recommendations on a very few areas where it appears that greater efforts may be warranted, such as:

* the disabled
* the process of transition from school for some 'at risk' young people; and
* the co-ordination of education and training systems with other support structures for young people.53

In this instance, it seems that the committee was less concerned with the iteration of general principles than with workable norms and procedures for identifying priorities and allocating scarce resources. In that sense, its use of Freeland's advice on equity issues and disadvantage was highly selective, adopting the vocabulary and using the category of 'at risk' youth as a tactical means of translating between competing imperatives.

For many commentators, the difference between Freeland's broad definition of disadvantage and the narrow targets set by the committee might serve as an instance of the generosity of principle and the meanness of bureaucratic calculation. The proportion of young people 'at risk' is identified by means of a governmental grid of categories of relative disadvantage, in relation to a norm of an employed adult, one able to 'make the transition' from school to work or training. It is not made in relation to a general goal of equality. By comparison with the principle of 'full participation', the statistical definition of targets for retention seems limited indeed.

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53 Finn Report 140.
But can we really dismiss the committee's deliberations in these terms? To put it another way, why do we continue to presume that questions of equity should be decided 'non-instrumentally'? Is Freeland's definition of 'disadvantage' any less technical and normative than the definition that replaced it? Of course, asking questions of this kind involves overcoming a certain suspicion about the calculative mechanisms of the 'science of state', and cultivating more appreciation of the achievement entailed in shaping the chaotic substance of social life into regular categories and identifiable objects.

v. Fragile and fallible instruments.
At this point, it is worth remembering that the competency programme did not emerge from a general will to realise liberal democratic principles, but from a specific set of problematisations: those of the need to produce a certain industrial outcomes, to find an administratively and politically acceptable solution to the problem of youth unemployment and to address the issue of the 'unmet demand' for university places. These problematisations arose from technical means used to identify problems of educational distribution. Equally, they depend for their solution on a limited set of instruments and strategies.

In fact, the fragility of the instruments available to government is one of the main reasons for the development of the device of competencies. This is made clear in the Finn committee's comments on its rationale for choosing the instrument of 'competency records' over other available mechanisms. In this rationale, the main task of the committee was defined as that of setting targets for improving the educational participation and achievement of young people at a national level. Associated with this was the problem of devising some means of tracking the movement of students across the archipelago of public and private education and training sites within the different States. As the
committee noted, there are few available means to do this. Retention rates provide one mechanism for monitoring the movement of an educational population across various sites. Participation rates (or 'the activity of young people in education and training programmes for particular periods of time') provide another, as does the tracking of 'pathways', or the flow of students through various educational programmes over a set period. But there are technical problems with each of these. Monitoring retention rates is difficult, given the distortions resulting from factors of migration and transfer between State systems and between public and private training providers. There are similar statistical problems in tracking patterns of participation, particularly given the lack of administrative data on intake patterns. Nor is it practicable to base national policy targets on the 'pathways and flows' of young people between different institutions, given the scale of the population to be followed. Furthermore, none of these measures gives any indication about whether time spent in training produces satisfactory educational outcomes. This is what the competency scheme is supposed to supply, by providing the federal educational bureaucracy with the means to trace the patterns of educational distribution across the country.

If we are tempted to dismiss this undertaking, it is worth giving some close attention to the terms in which the Mayer committee, in turn, described the bureaucratic ambitions attached to the schema:

The goal for development of the Key Competencies is for all young people to achieve the highest Performance Level in the full set of Key Competencies. It is critical that young people's opportunities for achievement are not restricted arbitrarily by assumptions about their potential achievement or by the procedures used to assess their level of performance.54

At first glance, the only noteworthy element of the statement is the now-familiar absence of any stated commitment to realise a general principle such as 'equality of outcomes' from this reorganisation of the education system. Nor is any promise made that the reorganised system will be able to achieve a more moderate goal of achieving 'equality of opportunity'. However, we should take care not to pass over the remark too lightly, since it does articulate some of the serious ethical and administrative purposes of the programme. After all, what would it mean for government to set itself the goal of equipping all the population with the full range of each of the Key Competencies? What sort of duty is the school system attributing to itself? Surely this is nothing if not ambitious, not to say visionary?

We can take another instance of this 'unprincipled' bureaucratic ambition from the Mayer committee's speculations on the political opportunities provided by the establishment of a national database derived from school assessment records. As the assessment of individuals' acquisition of Key Competencies is carried out across the nation – so the scheme goes – it will be collected within a computerised data base. This central bank of data should make it possible for all students to obtain their own records at any point at which they exit from school or training. But at the same time, it would also be used to supply statistical snapshots of the educational state of the nation, of particular regions, and of certain groups within the population. In fact, one proposal before the Mayer committee was that of placing statistical tags on those identified as belonging to disadvantaged groups, so as to monitor their educational progress. The proposed criteria for inclusion in such a remedial group were defined in terms of the probability factors of those 'at risk' of becoming 'early school leavers'. Compared with the 'total cohort', these young people are:
* more likely to come from a low socio-economic background; indeed, low SES background in the group which left school earliest is almost double that of the total cohort;

* nearly twice as likely to come from a sole parent family;

* much less likely to have at least one parent with a post-secondary education;

* about four times less likely to have a parent with a university education; and

* more likely to be disabled and, on the whole, less likely to be from a non-English speaking background.55

This vast statistical machine probably looks like progressivist educator’s nightmare. But unlike the cultural critic, government simply does not possess the means to look into its conscience in order to find the definition of disadvantage. What it uses instead are intricate calculations of probability, of risk, of proportion and of disparity – calculations originally invented under the title of ‘political arithmetic’.56 Should we wish to be without such machines? How possible is it to imagine a comprehensive national scheme for monitoring educational participation and outcomes that would not rely on statistical mechanisms in order to monitor comparability, accountability and equity? The formidable technicality of these as yet imaginary mechanisms should not make us mistake them for infallible engines of social control. Rather, the very complexity of their construction makes them both rare and fragile creations.

There are of course distinct limits to what the reform programmes will be able to achieve, just as there are limits set within the bureaucratic objectives themselves. But do these limitations simply stem from the bureaucracy’s lack

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55 Mayer Report 45.
56 See further discussion of these questions in Chapters Seven, Eight, Ten and Eleven.
of social vision? Those who dismiss the policy programme in these terms can be accused, in their turn, of a lack of imagination in underestimating the reformative ambitions of administrative intellectuals. Consider once again the sheer ambition of the expectation that these routines of assessment could be installed in every educational and training site. It is a tough call. Competency standards must be generic enough to be intelligible across a range of work and training contexts, but precise enough to be applicable in particular sites. The definition of Key Competencies will involve transposing the norms of a range of different sites into a common register, finding points of translation between the different requirements of the school, the workplace and public and private training sites.

The problems already signal themselves. For one thing, how are these systems of assessment to be nationally comparable if they are also supposed to be sensitive to the differences between State-based education systems? If they are to be capable of recording 'personal capacities', how are they to avoid being unreliably subjective or discriminatory? Who will train those carrying out these assessments? Is the owner of the local newsagency necessarily equipped with the ethical and technical capacity to assess young people's possession of 'Cultural Understanding', much less 'Ethics'? Some sense of the problems built into the process is provided by Martha Kinsman's comments on the problems already encountered by efforts to implement equivalent schemes of workplace-based competency standards in TAFE:

Problems of practical feasibility include the enervating and interminable task of preparing hundreds, if not thousands, of highly specific skills and competencies. The added requirement of these competencies then being ratified through an industrial relations 'bargaining' process means that it also takes an inordinate amount of

57 See comments to this effect by J.C. Walker, 'Summary and Discussion', Higher Education and the Competency Movement: Implications for Tertiary Education and the Professions (Canberra: Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, 1992) 90.
time. For example, competency standards development which commenced in the building industry and textile clothing and footwear industries as early as 1988 is still in progress and has not yet reached industrial resolution. By the time such competencies are available, their technological currency may well be questionable.\textsuperscript{58}

Those implementing the scheme are far from unaware of the difficulty entailed in devising an assessment scheme capable of meeting the demands of the schools, the workplace and the family, while retaining public credibility. This question is addressed at some length within the Mayer Report, in terms of the need to develop principles of assessment that could 'meet the need for consistency within a framework of flexibility to accommodate this diversity'.\textsuperscript{59} The concerns here are with 'validity, reliability, fairness and feasibility'.\textsuperscript{60}

The requirements of the Key Competencies' criteria for judging performance and assessment methods should be made explicit to the students/trainee. Assessment procedures should provide for the recognition of Key Competencies, no matter how, where or when they have been acquired. Students/trainees who, for whatever reason, do not take part in the formal learning process associated with development of a Key Competency should have opportunities to demonstrate their performance and obtain an assessment ... assessment procedures should be designed to provide all students/trainees with opportunities to demonstrate their performance across the full range of performance levels.\textsuperscript{61}

No doubt those who read the documents as expressions of corporate managerialism and market calculation are unsurprised to find that one of the technologies called upon to answer this need is derived from 'quality

\textsuperscript{58} M. Kinsman, 'Competency Based Education in TAFE', \textit{Higher Education and the Competency Movement: Implications for Tertiary Education and the Professions} (Canberra: Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, 1992) 35.
\textsuperscript{59} Mayer Report 30.
\textsuperscript{60} Mayer Report 30.
\textsuperscript{61} Mayer Report 31.
assurance' techniques drawn from industry. Those convinced that the competency reforms represent the revival of 'Taylorism' and the imposition of the factory model upon the classroom are no doubt untroubled, also, by the question of why it is that this particular industrial and vocational technology is being called upon to supply the condition of 'neutrality' associated with the schema. But isn't it possible that the recourse to this technology indicates just as much about the difficulties internal to the education system as it does about the imperialism of industry?

In fact, the failings of school assessment and selection are a consistent topic of public discussion, with each State education system being plagued by protests against the unfairness, inefficiency and incoherence of its certification and selection systems. These are often contradictory protests, in one moment provoking protest against the subjective nature of teachers' classroom assessments, and the next giving rise to denunciations of the impersonal standardisation involved in statistically-based moderation, in public examinations or in testing. If a national system of assessment and credentialling is to gain public support, then those implementing these schemes will have to address these routine anxieties in the public psyche.

It may well be, as some have argued, that the technologies of assessment and measurement are in danger of being raised to heights beyond their limits in these reforms. The apparatus of assessment is certainly a clumsy one, made up of ill-fitting components and crusted over with failures. Its machinery is fallible, subject to failure and difficult to fix. However, there are not many models available to replace it. The point is important, since it helps us to

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62 See Mayer Report 33. Here it is noted that recent moves towards the adoption of quality assurance systems in industry 'have their parallels in assessment, with an increasing emphasis on the establishment of explicit standards and a focus on improving the quality of assessment practice and decisions through the provision of training in assessment procedures and interpretation of standards'.
appreciate both the rarity and the fragility of governmental instruments. To understand it more fully, we will need to know more about the actual mechanisms provided by the apparatus of school assessment, and more about its endemic 'failures'. We return to these questions in Part III, in a description of the 'assessment complex', a construction built of an intriguing combination of dense technical calculation, overlain by closely-knit pedagogic commitments and political aspirations. For the moment, however, let us concentrate on consolidating our analysis of the relationships between critical expectations of governmental programmes and the means available to meet them.

vi. Conclusion.

We began this chapter by counterposing the kinds of critical expectations that have been applied to the competency debate. Both the proponents and the opponents of the scheme, it was argued, shared a romantic republicanist conception of the relationship between educational reform and greater ends of political self-realisation, characteristically tied to democratic values such as citizenship and participation. We noted, however, that insofar as the competency programme is concerned with participation and citizenship, this bears little relation to moral or philosophical conceptions of political participation. Instead, the programmatic ambitions of the competency reforms cut across a number of rights-base claims, in the same movement with which the programme cuts across actual educational and social sites.

Does this mean then that we are indeed facing a crisis of instrumentalism? Has public policy indeed lost sight of the greater ends of equality and self-determination, in the pursuit of the technical means to address the problems facing it? After all, it is by no means clear that the competency reforms will produce greater educational equality, or that they will promote the end of
critical enquiry or of democratic participation. In fact, the rationales supporting them are interested in participation only as means to the limited ends of forming a workforce and a citizenry with a definite range of attributes and attitudes. These ends are pursued within programmes of formidable technical complexity and administrative ambition.

We have also begun to locate some clues, however, that indicate that these developments are neither as new nor as urgent as their critics maintain. Indeed, the ambitions of the educational bureaucracy and the obstacles that it faces are too complex and wide-ranging to have appeared on the historical scene suddenly. Rather, the problematisations and programmes driving these reforms stem from some longer-standing duties and obligations now built into the education system's public undertakings. These include, for instance, the commitment to providing a common plateau of competence to all citizens, one that gives them the standing and the capacity to maintain the status of citizen. But they also include the administrative responsibility to allocate differentiated educational outcomes and to provide reliable and regular forms of vocational distribution. For critical intellectuals, these co-existing functions appear to be contradictory. But at this point, we can be sure that this characterisation is the expression of a specifically philosophical mode of reflecting on the principles that ought to underlie the conduct of the education system. We might also begin to suspect that this form of reflection bears at best a tangential relation to the more mundane plane on which educational planning occurs.

In order to pursue these clues, we will have to acquire a more solid understanding of the popular school system itself. What we are faced with in current efforts to reform the Australian education system is in fact an extremely long-standing set of governmental objectives, with a solid basis in
administrative programmes spanning many decades. Since at least the turn of the century, mass popular schooling has been seen as a means to administer the formation of adults and as an apparatus for forming a workforce and a population. These rationales have coexisted with child-centred approaches and with the school's role as a locus for self-fulfilment. But this has by no means been an unconscious contradiction in the logic of modern schooling. Instead, it has been one of the fundamental problematicalities of recent schooling policy. These dual objectives stem from governmental efforts to promote the security and prosperity of the state, the productiveness of national industry and the well-being of a productive, literate and civically responsible population. This has occurred during the rapid expansion of a relatively recent system of mass education – an uneven and incomplete expansion, still faced with many obstacles.

This emphasis on the recent and contingent achievement of mass schooling in this country provides the main argument of Chapter Seven. Here, I argue that the Australian popular education system did not emerge as the vehicle for a single set of principles. Far from being the expression of the self-realisation of either the rational individual or the political community, it is the product of the definite and limited capacities of forms of bureaucratic organisation, shaped by a contingent array of administrative, ethical, political and pastoral objectives. It is these contingent historical elements which created the conditions in which the modern education bureaucracy could organise its activities in terms of objectives such as 'commonality' and equity. Accordingly, it is in this historical context that we need to place the bureaucratic ambitions of the modern school system.
CHAPTER SEVEN: GOVERNING EXPECTATIONS

i. Introduction.
The competencies debate has served to exemplify the mismatch between educational critique and the field of governmental action which it takes as its object. In its absolutist preoccupation with principle, critique is often impervious to the limits posed by the technical, ethical and political components of education planning. Overestimating the degree of ethical vantage provided by its institutional position, academic policy critique often overlooks the efforts of arbitration and negotiation entailed in implementing bureaucratic programmes. Where it is prepared to be of assistance, critical commentary offers to clarify these difficulties by joining those engaged in these activities in moments of philosophical reflection. At times, many of those involved in policy implementation make use of these critical exercises and rise to a higher plane. But during the working day, those responsible for shaping the school system return to the ground-level of government, one in which the education system sprawls out of sight across the field of social administration. In their everyday task of tracking this rapid expansion, administrators make little use of critical vision, partly because the critical gaze is trained either too high or too deep to reach the outskirts of suburban construction. Instead, they rely upon the available intellectual and political means for inscribing and operating on educational reality.

In the case of the competency reforms, the education bureaucracy has undertaken the formidable task of establishing commonality within the credentialling and training systems of the education complex. In doing so, as we have seen, it is required to reconcile a number of competing imperatives. On the one hand, it
must be able to address itself to a variety of often conflicting demands, often couched in terms of absolute educational principles. These range from demands based on the political rights of citizens, to expectations invested in education as a field of social welfare. On the other hand, the bureaucracy must also be able to satisfy a different range of public imperatives: those concerned with the fair and efficient determination of 'education outcomes'. To put it another way, many critics hold the school system accountable to absolute rights to individual or collective self-realisation. At the same time, it remains the main source for the normative ranking of the population and therefore a positive source of social differentiation and inequality. Despite the strong expectation that schooling should be able to realise principles such as equality, schooling is inescapably tied to the machinery of social training and differentiation.\textsuperscript{1} For all the expectations attached to the building of 'pathways' and to the provision of commonality, it is not as if building a more uniform national education system will remove the schools' institutional role of distributing qualifications and social standing. If anything, these functions will be strengthened and systematised.

To describe schooling as made up of distributional machinery seems, no doubt, reductive. Nevertheless, it is a routine and intractable fact that the education system acts in this way. Furthermore, there is little political or ethical point in simply calling for these mechanisms to be dismantled. To do so, as I have begun to suggest, is to underestimate the fragility and rarity of these instruments that

make up the intellectual technology of equity calculations. After all, there is nothing either natural or inevitable about the development of means to monitor educational participation. As we have seen, the task of setting targets for increasing the educational participation of 'problem' populations is extremely complex. It entails not only the existence of means to track the movements of populations across the educational field, but also the establishment of reliable norms and points of comparison. These norms and targets are often arbitrary. Particular patterns of inequality acquire significance at various points, and programmes designed to address particular inequities often promote disparities in other areas.

There is no question that these bureaucratic calculations are limited and purposive. Nor is there any question that the school system fails to deliver equality in the sense of an absolute right to self-realisation. The question, instead, is whether we are in a position to change this, by providing philosophical clarification or political critique. Are the routine and intractable limitations of the available intellectual and political technologies really subject to moral-philosophical adjudication?

To assume this to be so, I have argued, is to overestimate the claims of a particular mode of critique and to underestimate the achievements of the school system itself. What would it mean, though, to allow the education system a greater historical mass and moral density than those accounts that treat it as the transparent expression of principle? Hunter offers one answer to this question in observing that 'state schooling supports the aspiration for equality of access within the constraints imposed by a bureaucratically organised process of social
selection, and intellectuals should accept these constraints as ethical limits on their own moral and political expectations.\(^2\)

In this chapter, I take up the argument that intellectuals should learn to 'govern their expectations' of equalisation, recognising the conditions and limits within which educational reform occurs, and acknowledging that the unequal outcomes of mass schooling may have a degree of 'civic legitimacy' – a legitimacy guaranteed, in fact, by the bureaucratic elements of the education system.\(^3\) The first step involves clarifying these expectations, pin-pointing some standard confusions within conceptions of the relationship between political principle and governmental technologies, between states and citizens, and between rights and capacities. Despite the romantic political expectation that citizens possess the capacity to exercise these pre-given rights simply by virtue of being human, democratic 'participation', I argue, is a more painstaking achievement. It entails the acquisition of definite capacities required to exercise these rights – capacities distributed (unevenly) by the school system itself. The distribution of these capacities and competencies cannot be credited to the vision of cultural prophets. Rather, the credit belongs to the institutions capable of equipping citizens with the capacity to exercise these rights. The government's competency programme is typical of these inglorious and flawed, but nevertheless indispensable institutions.

Second, in order to pursue this argument, I turn to recent histories of popular schooling and its governmental organisation. If we are to understand the social and political character of the competency programme – with its promiscuous

\(^2\) Hunter, 'Pastoral Bureaucracy' 277.
\(^3\) Hunter, 'Pastoral Bureaucracy' 277.
mixture of the liberal and the vocational, of individual rights and national objectives – then we must situate it within the historical form of the education system. Here, I take up the argument that the education system is not founded as a means to express (or repress) the pre-given rights of democratic citizens or the rational capacities of the individual. Instead, our understanding of the social role of mass schooling must adjust itself to the fact that the state addresses itself to its citizens in a variety of ways. In Western social democracies, citizens are treated as the bearers of a range of political rights. But at the same time, the citizenry, the workforce and the population remain the objects of governmental reform, care and attention. This double relation does not arise from the realisation or abrogation of principle. Instead, it is a by-product of the contingent circumstances in which different modes of government and self-government combined with one another to shape the modern school system. It is in these terms, I argue, that we can understand the fact that, within the school system, the pastoral promotion of 'self-realisation' and 'participation' is uneasy but indissolubly linked to bureaucratic calculation.

Finally, the same argument also makes it possible to mount a case for reappraising the achievements of the still-recent system of popular education. If the education system was not founded on principles such as equality, how helpful is it to keep accusing it of failing to realise such principles? The remarkable historical fact is not that the school system produces unequal outcomes, but that it has set itself the goal of providing a form of social equalisation. These ambitions are in fact bureaucratic ambitions, based not on 'oppositional' politics but on the school system's institutional capacity to provide uniformity in the capacities required by a citizenry, to produce 'common forms of
personhood and the desire for access to them”. For all its unglamourous character, it is this historical achievement that now makes it possible to identify disparities, to track participation and to conceive of equality of opportunity. This is the broader historical and theoretical terrain on to which our discussion of the competency programme has opened and in which this programme assumes its true perspective.

ii. The reign of principle

What is meant by 'democratic education'? For a substantial recent discussion of the question, we can return to Simon Marginson's *Education and Public Policy in Australia*. In his conclusion to a wide-ranging survey of educational problems, Marginson summarises his criticism of the ideologies and theories underlying Australian education policy and offers in their place a new rationale for democratic education. He begins by noting that education performs a range of different and often contradictory roles. These include the following functions: the 'custody and care' of students; the provision of 'safety and moral security'; the academic development of individuals; the preparation of a democratic citizenry; the construction of a more productive economy; and social selection. Public debate on education is portrayed as the process of trading between these purposes. Various agents and interests groups claim, he notes, that one or another purpose should be dominant, while education policy and professional educational practice oscillate between them. Decisions on curriculum occur in this way, as schools attempt to satisfy the conflicting demands of the universities and employers, while meeting the needs of 'the community' and pursuing progressive educational principles. The real crunch, says Marginson, comes

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4 Hunter, 'Pastoral Bureaucracy' 269.
with assessment, as teachers and educationists are forced to choose between the social prestige of the academic curriculum, with its social and economic rewards, and the 'free individual development' offered by more pluralistic modes of curriculum.⁶

Marginson's response to these difficulties is to pursue these competing imperatives to an origin in the realm of ideas and political interests. He takes it for granted that each of these educational roles is attached to 'a body of administrative and educational practices'. Each, however, is also associated with 'a body of ideals about education'.⁷ He traces these conflicts in ideas to the turn of the century. It was at this historical point, he argues, that the social democratic conception of education was formed. In this conception, education and politics were 'symbolic partners in the public sphere or polis'. Politics was conceived of as 'an important site for self-realisation and human development', and public education undertook the duty of preparing citizens for the exercise of democratic rights. In the same period, however — so the story goes — liberal democratic principles met their nemesis, in the form of classical liberalism. A 'positive' conception of freedom clashed with a 'negative' one, and the two doctrines have been engaged in battle ever since, although liberal democracy has begun to falter.⁸ Each contender has its slogan: that of 'preparation for the polis' and 'preparation for the economic market'.⁹ Each also has its supporters. It is this battle that is being played out, apparently, in educational arenas around the country.

⁶ Marginson 18.
⁷ Marginson 17.
⁸ Marginson 19.
⁹ Marginson 19.
As it turns out, however, the democratic forces are divided in themselves. The 'mainstream democratic' project treats all students as equal, by virtue of their status as future citizens. On the basis of the conception of citizenship rights, social democratic education policies have sought to provide commonality in educational resources and educational experiences, giving access to a 'common culture'.

This principle of commonality has the effect of identifying disadvantaged groups for remedial governmental action. According to Marginson, the problem with this 'mainstream' democratic conception of the state's responsibility to citizens is that it is too individualistic to recognise more collective forms of political and cultural identity. On the one hand, the political calculus of 'commonality' can result in privileged groups being treated as disadvantaged for particular purposes, as in the case of funding development for 'disadvantaged' private schools. On the other hand, this calculus can forestall the provision of programmes capable of recognising the needs of the truly disadvantaged. The 'common culture' to which citizens are supposedly given access, he argues, usually means middle-class Anglo-Australian (and mostly male-dominant) culture. Consequently, the normalising educational culture is more 'user friendly' to some students than to others, giving rise to consistent inequalities of outcome by social group:

in terms of equal starting points, the goal of a 'fair' selection system is impossible to achieve. Further, the management and measurement of 'fitness', the process of common assessment and of the common curriculum, serve only to exacerbate the problem. The decisive move is in the process of assessment, which enforces the homogeneous system across the whole student population. This policy problem is very deep-seated, because it is inherent in the nature of equality itself. Even if the norm of education were based on the lived cultural experience of working-class families, the problem of difference would remain. Which working class

10 Marginson 20.
11 Marginson 20.
culture? Normalisation and homogeneity are fundamental to the very identification of equality. Equality is concerned with differences of quantity, and quantitative comparisons require homogeneity of the things that are being compared. When two things are qualitatively different they cannot be compared in terms of equality. This is the central contradiction to a public education system which attempts to pursue, at one and the same time, the objectives of democratic participation and fair social selection.\textsuperscript{12}

He goes on to develop this tension between 'democratic participation and fair social selection' into two irreconcilable philosophical premises. In the first place, if the objective of education is 'to foster the self-determination of all the citizens', then education, in the interests of providing all individuals with this good, must 'foster heterogeneity and diversity'. In the second, if schools' purpose is 'to achieve equality of opportunity in terms of a single universal comparison', then the education system must 'maintain homogeneity and the normalising educational practices that are premised on the suppression of diversity'. Since these two philosophical principles are irreconcilable, he argues, then one must be abandoned. Not surprisingly, Marginson chooses to privilege the first. Accordingly, he recommends that the education system re-found itself on the principles of 'diversity', of 'self-determination' and of pluralism, casting out 'uniformity' and 'selection'.\textsuperscript{13} But what looks like a resolute refusal of dialectical division soon transcends itself. Within the newly founded culturally pluralist education system, he finds a split within culture itself. It is a familiar one, between 'marginal' and 'mainstream' cultural identity, in which education policy must 'find a new balance between the dominant culture and radical pluralism'. This balance is to be found within the critical self, as schools 'should provide students with 'the spaces to explore their own cultural alternatives and

\textsuperscript{12} Marginson 244.

\textsuperscript{13} Marginson distinguishes this model of self-determination from the liberal claim that markets foster diversity. This, he argues, is 'part of a single movement, the rejection of the normalising state'. Marginson 245.
the intellectual tools to place the mainstream culture under rigorous scrutiny, in its historical context.\textsuperscript{14}

This, then, is to be the new philosophical and political foundation for the education system. Legitimate government will be identified with the democratic expression of the rational will of a collective subject – that of 'society', 'the community', or 'the people'. Where this will is not democratically expressed – where there is a gap between democratic values and governmental norms – then government will be found to be unjust and illegitimate. It will only become legitimate again when governmental norms are once more joined to democratic values, providing a principled foundation for government. In that moment, the education system will be freed from both the state and the market. It will thus become the democratic forum of 'the polis', the centre of politically authentic participation, the point where the people gather for moments of collective self-realisation.\textsuperscript{15}

To say the least, it is not clear how this might solve the immediate problem of addressing the formative and distributional imperatives of a mass school system, much less how it would serve the stated political end of equipping all future citizens with the capacities to exercise 'choice and self-determination'. Indeed, it is arguable that rather than providing useful political tactics, such critical self-reflections allow educational commentary to remain impervious to a number of the more difficult ethical, political and technical questions attending the reorganisation of the education system. Not the least of such problems is that posed by the Finn, Carmichael and Mayer Reports: how should we devise forms

\textsuperscript{14} Marginson 244-5.
\textsuperscript{15} Marginson 246.
of education and occupational certification that combine both commonality and a
degree of flexibility and pluralism? Given the immense technical and political
difficulties of this task, it is hard to see how Marginson's prescription of a more
democratic system can be of much help. The problem, however, is not just one
of the distribution of the relevant expertise. In common with a good deal of
democratic educational theory, Marginson simply assumes that the problem of
distributing social competences will be solved by the democratic decisions of a
population that already possess them. But is this assumption tenable?

iii. Rights and capacities.

Let us restate the problem. Democratic principles have been identified with the
supposition that citizens, as rational beings, possess pre-given political rights to
self-determination. But social democratic rationales also presume that in order to
exercise these rights, citizens require a basic set of capacities, and that it is the
responsibility of government to provide them. If participation is dependent on
particular competences, then it becomes difficult to argue that these are
themselves pre-given and could be expressed independently of the 'normative'
and 'homogenising' actions of government.\textsuperscript{16} The problem, in other words, is
one of the mismatch between the discourse of 'democratic rights' and the
governmental norms and procedures installed within the education system. Once
again, the effort is to add each of these components together, within the exercise
of critique. Recognising this, we can also begin to suggest that these
components may be distinct from one another. Hunter puts the proposition in the
following way:

It is as if such accounts take two historically divergent
modes of citizenship – the citizen as a being requiring

\textsuperscript{16} Hunter, 'Pastoral Bureaucracy' 245-246.
governmental care, protection and training; and the citizen as the bearer of (civil, legal and political) rights – and seek to fuse them in the self-forging heat of subjectivity. They do so ... by employing a theoretical procedure that identifies (legitimate) governmental power and expertise with the democratically expressed rational will of a collective subject – society, the community, the people.17

To identify the nature of the critical exercise in this way is not, of course, to dismiss the significance of the problem expressed. On the contrary, the question of the relationship between these two elements of citizenship has been a long-standing problem in the political rationales applied to Australian education. Bodies such as the Commonwealth Schools Commission concerned themselves with such questions for some decades. Here, there was a standard tension between a conception of the 'rights of all Australian children to quality of educational opportunity and access'18 and a conception that part of the role of schooling was 'to equip school children with the attributes which would enable them to exercise their citizenship':

Equality has been interpreted as educational provision responsive to the needs of children in relation to desired outcomes. A basic plateau of competence is required by all children if they are to become full citizens able to exercise options.19

At points, the Commission understood 'democratic education' to entail 'the right of every child to assistance in developing a variety of socially desirable attributes'.20 At others, it was prepared to entertain the 'unequal treatment of

17 Hunter, 'Pastoral Bureaucracy' 245-246.
children' in order to achieve more equal outcomes. The same set of issues has reappeared in different forms within a variety of programmes. In the policy area of gender and education, for instance, it takes the form of the dilemma over the kinds of action that governments should take to redress imbalances in the patterns of subjects chosen by male and female students. Is it equitable to respect the expressed choices of girls who choose 'traditional' rather than 'non-traditional' subjects? To what extent is this choice really 'free'? Should the state intervene in order to make girls more competent to choose their vocations and courses wisely? Is the role of the school that of forming 'self-determining citizens' or that of providing 'what the nation needs its citizens to know'? Finally, what competences are required in order to make self-determining choices?

As political or ethical dilemmas, these questions appear to be intractable. Nevertheless, they are routinely addressed within practical spheres of decision-making. The rationales attached to education policies routinely emphasise the importance of 'choice', of cultural diversity and of self-determination. At the same time, the programmes stemming from these policies take the citizen as the object of a variety of reformatory goals concerned with what the 'nation needs its citizens to know'. This, of course, is the same duality of rationales that we have been observing in the competency programme. Here, the practical problem for government is to adjust the political vocabulary of choice so as to translate its goals into the desires of 'self-determining' citizens. Much the same point could

be made about the policy of promoting 'non-traditional' career choices for girls.\textsuperscript{23} In each case, there are difficulties in achieving a coherent rationale for the reforms that will mediate between different conceptions of rights and entitlements. And in each case, the programme is open to 'principled' and 'perfectionist' criticism, on the basis that it fails to correspond to a more absolute conception of freedom, equality or self-determination.\textsuperscript{24}

Critical intellectuals have not tended to ask the question of how it is that the education system manages to sustain its operations despite these standard dilemmas. Instead, for critique, the co-presence of democratic principles and tutelary objectives is always a sign of crisis. On the one hand, say the critics, the rhetoric of policy makers shows that they have an appreciation of principle. On the other, the bureaucrats continue to promote the normative and tutelary operations of the system. How, ask the critics, can democratic rights be realised in a 'paternalist' school system? For some, as we have seen, these are symptoms of a deeper malaise; the loss of principle from within the education bureaucracy. What is recommended, then, is a dose of principle. Accordingly, critics have

\textsuperscript{23} See the discussion of these questions in Commonwealth Schools Commission, \textit{Girls and Tomorrow: The Challenge for Schools} (Canberra: AGPS, 1984); and in Commonwealth Schools Commission, \textit{A National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools} (Canberra: AGPS, 1986)

invested their hopes in a future education system. But they have just as often found these hopes realised in the past. There once was a time, apparently, in which the principled was united with the technical, and in which the operations of government expressed the political rights of citizens, uniting democratic discourses and governmental norms within a form of principle corresponding to the 'perfectionist' expectations of critique. This time must come again.

The problem of locating 'democratic values' is a familiar one within cultural criticism, political theory and intellectual history. The usual debate is between those tempted to treat democratic values such as egalitarianism, for instance, as a part of national character or ethos, and those with a more constructivist account of the effects of social and political organisations – such as the machinery of the welfare state – in unevenly distributing the statuses and attributes associated with political and social rights. In the first case, the discourse of 'democracy' and social rights is treated as a natural and inevitable result of the

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development of a 'critical consciousness' within the intellectual life of the nation. In the second, commentators are more willing to describe the circumstances in which political, social and industrial rights are claimed and arbitrated within specific legal and administrative environments. This is usually understood, however, in terms of the evolution towards the realisation of democratic ideals, political identity and social equality, an outcome which awaits the results of continuing class struggle. In each case, the ideal of democracy and equality is treated as the expression of a pre-existent political identity and political will. Conventionally, the historical origin of this political will is associated with the emergence of democratic political ideals at the end of the eighteenth century, as a response to revolution or to enlightenment. During this period, apparently, citizens came to a political awareness of their claims to political equality and freedom – claims guaranteed by the human rights vested in their possession of rationality. In its ideal form, the democratic state is treated as the expression of this political will and this rational faculty. In turn, the government of the state becomes (by rights) an extension of the individual's rational government of herself. The observation that this ideal has not been

27 For an application of this model to the history of Australian education and conceptions of citizenship and 'opportunity', see J. Blackburn, Changing Approaches to Equality in Education, 16th Annual John Curtin Memorial Lecture, Canberra, Australian National University, 1986. See also the marxian version of these arguments in contribution, D.J. Ashenden, S. Kessler and G. Dowsett, Making the Difference: Schools, Families and Social Divisions (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983); and R.W. Connell, Ruling Class, Ruling Culture: Studies in Conflict, Power and Hegemony in Australian Life (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977). In each of the latter texts, the 'critical consciousness' which liberal historians associate with the 'national ethos' is ascribed instead to the expression of class identity and class conflict. For an extended characterisation of Making the Difference and of the ground shared in this respect by 'liberal' and 'marxian' conceptions of 'social rights', see Hunter, Rethinking the School.


realised then provides the basis for the critique of the modern social welfare state as 'undemocratic' and amoral.30

Recent reconceptualisations of citizenship and its history have begun to question these assumptions. To begin with, various theorists have pointed out that these evolutionist conceptions of citizenship in fact refer to a variety of different kinds of rights, each of which emerged at different historical points. Drawing on T.H. Marshall's historical analysis of citizenship, these commentators have developed non-evolutionist accounts of the allocation and acquisition of citizenship rights.31 Such accounts involve descriptions of the piecemeal emergence of civil rights as established by common law precedents; of the uneven aggregation of political rights such as those associated with the franchise; and of the patchwork


application of social and industrial rights to the citizenry during this century, within the expanding areas of social welfare and education.  

The description of these confusions about the nature of democratic rights touches on a substantial area of debate on citizenship, social welfare and the state. For our purposes, however, it is enough to note the complex nature of the relationships between questions of equity as they are adjudicated within the zones of philosophical and political reflection, and as they are addressed within governmental programmes. Clearly, the areas overlap. However, it is important not to overlook the very real differences between the ways in which ideals such as citizenship or equality function within political rationalities, and their quite different use as norms and targets within areas such as educational, legal or social welfare decision-making. To do so is to ignore the positive nature of each of these areas. In each of these zones, there is a significant distance between the political status of citizenship and the operational norms specific to that sphere.

Despite the consistent expectation that social welfare, the law and the education system should treat each individual as the possessor of inalienable human and political rights, each of these areas actually functions by means of systems for allocating a limited set of statuses, and for attaching rights and capacities to those statuses. In other words, the social security system certainly works with categories such as the rights and entitlements of citizens, but it operates by

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determining whether or not individuals fit the definition of particular statuses and thereby possess the capacity to claim specific rights and entitlements. Much the same could be said for law, which operates within a different but equally definite system for allocating statuses, rights and capacities. Disparities routinely occur both within and between each of these systems, and there is no one single aggregate form of citizenship rights which unites all these areas. It is possible at various points for individuals to occupy different statuses and possess the rights attributed to them, but this does not mean that the rights add up to a 'whole person'. Rights are social categories distributed in definite circumstances, under conditions that are technically and institutionally determined.

In the sphere of academic discussion, such statements are still startling. Nevertheless, in fields such as law, observations of the limited and technical character of rights are simply descriptive. One has legal standing not as a human being, but as a minor, adult, employer, employee, husband, wife, de-facto, holder of duty of care and so on. The same might be said for the administrative field of the social services, which routinely defines rights and allocates entitlements on the basis of specified statuses. Observing this should help us to understand how it is that the education bureaucracy conducts itself without undue anxiety over inconsistencies in the political rationalities that it deploys in its programmatic statements on the rights of citizens and the responsibilities of the state. It does so without great difficulty, because its modes of operation and


calculation are on the whole distinct from those of 'integrationist' academic reflection.

The notion therefore that all the capacities of an individual add up to a self-reflective unity is foreign to the spheres of social administration. These domains are too busy carving up the undifferentiated mass of humanity into the categories and statuses of specific governmental programmes – categories that in Marshall's words, will 'instantly ring the appropriate bell in the mind of the busy official'.\textsuperscript{37} That the school system is no exception to this rule is the great lesson that its historians can teach us.

iv. History lessons.

Our first observation should concern the historical contingency of the emergence of modern mass schooling. The provision of a common form of mass schooling – one capable of providing the population with the capacities now regarded as fundamental to the exercise of basis rights – was by no means inevitable. The ability to provide commonality in the educational provision available to national populations was in fact a remarkable historical development. It was the unpredictable historical product of the assemblage of various Christian pastoral reform programmes, of the emergence of a set of architectural innovations and disciplinary techniques, and of the systematising efforts of bureaucratic action. Let me summarise some recent accounts of the circumstances in which these historical convergences occurred.

Our initial point of historical reference is supplied by the first form of systematic mass schooling, first provided in Australia and England in the early to mid-

\textsuperscript{37} Marshall, 'Citizenship' 124-5.
nineteenth century, in the form of elementary schools based on the schema of 'monitorialism'. Pioneered in different forms by Joseph Lancaster and Joseph Bell, the monitorial scheme flourished in New South Wales from the 1820s to the 1840s, largely replacing the older pedagogic models of the philanthropic charity school, the Sunday school, and the denominational schools run by local patrons. Today, the monitorial school enjoys a poor educational reputation, appearing in education history as an instance of the repressive and benighted nature of early bureaucratic efforts at schooling, uninformed by enlightened pedagogic or political principles. Nevertheless, the monitorial school was a significant innovation, successful in its own terms in distributing literate capacities to a large number of individuals at once, by dint of intensive organisation and co-ordination of action. The monitorial classroom was capable of teaching large numbers of the urban poor at once at relatively low expense. Hundreds of pupils were enclosed within the one room, arranged in fixed benches set on a sloping floor. These benches were partitioned into separate groups, comprised of individual pupils performing a hierarchical set of tasks under the supervision of monitors not much older than themselves. In turn, these monitors were supervised by the teacher, who acted as overseer of the classroom apparatus as a whole. Through these means, the efficiency of the classroom was optimalised though an elaborate system of drilling in hierarchically organised tasks. Its success in providing large numbers of pupils with basic literacy was one of the main reasons why this device, initially developed by philanthropic and

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pastoral organisations, was adopted and systematised during the 1820s as the model for the developing state elementary school system.

The important point to note here is the foundational combination of bureaucratic organisation and pastoral and philanthropic strategies. The mass elementary school system was built, of course, upon an array of kinds of private and philanthropic tutelage. Where mass schooling existed before the provision of mass monitorial training, it did so within a scatter of privately-funded Sunday schools and Charity Schools provided by local government and religious and secular charities. The primary aim of these early models of schooling was 'to promote morality and combat idleness and degeneracy', not to train young workers or to form future citizens.\textsuperscript{40} There was no concerted set of governmental objectives: instead, the reform and schooling of the urban poor was organised by a number of preoccupations, from concern to eradicate idleness to the policing of the waste of labour.\textsuperscript{41} By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, these scattered private and philanthropic organisations had been consolidated within a system of mass popular education, within intricately designed and purpose-built education sites designed to answer to a number of ambitious bureaucratic expectations.\textsuperscript{42} By this time, education systems were conceived as means to make populations literate, healthy, productive, orderly and useful. The concern to combat idleness had been transformed into the provision of means to provide mass literacy and numeracy, to reform morality and conduct and to shape the new objects of the population and the individual. Whole new

\textsuperscript{40} Smith, 'Governing Classrooms' 87.

\textsuperscript{41} Smith, 'Governing Classrooms' 85.

domains of social life were opened up. Along with popular education, these included public health, social insurance and economic management. The foundations of modern social welfare had been established, as had the place of popular education within it. So too had the modern form of relationship between states and populations, between the 'pastoral bureaucracy' and the citizenry. These developments now require further historical clarification. For this, we can turn to the developing field of discussion on the history of 'govern mentality'.

Recent histories have located the initial context for the development of modern mass schooling in the form of bureaucratically-based social administration known, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as 'cameralism' and police. This was a form of governmental organisation developed in the small German states of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cameralist or

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44 See A.W. Small, The Camerallists: The Pioneers of German Social Polity (New York: Bur Franklin, 1909) and G. Oestreich, Neostoicism and the Early Modern State (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Oestreich lists a number of factors in the formation of cameralism: the effect of urbanisation and the breakdown of the religious regulation of the villages; the failure of ecclesiastical government; the development of new administrative technologies, including new forms of regulation and legal provision; and the development of trade and industries requiring the regulation of new forms of social life and civic administration. Each of these elements is associated with the development of 'police' as a strategy of management. Albion Small's account provides a fifth factor, depicting the construction of cameralist technologies as a response, in part, to the threat posed to the security of the state by religious dissent, these threats taking the form of warfare from without and civil disorder from within. The effect of establishing state-centred purposes of government to counter these threats was the establishment of 'non-religious' and 'unprincipled' governmental rationales, and a governmental concern with 'human happiness', as associated with particular standards of material and social life. From this point, government concerns itself with the primary goals of preserving the security of the country and maximising the social well-being of its populations. See also K. Tribe, 'Cameralism and the Science of Government', Journal of Modern History 56 (1984): 263-284.
absolutist bureaucratic government emerged from a period of bloody civil war and religious strife, as a set of improvised measures to combat civil unrest and to promote state security and development.\textsuperscript{45} In this context, the doctrine of raison d'\textit{etat} was developed as a political rationality stressing the paramount nature of the interests of the state. In the sphere of political philosophy, the shift in emphasis was from the need to extend the interests and territory of the sovereign, to the imperative to protect and strengthen the state itself, in the interests of internal prosperity, civil peace and external security.\textsuperscript{46} In the emerging sphere of public administration, the associated shift produced such new governmental objects as the population, the economy and the sphere of social welfare.

Two of the characteristic features of governmental power emerged at this time. The first is the development of a range of intellectual technologies and forms of expertise, including the forms of economic management and statistical calculation now indispensable to the modern state. The second was the construction of the new intellectual and administrative system that we now know as bureaucracy. With cameraлист forms of organisation, the bureau emerged as a combination of new intellectual technologies and a new form of public personnel. Replacing the systems of patronage characteristic of the absolutist court, cameraлистism developed from the formation of a cadre of public officials dedicated to the ethos of office rather than to the pursuit of personal gain, political allegiance or religious principle.\textsuperscript{47} As paid officials, the duty of the bureaucracy was to address the


\textsuperscript{46} Foucault, 'On Governmentality'; Gordon; Pasquino.

\textsuperscript{47} See the discussion of the 'bureaucratic ethos' in L. Hunter, 'Personality as a Vocation: The Political Rationality of the Humanities', Accounting for the Humanities: The Language of Culture and the Logic of Government L. Hunter, D. Meredyth, B. Smith and G. Stokes (Brisbane: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, 1991) 7-66. Here,
technical problems of achieving national security and prosperity and to make use of the new faculties of statistical and economic calculation, in order to maximise the protection and management of state and population.\textsuperscript{48}

These, then, were the historical and political conditions in which mass education systems appeared, as means to form the moral, social and economic attributes of national populations.\textsuperscript{49} In combination, these new intellectual technologies, forms of expertise and kinds of personnel had the effect of reshaping the conduct of life in a number of modern Western states. By the mid nineteenth century in Britain and Australia, each of the elements which make up this sphere of governmental calculation was firmly in place. In vast programmes of philanthropic and governmental inspection, the habits, health and literacy of the urban population were recorded and tabulated, within 'moral topographies' detailing the effects of poverty across a geo-political grid of class and demographic location.\textsuperscript{50} The school, the prison and the hospital were redesigned as reformatory and disciplinary sites, capable of identifying problem populations and charting their regularities and deviations.\textsuperscript{51} The emerging field of 'social welfare' was mapped

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\item \textsuperscript{48} Drawing on Weber's historical work on the ethical dimension of the bureaucratic vocation, it becomes possible to emphasize both the degree of achievement entailed in these developments and their historical contingency. See also Minson's comments on ethical and rhetorical skills specific to the early bureaucracies, on 'rationality' and the cultivation of a rational attitude and on the achievement of reforms to patronage. \textit{Questions of Conduct} 133-9.
\item \textsuperscript{49} See J. Van Horn Melton, \textit{Absolutism and the Eighteenth Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria} (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press 1988).
\item \textsuperscript{50} See Jones and Williamson 58-110.
\end{itemize}
out by the spread of statistical grids, developing 'the science of deviancy, of criminals, court convictions, suicides, prostitution, divorce'.

From its inception, mass schooling was inseparable from processes of differentiating a school population according to variables of performance, health, and environmental influence. The national distribution of these standards now created a new uniformity. The techniques used by the school system were designed to internalise standards of social deportment and scholastic performance. But the technical effect was to create a more sensitive and sophisticated registration of difference. By the turn of the nineteenth century, such observations had been yoked to a relatively new deployment of statistical techniques for social management. In Australia, in 1910, the Commonwealth Statistician G.H. Knibbs put it this way:

> Every civilised country has now well-elaborated official statistics, covering a wide range of its affairs. Political statistics, in the modern sense, arises from a clearer perception of what is essential for productive administration, and for what has been called, in the wider sense of the term, police regulation.

The important point here is the explicit connection made between 'police' (in the eighteenth century sense of a positive means to monitor public welfare and happiness), and the deployment of statistical techniques.

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Like the prison and the hospital, the popular school provided a central space of statistical observation and classification, partly because it was able to enclose problem populations within a single normative regime, registering distributions of capacities and conducts including literacy and health. This relationship between the statistical and the educational was reciprocal and constitutive. On the one hand, the need for mass popular education was made politically intelligible through the effects of 'moral statistics', detailing the frequencies of illiteracy, ill health or immorality amongst rapidly growing urban populations. On the other hand, the popular school also made the population thinkable in new ways, due to its capacity to provide a uniform set of cultural attributes, observable and inspectable within the one site.

Having observed these historical developments, we can begin to revise the poor historical reputation of these early school systems, so often accused of being the vehicle for repressive social purposes. The popular school certainly operated to regularise conduct. But at the same time, it made it possible to form a population equipped with a basic range of capacities. Well before the provision of a universal franchise, mass schooling was laying the institutional foundation for 'common forms of personhood, and desire for access to them'. Of course, in doing so, government was driven by its own internal imperatives, in which the well-being of the population was closely tied to the strengthening of the state and the maintenance of territory. This is not to say, however, that bureaucratically-organised state schooling was unprincipled, in the sense of being 'unethical'.

54 See Rose, The Psychological Complex 68.
55 See Jones and Williamson.
56 As Bruce Smith notes, in Australia in the 1840s and 1850s, educational problems were increasingly defined in terms of distinctions between the 'sinking' and 'sunken' class; the 'sinking' were to be prevented from continuing their decline, and to be transformed into the 'uprising'. Smith, 'Governing Classrooms' 115-116. See also Hunter, Culture and Government, 33-70.
On the contrary: as Hunter has argued, mass schooling was made possible by an historical *rapprochement* between two complex zones of ethical formation. Each is described as a distinct 'life-order'. The first element, that of religious self-cultivation, was formed from the ethical components of Puritan programmes of conscience, developed in a 'print-oriented *habitus* of spiritual self-formation and reformation'. It was this ethos that provided the model of Christian pastoral care. The second ethical element was provided by the bureaucracy itself. The bureaucratic ethos involved the construction of a new form of personnel. But associated with this was the development of a new kind of moral personality, composed from a highly sophisticated ethos of professional neutrality, self-restraint and loyalty to office.57 This ethos was an indispensable element in the establishment of popular schooling, shaping as it did the cadre of professional reformers and administrators who drove the expansion of the school system, and who formed, trained and inspected the new ranks of trained teachers.

In Hunter's historical account, it is these elements that converged to form what he calls the 'pastoral bureaucratic' disposition of mass schooling.58 He notes that these elements intersected in a variety of places and circumstances, and at different points in the formation of national education systems. But in Australia, as in Britain and (much earlier) the Germany states, popular schooling was founded in a combination of evangelical social concern and the bureaucratically-organised statistical diagnosis of social problems. In each instance, mass

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57 See Oestreich and Minson, *Questions of Conduct* 133-139.
58 As Hunter puts it, 'The demand for and the intelligibility of state schooling was decisively shaped by a group of institutions that managed to combine the statistical diagnosis of social problems with an evangelical pastoral concern. These institutions ranged – across civil society and the state – between private scientific and statistical societies, through the parliamentary committees, to ministries of state. The power and expertise of their exercises can be characterised as that of "bureaucratic pastoral"'. Hunter, 'Pastoral Bureaucracy' 265. See also Hunter, *Rethinking the School*.  

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elementary schooling emerged as a bureaucratic reorganisation of pastoral
discipline and spiritual formation. Historically, as Hunter puts it, a Christian
pastoral pedagogy oriented to ethical self-development sits beside a political
technology which 'treats the population as a resource to be cultivated for "reasons
of state."' The conjunction was a contingent and often uneasy one:

It was not ... at the level of principles that the pastoral
concern with the individual soul was joined to the
bureaucratic concern with the social training of populations.
It was through a series of improvisations in disciplinary
technique, architecture, pedagogical practice and
administrative organisation.

The combination of the religiously-based cultivation of moral personality and of
the mechanisms of bureaucratic normalisation remains an unstable one. The
different ends and commitments built into the pastoral and the bureaucratic ethos
each have their effects on the operational norms of the popular school. If Hunter
is right, then it is this combination that gives rise to the consistent expectation that
schooling could or should be the expression of the rational or moral individual's
capacity for self-determination – an expectation which just as regularly
encounters its limits in the norms and targets set by state-based planning. In
other words, what critical intellectuals see as a conflict of principles, educational
'genealogists' see as the historical 'hybridisation' of the school's twin lineages.

v. Conclusion.

This historical context provides us with an ethical and historical framework in
which to place current policy dilemmas. First, we have questioned the
assumption that the school system could or should be treated as a means to
express rational and moral capacities that stem from human subjectivity or its

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59 See also Hunter, Culture and Government 33-69.
60 Hunter, 'Pastoral Bureaucracy' 265.
historical emancipation. Instead, we have begun to shift the focus of analysis towards a more particularistic investigation of the relationships between historically specific technologies of ethical life and of social administration. This field of historical events is too complex, piecemeal and contingent to be clarified by philosophical reflection or to be judged on the principled grounds of modern educational moralists.

Second, we have separated the governmental technology of popular schooling from the sphere of political rights. The modern school system was not founded on political principles, and nor was it the means to express (or repress) the pre-existing political will of the community. Instead, the bureaucratic school system provided the conditions for the articulation of political will, by providing the basic and common capacities necessary for the exercise of democratic rights. But it is not as though the governmental strategies of the 'pastoral bureaucracy' were built up as the concrete realisation of democratic principle. Instead, as we have seen, there is a considerable gap between the philosophical and political ideal of the citizen as the bearer of political rights (on the one hand) and the ways in which states conduct themselves towards citizens as the objects of governmental action. These different ways of organising the rights, entitlements and duties of 'citizenship' are unlikely to be reconciled by philosophical arbitration. Instead, as we have begun to see, each has historical conditions of emergence which bear a tangential relation, at best, to political philosophies or to absolute principles.

Having established this, we are now in a better position to appraise the achievements of the still recent system of state schooling – achievements such as the administrative capacity to register correlations between educational performance and 'social' factors (such as family background, race, gender,
ethnicity and locality) or the capacity to install equality of educational opportunity as an objective which operates within the school system. It is no mean feat to undertake the kinds of planning that could provide populations with a common set of attributes by virtue of which they can be compared, setting standards that can serve to identify discrepancies and imbalances in educational outcomes. But these developments do not represent the school system's ability or inability to realise principles that operate as ends in themselves. Instead, they can be understood as the result of more contingent circumstances, such as those in which the apparatus of the popular classroom made it possible to provide uniform norms of capacity applicable across a school population.

We can now begin to apply these historical lessons to our own situation. What we are now faced with in efforts to reform the Australian education system is in fact the current form of an extremely long-standing set of governmental strategies, with a basis in administrative programmes spanning many decades. Since at least the turn of the century, schooling has been seen as a means to administer the formation of adults and as an apparatus for forming a workforce and a population. These rationales have coexisted with child-centred approaches and with the school's role as a locus for self-fulfilment. But this has by no means been an unconscious contradiction in the logic of modern schooling. Instead, it emerges from the school's historical genesis and remains one of the fundamental problematics of recent education policy. These dual objectives can now be seen as stemming from governmental efforts to promote the security and prosperity of the state, the productivity of national industry and the well-being of a literate and civically responsible population. In Chapter Eight, we will see how such objectives were transmitted into contemporary Australian education policy.
CHAPTER EIGHT: SCHOOLING FOR NATIONAL PURPOSES

i. National purposes.
Let me turn first to some comments made in a series of speeches made by Peter Board, the Under Secretary of Education in New South Wales, and published in the *Australian Journal of Education* from 1905 to 1910. The comments mark a significant convergence of our two elements of 'bureaucratic pastoral'. One is the now well-established emphasis on the popular schools' role in modelling the conscience of the child and the moral conduct of a population. The other is the equally well-established treatment of the population as a resource of the state. Each of these meet within a new organisation of the state secondary school system.

Board announces a new relation between the state and education. Rather than providing only 'the mere minimum education for a rudimentary citizenship', the state's responsibilities now include 'the preparation of the youth of the nation for the most efficient participation in productive industry':

As time goes on the evolution of the industry will become more and more bound with our educational systems. The school will become an adjunct of the workshop, and the workshop a classroom of the school. The gap between the desk of the pupil and the bench of the artisan, or the office of the businessman, will be bridged ... The occupations of the primary school, aiming at greater breadth of mental outlook, will and greater adaptableness of manual skills, will be linked with the technical and trade school as well as with the ordinary secondary school. The secondary school and the university will fill a larger place in the educational scheme than at present, opening their doors more widely, with the same freedom of admission that now obtains in the primary school for all those who can benefit by their teaching. If this outlook is at all a correct one, the State systems of education will thus become so interwoven with the progress of the nation, and so necessary for the maintenance of its place in international competition, that the education of the

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1 P. Board, 'Mental Science and Education', Brisbane: Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, 1910 708.
people will fill an increasing place in the functions of government. The schools of all grades will be the instruments for national purposes, for the cultivation of individual productiveness and intelligent citizenship, the training grounds for national defence, and the nurseries of the nation's morality.²

The statement is well-known, but still remarkable, if only for its similarity to current governmental ambitions and rationalities. Like Board, current directors of the education system still strive to make the school system capable of providing 'instruments for national purposes', while maintaining the forms of pastoral care and attention that make the schools the 'nurseries of the nation's morality'. Similarly, the political rhetoric of current policy documents makes routine references to the dual goals of cultivating 'intelligent citizenship', while providing 'individual productiveness'. In fact, the terms of these imperatives have altered very little in the intervening decades, even though it would now be rare to find educational commentary providing anything like so forthright a statement of the state's interest in the 'care' of the population – a form of 'care' which is clearly both economic and moral. In other words, by Board's time - and despite the utopian ease with which he speaks of bridging the gap 'between the desk of the pupil and the bench of the artisan, or the office of the businessman' – many of the objectives of the competency programme are already squarely on the agenda of government.

This was a time of massive state intervention into public education.³ Following the lead of Board in New South Wales and Frank Tate in Victoria, state secondary school systems were established in almost all of the

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² Board 'Mental Science' 711-2.
³ Elsewhere, Board asks: 'Out of a state that has a quarter of a million children between the ages of six and 14, we have 108 who have completed a secondary course. Is that a condition that any state can regard as satisfactory?'. P. Board, 'Secondary Education: An Address to Teachers' Conference, Sydney Town Hall 20th December 1909', Australian Journal of Education 15 January (1910): 16.
Australian States, in a remarkable two decades of bureaucratic activity. A series of inquiries into public education had established the objective of strengthening the state's role in the provision of post-elementary education. The expectation emerged that all children would complete elementary schooling and be involved in some aspect of post-elementary education. This was followed by dramatic expansions in education provision and enrolments. This rapid administrative change was remarkable, given the recent nature of state administration for mass elementary schooling. Within two decades, parliaments in each Australian State had legalised state involvement in secondary education, drawing together proposals that had proliferated since the 1870s, and systematising the range of 'extended', 'higher' and 'secondary' courses that had mushroomed in the spreading secondary sector. By 1911, in New South Wales at least, this sector had

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6 Between 1872 and 1890, Victoria more than doubled the number of full-time state primary schools, with enrolments increasing by 75 per cent between 1872 and 1898, doubling the average number attending these institutions. The number of elementary day schools in NSW in 1881, 582 fewer than in Victoria, had reached the Victorian level by 1898. Growth was also dramatic in South Australia and Queensland, with the number of schools in these states almost doubling between 1880 and the turn of the century. See Ling 65.

7 For descriptions of the range of early secondary schools and extended elementary schools, see B.K. Hyams and B. Bessant, *Schools for the People? An Introduction*
been divided into a number of strands, drawn from the model of the 'superior public schools', an extended version of the elementary (or 'primary') school. The selective High Schools were accorded the role of preparing students for university and professional examinations, while other students were directed to junior technical, domestic science and commercial schools, each of which was designed to prepare future citizens and workers for specific vocational outcomes. The result was a formidable complex governmental programme of educational differentiation.

The points of comparison with the present expansion of post-compulsory education are striking. For one thing, Board's comments indicate just how long-standing is the objective of linking state secondary schools to technical education and to the universities. At this point, we begin to see the development of some of the institutional arrangements now in the process of being reorganised under the competency programme. The reform programmes pursued by Board and Tate establish technical education as a separate zone of educational activity, even as it is marginalised by the consolidation of a core of 'general education' based within the new high schools. Similarly, it is at this time that mechanisms of matriculation, certification and selection are set up between the universities and the secondary schools. The vocational relations between schools, universities and workplaces also become installed, through a series of administrative relays. It is these relays that make it possible to conceive the bureaucratic

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9 There were four main factors here: the universities adjusted their rules of entrance, (removing the compulsory component of Greek and Latin and installing English, History, Geography and Mathematics); the commercial sector began to recruiting
ambition — still with us — of making the school 'an adjunct of the workshop', and the workshop 'a classroom of the school'. Then, as now, the ambition was to 'bridge the gap' between the desk of the pupil, the bench of the artisan and the office of the businessman. Just as in current debates, the ambition was to make the universities 'open their doors more widely', agreeing to become part of the extended public education system. Even then, however, the question was controversial. There was substantial public support for providing forms of technical training linked to the university system.  

Others, however, were already concerned that the impact of technical and professional training on the universities could undermine broad humanistic education in the interests of 'educational efficiency'.

One cannot view the terms of the debate surrounding the reforms without experiencing *deja vu*. On the one hand, the universities were attacked as elitist and exclusivist. On the other, the champions of liberal education took up the defence of an academically-oriented curriculum, on the basis of the need for making 'intellectual development' available to all. In either case, the expectation was that the universities would be adapted to the needs of the people, albeit in different forms. And already, social commentators were looking for dialectical solutions to the competition between different rationales:

what is required for educational purposes is the combination of the purely academic mode of thought with that of the man who sees the matter largely from its practical workaday side ... it will be clearly understood then, that the conception of the university from the popular point of view must no longer be confined to the building in Carlton, but must be...

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10 As early as 1910, proposals were being put for the establishment of a binary system of industrial and general universities. See Ling, 'Educability' 79.
11 Ling, 'Educability' 82.
12 Ling, 'Educability' 80.
extended to every serious educational institution throughout the state.\textsuperscript{13}

It seems that today's supposed 'crisis of instrumentalism' has been with us for a very long time indeed - yet the patient is still alive. In 1910, as in 1990, the objectives of educational reorganisation were closely tied to economic imperatives, including those of improving industrial standards, of maintaining a workforce capable of meeting standards set by advanced industrial competitors, and of making better use of school leavers working at low-paying and dead-end jobs, who had become 'a problem to themselves and the community'.\textsuperscript{14} Like today's education bureaucrats, Board and Tate treated these imperatives in terms of the need to promote national security. For instance, in a famous comment, Tate referred to the need to promote 'school-power' as a correlative to 'sea-power'. In accordance with the imperatives of national security, Tate contended, the state must concern itself with the fact that 'only about 5 per cent go beyond elementary education' and that 'higher education tends to become the right of the well-to-do and the resident of the cities.' Education and training, he argued, must be used in the 'struggle for existence' between trading nations, especially that conducted with Sweden and Germany, with their well-developed training systems:\textsuperscript{15}

The state must in its own defence assume this obligation. There is no more reason why higher education should be a matter for private concern and private enterprise, than that our defence scheme should as in olden times revert to private enterprise. The State everywhere concerns itself with sea-power, and a wise and prudent State concerns itself with full provision for school power. Who amongst us would advocate


\textsuperscript{14} Ely 69.

\textsuperscript{15} F. Tate, \textit{School-power: An Imperial Necessity} (Melbourne: Govt. Printer, 1908) 5. See also F. Tate, \textit{Continued Education from 14 Years Upward: Our Opportunity and Our Obligation} (Melbourne: Govt. Printer, 1920).
maintaining a navy as in Elizabeth's time by local effort and subscription?  

The object, as Board put it, was to make the youth of the nation 'contributors to the well being of the State as a State'. Nevertheless, these concerns were accompanied by an emphasis on the need to form the general skills required for citizenship. As in the current reforms, the state's responsibility to its citizens is understood in terms of the need to provide enough commonality in educational provision to ensure equity, while also providing efficient differentiation and vocational distribution. The administrative solution developed to address these competing imperatives involved a combination of a common core of generalist studies, yoked to a system of vocationally-based streaming. Board stresses the emphasis on commonality in the following terms:

A common education is smoothing out the unevenness due to inherited disadvantages. It is becoming more and more possible for the child of more than average capacity to rise to the level where that capacity finds its best expression, and as a consequence, the lines of separation between class and class are becoming blurred: and the change is welcome. It makes for stability.

The administrative rationale was that of creating a 'ladder of opportunity' into distinct post-primary establishments, designed to cater for a range of social destinations and forms of training.

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16 Tate, *School-power*. Cf. Tate's comment that 'so vital a concern as the education of a State should not be left entirely to private enterprise or to the benevolence of religious denominations', in *Victoria, Ministry of Education, Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1903-4* (Melbourne: Victoria, Education Department, 1905) 35.


18 Board, 'Mental Science' 704.

19 See Tate's famous comment that 'We have too long considered that it is enough for the State to provide primary education merely. In this respect we are behind every other Australian State. If we are to have a trained and efficient people the opportunities to ascend from one educational storey to another must be provided as broad stairways for all who can climb. At present we merely throw out a few ropes from the upper storey to accommodate a few selected scholars'. *Victoria, Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for 1903-4*: 36.
In order that our Secondary schools may be adapted for the various requirements of a community such as ours, the courses of study must be arranged so as to provide each boy with a course that shall be of service in the direction in which his opportunities will provide him with an opening. For that purpose we require the secondary school with the literary and professional ends, the school with the commercial ends, and the school with the industrial ends, while in them all there would be something in common, simply because there is something in common in every life in the community, and that interest should be expressed in a course of study.\(^{20}\)

It is the study of English that is to supply this 'something common', developing 'our own mother tongue, in which we will find the elements out of which we can build that refinement of taste and sentiment which constitutes culture.' As Board puts it, English will be 'the core of the school work', the centre around which other subjects will be grouped, other courses branching off in different lines: one literary; one commercial; one industrial and one scientific.\(^{21}\) Board comments that '[p]ersonal culture is the result of the impinging of mind upon mind, the result of personal contact of the thinking student with the thinking teacher ... And where will be found the alter-fires of thought at which thought can be kindled better than in our English literature?'\(^{22}\) However, this lofty sentiment is tied to quite direct normative comments on the state's relation to citizens. English is associated with a highly specific role for the teacher, one of moral influence and character formation.\(^{23}\) Accordingly, Board differentiates the 'mental culture' }

\(^{20}\) Board, 'Secondary Education' 15-6.


\(^{22}\) Board, 'Secondary Education' 16.

associated with classical training from the kind of English curriculum which he regards as suitable for a general school population:

The mental culture I have described is not the outcome of this subject or that, but it is rather the outcome of that insensible thing that you call influence, whether it is the influence of the teacher or the influence of the author.24

The context for this apparently other-worldly goal was, however, a number of long-running institutional tussles between the state school system and the universities. Like other State Directors, Board's emphasis was on the need to provide a practical curriculum suited both to vocational preparation and to the general formation of citizens. To this extent, he was quite explicitly concerned to break the secondary schools' subservient relation to the university and to build a new one on the schools' own terms.25 The main point of contest concerned the rival claims of the university-dominated Classics curriculum and the newly central discipline of English – a discipline and form of teaching directly derived from the pastoral regimes of moralisation and self-expression developed in the elementary classroom.26 Board's description of the new form of common and general education serves as a defence of the curricular and pedagogic regimes of the popular school system, and as a rejection of what might now be called the 'competitive academic curriculum'. However, he does not take this stance in the name of progressive pedagogic principles, nor as a champion of the self-expressive

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24 Board, 'Secondary Education' 16.
25 Board, 'Secondary Education' 16.
rights of the 'whole child'. Instead, he speaks with the voice of the bureaucrat, in the name of raison d'etat. 27

Despite the university's claims to have a monopoly on the pedagogic formation of 'mental discipline', by means of training in classical language, Board noted, the state is less interested in equipping the population with 'mental gymnastics' than with the 'practical uses' to which state-funded education might be put: 28

with regard to the work of our secondary schools, a great deal more needs to be done than the mere determining of what students should leave the schools to go to the University. The University is not the goal of all education. It is the goal for about 15 per cent. of those who go through our schools. It is doubtful whether 15 per cent. is not too liberal an estimate. The question arises: Are University standards to determine the nature of the work of all those students who do not reach the University? The present public examinations narrow down the work of the school to absolute uniformity of programme 29

27 As Bruce Smith points out, 'tracing intellectual lineages ... does not tell us a great deal about the nature of those changes and why some ideas were acceptable and so many others were not. What historians regard as the most advanced educational ideas were not necessarily highly regarded or operationalised by contemporaries'. In contrast to existing accounts, Smith treats bureaucratic reformers such as Board, Tate or Wilkins as 'highly skilled and innovative administrators who forced the pace of reform and broke through established patterns of practice. They did so, however, in the context of long-terms shifts in educational practice and simultaneously with other administrators in other States', Smith, 'Governing Classrooms' 38. See also Smith's commentary on the historiography of Australian education in B. Smith, 'Deserts and Oases: History Writing and State Education'. Paper presented to the 17th annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand Historians of Education, Hobart, 1987.


Once again we see the genesis of such current references to post-compulsory education as the 1985 Blackburn Report. The main difference lies in the frankness of the earlier acknowledgement of the state's interest in the pastoral formation of the population. Equally unabashed is Board's attachment to the distributional functions of the education bureaucracy. The particular role of English is explicitly defined within a strategy that uses the moral influence of the teacher in order to build a non-coercive reformation of conduct. 'The aim of education', Board notes, 'is to enable an individual to become serviceable to the family and the community. It is not formation of character, not culture, not intellectual training we want, but serviceableness ... let us provide a nation of serviceable men and women, and if we can do that we may rest content'.

The 'serviceablenes' of citizens is to be built through a combination of vocational preparation and general education concentrating on moral formation:

Whether the pupil is to be a commercial clerk or an artisan, or is to enter a profession, a course of study that is entirely confined to a preparation for the initial stages of his calling will leave him poorly equipped in point of intelligence for the larger demand which he is called on to meet as a home-maker and a citizen.

The comment is immediately familiar, recalling the imperatives addressed by school systems to this day. If the state's responsibility is to recognise the rights of all citizens, then it must also equip them with the capacity to exercise these rights. Accordingly, it must be able to provide a degree of commonality and parity in the resources and educational experiences that it provides, co-ordinating its activities so as to accord with the needs of the different domains of work, 'life' and democratic activity. However, this imperative is accompanied by others, in which the school has been assigned the institutional role of distributing uneven and unequal educational and

30 Board, 'Secondary Education' 15.
vocational outcomes. For modern school systems, fulfilling these functions entails a complex process of combining generalist education suited to the pastoral formation of citizens with specialist forms of training geared to the formation and distribution of a workforce. Given these functions, is it the state's responsibility to promote the access of the few to the universities, or to provide the many with a package of capacities portable to a range of destinations? If the latter, then what proportion of these packages should be made up of the staple ingredients of generalist education?

As early as 1910, it seems, the divergent objectives of today's education system were already in conflict. The problem then, as now, was the familiar one of developing a curriculum designed for a range of different educational ends and vocational destinations, while providing an adequate degree of commonality. How could the emphasis on general moralising 'child-centred' education sit beside a bureaucratically-driven emphasis on economic goals and technical education? How could the pastoral and child-centred routines of the elementary classroom be adapted to the needs of vocational differentiation? But these difficulties did not emerge from rival philosophical principles. Rather, they stemmed from the pragmatic need to provide both 'commonality' in training and intelligible norms and standards applicable across an archipelago of education sites and systems. The observation is not profound: nevertheless, it has continued to escape the notice of those whose critical reflections on current policy debate have taken an historical bent.

ii. The verdict of history.

Commentators have not missed the connections between the current policy debates and developments at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{32} On the contrary, to the

\textsuperscript{32} For most commentators, the main historical reflection to be made on current developments in postcompulsory education concerns the long struggle between vocational and general education, between the principles of democratic citizenship and the instrumentalist governmental concern with skills. This emphasis is
extent that current developments are understood historically, it is to this point that they refer. These accounts have varied. In some cases, this period of reform is characterised as the point at which progressive education principles were established. In others, it is the point at which they were abandoned. For some, Board's activities are an expression of social democratic doctrines, while for others they are the vehicle for liberalism, psychologisation or vocationalism. It will be no surprise to find that these arguments reflect the now-familiar 'principled' battle between liberal and marxian interpretations, with their common tendency to assess the education system against its capacity to provide the means for the self-determination of the (individual or collective) political subject. In either case, governmental programmes are described as emerging from democratic principles, from either the rational will of the individual or the will of the political community. In fact, these accounts suffer from two related limitations. On the one hand, they play out the opposition between the principled and the technical to its forgone conclusion in favour of principles. On the other, in failing to distinguish between principled conceptions of democratic rights and the actual capacities required to exercise them, these accounts also conflate political theory and the practice of government.

The first problem, the preoccupation with principle, has shaped some decades of historiographic work on the history of secondary education. It has been consistent since the earliest stories of the pioneering efforts of education reformers, pursuing progressive goals against the recalcitrance of apathetic
parents, middle-class interests and conservative universities.\textsuperscript{33} In these accounts, the establishment of secondary education was understood as the evolutionary product of an emerging national identity, shifting from 'liberal democracy' to 'social democracy' in the economically optimistic 1880s and 1890s.\textsuperscript{34} Revisionist histories have shifted these terms somewhat, trading 'principles' for 'ideologies' and 'political interests'. In these more recent accounts, early forms of mass secondary education are taken to task for being the vehicles of liberal ideology, tracing the apparently progressivist strand of public reform to a basis in assumptions about mental capacity and educability.\textsuperscript{35} Board's reforms to secondary education in New South Wales provide a prime instance for such revisionist arguments. If anything, it is argued, the different vocational rungs of Board's education ladder were designed to distinguish between the 'privileged' and the 'unprivileged', providing little more than 'upward mobility for the able and ambitious boys, and skills for a tractable workforce.\textsuperscript{36}

At these points, the opposition between education principles and utilitarian consideration overlaps with the equally common conflation between the

\textsuperscript{33} B. Smith, 'Governing Classrooms: A Genealogy of Classroom Management', diss., Griffith University, 1991, 44-6.
\textsuperscript{34} Ely 36-9.
\textsuperscript{35} David McCallum, for instance, in his influential history of psychological discourse in Australian education, characterises the extension of mass education in terms of the combination of liberal political ideology and the advocacy of remediatory state interventionism, as a response to the class conflict of the 1880s and 1890s. D. McCallum, \textit{The Social Production of Merit: Education, Psychology and Politics in Australia 1900-1950} (Basingstoke: Falmer Press, 1990): 4. The key concern in this account is with the 'psychological capture of education through the focus on individual difference', a move 'in line with the social efficiency movement and demand for rational and efficient allocation of resources' (McCallum \textit{Social Production} 13). See also D. McCallum, 'The Theory of Educational Inequality in Australia, 1900-1950', diss., U. of Melbourne; 1985.
\textsuperscript{36} McCallum \textit{Social Production} 55.
sphere of government and that of democratic political rights. Once again, the imperative is to make these rights the foundation for the education system. Accordingly, the history of secondary education is read in terms of the (lost) political possibilities presented by technical education, particularly the long-awaited evolution of a form of 'really useful knowledge' organic to working class culture.\textsuperscript{37} The demise of this political ideal is marked in two ways. On the one hand, this possibility was forestalled by the substitution of a vocational curriculum designed to suit middle class ends.\textsuperscript{38} On the other, it was undermined by the dominance of the academic curriculum.\textsuperscript{39} The universities are the 'villain' in this story.\textsuperscript{40} Under the cover of education for 'leisure', it is argued, the secondary schools pursued academic and especially 'literary' subjects, restricting state secondary schools to preparing students for fundamentally unequal battles with the private schools.\textsuperscript{41}

The problem here, as in current accounts of 'economic rationalism' and 'corporate managerialism', is that there is little sense of the specifically


\textsuperscript{39} Hyams and Bessant 97.

\textsuperscript{40} Hyams and Bessant 83.

governmental character of these bureaucratic reforms. Against this historiographic background, figures such as Board become little more than ciphers, agents acting in the interests of economic classes. Insofar as critical accounts are concerned with governmental rationales for the expansion of the system, the focus is firmly on the rhetorical or discursive elements of bureaucratic statements. Accordingly, Board's apparent distrust of individualism is traced to a 'social imperialist' rhetoric of 'national efficiency', with elements of 'Liberal-Imperialism' thrown in.\textsuperscript{42} His descriptions of the poor conditions suffered by residents in industrial cities are treated as colonialist and paternalistic, since he failed to 'question the social system which produced such "degradation."' Admittedly, his comments on the social benefit to be derived from breaking down class stratification through increased educational mobility are regarded as more 'positive'.\textsuperscript{43} But even so, although Board decried social stratification, he did not question Australia's basic social structure.\textsuperscript{44} This, apparently, is a moral and political failing that damns the ethical credentials and historical achievements of the reformers:

Those in power gained more than they gave. According to the current orthodoxy, secondary education in Australia may have been designed for a 'democracy'. But egalitarian ideals founded in fee-paying private school interests, 'meritocracy' in academic high schools, and technical education designed for a 'workforce'... [was]... not so much a change or even a reform of the social structure inherited from the nineteenth century. It represented a consolidation of the existing social, economic and political system. If far-reaching transformations were to occur in Australian society, they would occur in spite of, rather than because of, the education system.\textsuperscript{45}

Perhaps it is time to repeal this historical sentence. In the light of our genealogy of popular schooling, it seems extraordinary that historians have

\textsuperscript{42} Hyams and Bessant 89.
\textsuperscript{43} Ely 71-2.
\textsuperscript{44} Ely 55.
\textsuperscript{45} Ely 75.
been able to dismiss the construction of mass secondary schooling as occurring 'in spite of, rather than because of, the education system',\(^{46}\) on the basis that the extension of educational facilities failed to realise a higher end of complete equality and political self-determination.\(^{47}\) Such dismissals of the historical achievements of the school system, we have argued, misrepresent both the achievements of the bureaucratically-organised education system and its limits, even as they underestimate the ethical and political substance of the governmental programmes which shaped it.

At a closer look, in fact, Board's bureaucratic comments on the goals of popular schooling exhibit a formidable degree of political complexity and ethical force. His programmatic statements exhibit an exemplary sense of the duty of the state's role in the education of a citizenry and of the need to arbitrate between competing imperatives and rights. Furthermore, they display a rigorous attention to commonality and uniformity in the educational opportunities provided to each citizen. These objectives are accompanied by an admirable distrust of inherited privilege – typical of the bureaucratic strata – and by the beginnings of efforts to separate the provision of public schooling from the effects of unequal background.

**iv. 'The state as a state'.**

Recall Board's comment that 'the schools of all grades will be the instruments for national purposes, for the cultivation of individual productiveness and intelligent citizenship, the training grounds for national defence, and the nurseries of the nation's morality.'\(^{48}\) We will not find here a conception of the education system as a means of realising the political rights of citizens to 'self-determination'. On the contrary, Board calls upon a strongly anti-

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\(^{46}\) Ely 75.  
\(^{47}\) Ely 56.  
\(^{48}\) Board, 'Mental Science' 711-2.
individualist political rationality, to the effect that concentration on the individual development of the child undermines the ethical imperative of responsibility to state, to community, to national productivity and to civic well-being:

the future well being of the Australian nation (depends on) the physical, mental and moral training that is being given to its children ... in other nations ... the object of the education that was given to the youth of the nation was to make them contributors to the well being of the State as a State. The continued existence and persistence of the State was felt to be bound up in the undeveloped resources that lay waiting for the its unfolding in the capacities of the nation's children. The conception of a nation as merely an aggregation of units, each struggling for its own selfish ends, has carried with it the elements of national decadence. On the other hand, in contrast to this individualism, it is the development of corporate responsibility, the partial merging of the individual in the community, the subordinating of personal freedom to the welfare of the State which, added to the personal progress of the individual with regard to his own private interests, has produced the most stable and contented communities.49

If we do not find here an expression of the liberal goal of 'equality of opportunity', neither do we find a commitment to equality, in the modern sense of equalising access to prestigious educational destination such as the universities or the professions. In fact, the comment quoted above is directly pitched against such an emphasis. The university is not conceived as the destination for the mass of secondary school students – such a form of mass entry was literally unthinkable at this point. Indeed, it seem that at this time, there was no generally accepted conception of mass entitlement to post-elementary schooling, and nor was there a strong popular demand for high school education for all.50 What Board does stress, however, is the political

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49 Board, 'Presidential Address' 6.
50 See Ling, 'Educability' 83. Ling also notes that 'education "beyond the 3 Rs" was not universally advocated for all children, and nor was there a great clamour from the classes expected to derive most benefit'. See Ling, 'Educability' 63. Despite the prevalence of historical arguments which treat the extension of secondary education as the product of political pressure from the working classes, Ling argues, there is little historical evidence that the 'lower social-orders' in in New South Wales or Queensland lobbied actively for an extension of state secondary education. He also
importance of the provision of commonality and parity in education resources.

We have already noted that the provision of mass education in fact made it possible to conceive of the population in new ways, through the institutional provision of a common social training. At the turn of the century, it was not self-evident that systems of ranking and differentiation were antithetical to such an objective or inimical to deeper and more authentic cultural differences. Instead, the rationale was one of providing points of entry to differentiated outcomes for those with ability. Part of the difficulty was to ensure that all children, wherever they might reside, would receive the same style and standard of schooling. Thus, the pupil in the remote one-teacher school in the bush would be exposed to the same education as his counterpart in the large, well-established urban centre'.

Here, the concern was to bypass systems based on familial privilege and to identify forms of merit independently of family background, in the interests of greater economic prosperity and individual equity. To achieve this end, it was necessary to have means to identify 'individual potential' and to determine 'educability'; it has to be recognised that no absolute standard can be fixed as one to which all children should attain by their fourteenth year. The variations in individual inherited


51 Hyams and Bessant 69.
capacity, and still more, the variations in home environment make an absolute standard impossible. But, apart from these modifying circumstances, the operations of the school should, under ideal conditions, enable each child to reach the limits of his possibilities.\textsuperscript{53}

Of course, such an ambition was not easy to implement, involving as it did a complex set of procedures for installing the registration of differences within classroom, and for monitoring the effect of family background.\textsuperscript{54} As we have seen, the routines of the elementary classroom itself had made it possible to enclose individuals in a common educational environment, in a common dispensation of pedagogical exercises and purpose-built capacities. To that extent, the popular classroom had provided the means of conceiving the separation of educational performance and familial background.\textsuperscript{55} The bureaucratic problem was that this educational provision remained uneven. Historians point out that, 'even in the later part of the century, the state school systems had been unable to make primary education either universal or of uniform quality, and even within the urban areas marked inequalities remained.'\textsuperscript{56} Consequently, it remained difficult to fix 'absolute standards' of

\textsuperscript{53} Board 'Mental Science' 707.

\textsuperscript{54} See the Report of Alfred Dean, Esq., Ballarat no. 2 District, in Victoria: Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for 1903-4: 37. The report notes the methods by which grading was introduced in schools:

By dividing a class of 50 to 60 pupils into three grades, containing (a) good, (b) fair, (c) weak pupils, the teacher is enabled to get through a greater amount of work during the lesson. In teaching arithmetic, for example, two or three exercises are entered on the blackboard to be worked by the pupils. The quicker ones soon have these finished and then, instead of idly waiting until their slower class mates have finished, they quietly open their text-books and begin to work from them. The teacher finds that he has more time to devote to the slower ones.

Similar developments may be traced in subsequent Ministerial reports: Victoria, Ministry of Education, Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1904-5 (Melbourne: Victoria, Education Department, 1906); and Victoria, Ministry of Education, Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1905-6 (Melbourne: Victoria, Education Department, 1907).


\textsuperscript{56} Hyams and Bessant 70.
educational attainment. In a system based on streaming, this was a significant obstacle to bureaucratic ambitions such as Board's.

Observing the limits to the intellectual and political technologies available to the education bureaucracy at this point helps to explain how it was that the school system came to be linked to the universities through the networks of certification and examinations which are now being so painstakingly replaced by school-based record-keeping and testing. The most important element to note, for our argument, is that there were few mechanisms available to administer mass schooling, or to monitor the provision of commonality and equitable differentiation. The network of examinations established between the state and private schools, the universities and the public service provided the main relay between different educational and vocational sites, giving students from the state school system access to scholarships and thus to the universities and professions, and providing a degree of public confidence in the emergent public school system. From the point of view of the state school system, however, this administrative link threatened to tie the new system to the academy, leaving those steering state education without the flexibility to pursue other objectives. Board's position on this question in ambivalent. On the one hand, he supports the retention of university-designed examination in terms of the need for 'public confidence' in secondary school standards, arguing that it 'saves the teacher from a certain amount of diffuseness which is liable to enter into a liberal course without some restraint.' On the other, he recommends the establishment of a system of matriculation examinations conducted within the schools, and 'organically connected' to the school programme, but designed in consultation with the universities and monitored by an independent Board.

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57 See Board, 'Address Delivered' 4. Cf. Board's later comments on this question in P. Board, Whither Education (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1939).
58 Board, 'Important Address' 8.
It is worth noting that, in objecting to the expansion of examinations, Board displays no anxiety about contradictions between the rights of the individual and the imposition of collective norms. He was more concerned that means of differentiation, such as examinations, were not normative *enough*. Not only were they conducted at some distance from the classroom, but they were also couched within the abstract and rote-learning based routines developed in the classical and rhetorical teaching of Latin. In fact, examinations had begun to look extremely clumsy, possessing little of the flexibility in character-formation developed within the elementary classroom and extended within the newer secondary subjects, in English in particular. Furthermore, examinations possessed none of the classroom's capacity to identify the stages of learning particular to the new figure of the adolescent – stages which had in fact been formulated on the basis of observations conducted within the normative environment of the classroom itself. The failure of the examination was that it took place outside the 'learning context'. In other words, it lacked the normalising and individuating capacities of the popular classroom.  

Board's comments stem from the long history of efforts to establish a teaching service trained within the tactics of non-coercive moral reformation. We can recognise these as the strategies deployed within the 'simultaneous classroom' (as developed in the 1840s and 1850s by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth in Britain and by William Wilkins in Australia), and extended through the state education system by means of teacher training and the efforts of the Inspectorate.  

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59 See comments on this question in Hunter, *Culture and Government* 296.  
built pedagogic relationship, designed to promote the internalisation of norms and the voluntary reshaping of the conscience and conduct of both the child and the education community. It is on the strength of these strategies and kinds of expertise that the state education system had achieved its predominance over the rival denominational system in the late 1800s. It was on the same grounds that it sought to establish its autonomy from the universities, retaining a considerable degree of control over the conduct and content of matriculation examinations and therefore of the syllabus.  

In fact, it was the difficult nature of the relations between the school system and the universities that gave rise to the emerging bureaucratic interest in using 'mental testing' and psychological techniques in order to determine educability. Both Board and Tate make reference to the capabilities opened to classroom by the new 'science of education'. The advantage of using psychologically-based tests in the classroom lay in the fact that teachers might be able to use them to identify individual differences in child development, on the basis of tasks drawn from the common array of exercises performed in the classroom. In this way, instead of being forced to distribute students to differentiated vocational outcomes on the basis of a set of externally-defined tests derived from a different normative environment, it might be possible to devise a mechanism capable of formalising the relations of knowledge between teacher and student already painstakingly established in the classroom itself. As Board put it in 1910, 'mental science' offered the opportunity of 'systematising of the child's experiences'. In the developmental stages identified by the emerging field of 'child study', a variety of disjointed experiences [are] brought together, correlated,


61 See Smith, ‘Crime and the Classics’ for this argument.
interlocked, organised, before resulting in acquired knowledge. At the same time, it also provided the opportunity to break the hold of the universities upon the school system, and to establish a form of differentiation more closely tied to the capacities and routines of the popular school itself.

From the perspective of modern educational critique, the programmes developed by Board and other education bureaucrats are easily enough described. In choosing technical means of equitable differentiation over the higher end of equality of outcomes, Board condemns himself as an agent of the technocratic – and therefore, of course, as an ally of market forces and of liberalism. My argument, however, is that such characterisations fall into the trap of underestimating both the extent of bureaucratic ambitions and the routine limits that they encounter.

In fact, Board's reforms mark one of the key moments where the governmental site of the popular school begins to link itself systematically to the broader network of social administration and welfare. In doing so, the school alters this broader field substantially, drawing with it a number of elements that shape our current conceptions of social rights and citizenship. In part, this is due to one of the earliest characteristics of the popular school: its provision of an environment and a set of regimes capable of establishing a common educational habitus, common forms of personhood, and common desire for access to them. The existence of these forms of institutionalised commonality makes the goal of equitable educational outcomes thinkable.

However, it is difficult to tie the extension of post-elementary education to the 'political', if by that we mean treating it as the expression (or repression) of

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62 Board, 'Mental Science' 705. Board also remarks, however, that, for all the advantages of the new science of individual observation made available by child study, education becomes 'too individualistic' if 'controlled completely by 'objective psychological' methods, and 'leaves out the concerns of the community'.

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pre-formed political interests and identities. Whereas modern historians treat these reforms as the (thwarted) opportunity to express the democratic capabilities of political subjects, in a moment of self-determination, Board's concerns lie with citizens as the objects of governmental attention and adjustment. Nevertheless, this by no means precludes him from developing what we might recognise as 'principled' objectives, stressing the need for commonality and parity in education provision. In fact, within the terms of the bureaucratic ethos as we have described it – with its heritage of the distrust of partisanship and of inherited privilege – Board exhibits an exemplary attention to the difficulties of reforming systems of educational differentiation.

The relation between educational differentiation, technical calculation and equity will be pursued at some length in Part III, as we develop our third case study on assessment and equity. For now, however, let us consolidate our observations of the historical background to current policy developments. Our description of some of the elements converging at the turn of the century should provide some impression of the longevity of current education problems, and of their intractability, while also providing us with a more historically-based appreciation of the achievements entailed in establishing the current system of state secondary education.

v. Conclusion.

Our description of the formative role of the 'pastoral bureaucracy' has provided us with a distinctive approach to the historical formation of the modern Australian education system. If our genealogy is correct, then the objectives of maintaining the security of the state, promoting welfare of citizens and exploiting the population are a structural feature of modern 'bureaucratic pastoral' education systems. Although critical intellectuals
will continue to maintain that the development of more equitable modes of schooling occurred 'in spite of' rather than because of the efforts of bureaucratic education reformers, we can now recognise the arbitrary quality of this historical verdict. Educational critique, it seems, tends to misconceive and underestimate the governmental drive and bureaucratic power of reform programmes, just as it ignores the self-contained nature of the institutional objectives that organise them. By contrast, instead of treating modern Australian secondary schooling as a surface that registers deeper struggles between political interests and ideologies, we have begun to concentrate on the concrete historical achievements and capacities of the school system itself.

We can now return to our point of departure: the government's competency agenda and the critical response to it. We have begun to provide a history for current efforts to systematise the provision of educational commonality and differentiation at a national level. We have also noted the limited range of instruments available to meet these ends. In Chapters Five and Six, we encountered a set of intractable administrative and political difficulties which were irreducible to the arbitration of principle or of philosophical clarification. Insofar as it was possible to grasp the combination of ethical, technical and political complexities entailed in the process of adjusting the education system to new imperatives, we found, it was possible to do so only through the use of fragile and fallible instruments of calculation. In this case, the instruments on which the reforms rely are those of educational assessment.

In Chapter Six, we returned to the general terms of the principled conception of democratic education and citizenship rights, in order to pose a series of questions. What if the governmental apparatuses in which we are nurtured and developed are not founded on the rational-faculties of individual or on
inalienable rights? What if they stem instead from the more definite and limited source of the political and intellectual technologies of government? What if they derive in fact from the bureau itself and from the expertise which staffs it? Citizenship, we have argued, is not a pre-given human attribute. Instead, it consists of a bundle of statuses and attributes, which cannot be added together to form the sum of human political potential. There may well be disjunctions between 'political citizenship' (the status of the possessor of civil, political and social rights) and the governmental treatment of citizens as the objects of care and attention. But this opposition does not occur – as is often assumed – because governmental operations have failed to express a set of pre-existent rights. Instead, the political rights engendered by political systems simply belong to a different sphere from the social rights and capacities built by the school system. This gap cannot be closed by invoking fundamental human or political rights, or by calling for the education system to redeem its historical promises. The Australian education system was not founded as an expression of political rights, and nor is it a conduit through which absolute ideals can enter the world. Instead, it is a complex apparatus forged by the pastoral and bureaucratic machinery of government.

In Chapter Seven, this argument was made in historical terms, in a genealogical effort to untangle current confusions between critical conceptions of absolute 'principles', the discourse of democratic rights, and the distribution of governmental norms. Describing the actual and historical circumstances in which built the popular school system was built, I put the proposition that the education system may not be founded on principles such as equality or freedom. Its origins are more mundane than this. But by the same token, its achievements are more significant. The establishment of mass popular schooling was not the effect of an expression of political will. Nevertheless, in establishing the grounds of commonality in education
provision, and in forming a citizenry equipped with a set of capacities, the bureaucratically-organised school system made democratic political capacities and expectations possible.

Chapter Eight extended this historical analysis by examining the circumstances which established modern secondary education in Australia. Here, I have set out to describe both the extent of bureaucratic ambitions and the limits to them. There are two main points to draw from this. The first has direct consequences for current debates on post-compulsory education, since it suggests that many of the imperatives driving education policy today are both familiar and recurrent, and are clearly identifiable in the uneasy institutional relations of secondary education at the turn of the century. The second point is a broader one, concerning the need to govern our expectations of the school system's capacity to realise absolutist principles and to align itself with the expectations of its critics.

In making this argument, this final chapter of Part II has returned us to the intellectual technology of assessment. I have begun to describe some of the _ad hoc_ and improvised circumstances in which educational assessment was established, as well as the amount of moral and political weight that it is required to bear, as a relay between institutional imperatives such as commonality and differentiation. I have also begun to identify both the expectations invested in this fragile set of instruments, and the limits to them.

Let me restate the problem. Within spheres of philosophical/political reflection, it is assumed that education is democratic only when it acts as a means to express the political rights of the citizen and the rational and moral subject's capacity for self-determination. Such claims, it seems, are irreducible to the limited entitlements and definite statuses allocated by the
actual and existing education system. Accordingly, the gap between the political rights attributed to the citizen and the governmental treatment of citizens as objects of remedial attention continues to attract the indignation of educational critics. Critical intellectuals have found this gap between the political and the governmental components of citizenship insuperable. Nevertheless, they continue to attempt to close the gap by means of theoretical or principled arbitration. The difficult point to grasp, however, is that what holds these components together, in fact, is not a set of principles. Instead, it is an inglorious but indispensable apparatus: the intellectual and political technology of educational assessment. If bureaucratic governance extends no further than the instruments at its disposal, then clearly we need to pay more attention to such instruments.

We thus turn, in Part III, to the description of the intellectual and political technologies available to those developing and implementing the competency programme. Here, we enter the dense and ill-lit area of educational assessment. This is an area that has held some fascination for the critics, most of them having the kind of political imagination that makes it a disreputable place indeed, being the local haunt of technocratic discourse, of individualism, meritocracy, vocationalism and human capital. Our interest in the area is a more mundane one. Initially at least, our task is simply to explore this district of educational debate, identifying its main current and historical features. In order to understand the intractability of the technical, ethical and political difficulties negotiated in current reforms, we will need to locate them within this field. The objective of current reforms is to clear a path through this terrain: our task is to map it.
PART III

THE EQUITY CALCULUS
CHAPTER NINE: FALING THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

i. Introduction.

Our central theme has been that 'principled' forms of critical appraisal tend to underestimate the complexity of the political, ethical and technical difficulties negotiated within bureaucratically-organised education systems.¹ For all the appeal of the formulations called upon by critique, the emphasis on fundamental oppositions between absolute principles is less than helpful in understanding the diverse range of elements which have shaped current education problems, or in indicating practical paths for reform. Instead, critique consistently orients its suggestions to more absolute ends. The expectation is that a democratic education system should express pre-existing rights based in a fundamental human faculty for self-determination and critical reason. Once it does so, society will become transparent to democratic scrutiny, making it possible to transform the specialist and technical ('alienated') character of bureaucratic planning and make it expressive of democratic principle and critical values. These expectations are consistently frustrated. The problem is that the 'transparency' of the education system is dependent on particular intellectual instruments, such as those of statistics and demographics, used within the routines of governmental decision-making. Although these intellectual and political technologies provide a form of bureaucratic 'vision', this vision is limited to objects such as a literate and numerate citizenry, a skilled workforce and ethically competent individuals. In other words, critique's 'completely developed person' is nowhere in sight.

In Part II, we addressed one main instance of these difficulties. In describing current policy debates on competency and post-compulsory education, we identified some of the competing imperatives which organise mass education systems, tracing these competing demands to the origins of mass schooling. From the eighteenth century, we have argued, pastoral means to promote conscience and to build moralised habits of self-cultivation have co-existed with the bureaucratic management of populations. Furthermore, since the establishment of mass secondary education in Australia, governments have pursued a diverse range of objectives through the school system, from the imperative to form a literate, peaceable, healthy and moral population to the goal of equipping a workforce with vocational skills and a citizenry with common civic capacities.

These purposes have achieved an uncertain rapprochement within the modern school, which combines a moralised 'child-centred' pedagogy with systematic sorting and vocational distribution. In melding these elements, the school system balances a number of now-standard tensions, negotiating between deeply implanted vocational commitments, institutionalised routines, political demands and civic expectations. But this negotiation is not achieved by means of a unified philosophical or political rationale. Instead, the school system is contingently organised by a number of calculative technologies such as those found in the apparatus of educational assessment. It is via these mundane intellectual and political technologies (rather than from pre-existing rights or principles) that the education bureaucracy derives its capacity to address the rights-based claims of citizens, to set targets for reform and to monitor their implementation. These technologies, we have observed, are fallible and contingently formed. Nevertheless, the range of instruments is not easily replaced. The conclusion we drew was that, if bureaucratic government extends no further than the instruments at its disposal, then we need to know
more about these instruments. In particular, if we are to achieve a more useful and pragmatic appraisal of current policy imperatives, then we will need a more historically-informed understanding of the available apparatuses of educational assessment.

This is the task of Part III, and it is undertaken in four steps. In Chapter Nine, we begin by surveying the field of recent debates on school assessment. Here, we explore both the diversity of assessment schema and the uniformity of their 'failures', drawing out some standard tensions between the pastoral will to know and form the individual child and the bureaucratic emphasis on efficient and equitable systems of mass distribution. Although the tension between these twin elements appears to be self-evident, it is argued, it is by no means inevitable. Retracing our historical steps, we begin to identify the points at which the will to know and form the individual became established as the standard objectives of the school system. Chapter Ten develops this account, in a genealogical description of the formation of these tensions. It describes the assembly of the main mechanisms of school assessment now in use: those of the examination, of mental testing and of school-based record-keeping and continuous assessment. Here, we explore some reasons to revise the standard suspicion of psychological and statistical expertise. This terrain is more thoroughly explored in Chapter Eleven, where I describe how the reciprocal relationships between the school and the 'psy complex' have shaped the ways in which it is now possible for the school system to conceive of equity, social difference or 'equality of opportunity'. But these developments do not occur as an effect of the evolution towards self-evident educational truths, or as the expression of pre-existent political rights. On the contrary, they come about in more mixed and messy circumstances, as the product of failed experiments, technical hitches and patchy negotiations. Finally, in Chapter Twelve, we pursue some of the
implications of these arguments by means of a close study of one debate on assessment, equity and aptitude testing. Describing some of the political ambiguities of the example, we investigate some advantages of a more pragmatic approach to the problem of assessment, one more appreciative of the kinds of negotiation entailed in arbitrating between the competing imperatives applied to the popular school. This prompts some suggestions for developing more modest expectations of the effects of 'critical intervention' into expert arbitration. It is also argued that we need to give the negotiatory and technical elements of educational calculation their due, given that it is from them that we derive the valuable political and ethical achievements of many of the equity-related objectives now built into the popular school system. These, then, are the overall concerns of Part III. Let us turn to our first task, that of mapping the range of expectations attached to the area of assessment, and the variety of technical alternatives available to meet them.

ii. The failure of assessment.

Educational assessment provides one of the most contentious areas of Australian social policy. Within the last ten years alone, public concern with the alleged failures of assessment policies and instruments has led to major policy reviews in each Australian State, and a vast amount of collateral commentary. But despite these policy initiatives, the 'failure' of assessment

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continues to be rediscovered in public debate. Apparently, assessment is too simple and too schematic, denying the individuality of students and the complexity of social differences. But then it is also not simple enough, since parents and employers are unable to understand it. Whether the demand is for educational evaluation to be adequate to the fullness of the individual or to the full range of social differences, it appears that the available forms of school assessment fail to know the child fully, or to monitor closely enough the complex patterns of development and potential.

If the problems of assessment are recurrent, the recommendations made for its reform are repetitive. These involve variations on two main (apparently contradictory) tactics. On the one hand, assessment is to escape 'arbitrary bureaucratic norms' by finding more intimate and open-ended means of

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observing the child. On the other, it is to purge itself of subjective judgement, by locating more exact criteria or more reliable forms of measurement. But neither of these strategies is able to cure the problem. In each case, the symptoms continue to be diagnosed: either classroom assessments are not individualised and intimate enough, or programmes for more efficient normalisation are unable to rid themselves of subjective judgements. Nevertheless, techniques of testing and examination, individual profiling and normative assessment continue to coexist, even though each bears the stigma of failure and each is advocated as an answer to the failures of the others.

It may seem incongruous that assessment schemes continue to proliferate, even as their failure is announced. But to think so is to underestimate the complexity of the assessment apparatus, and the range of imperatives it must satisfy. These imperatives are diverse and often incommensurate. They include the need to provide individualised accounts of students' school performance, while ensuring that performances in different school programmes are comparable; the imperative to protect the autonomy of the classroom and the need to achieve systematic comparability of teacher

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judgement; and the need to respect the rights of the child, while meeting the demands for reliable information made by employers, parents, universities, the 'community' and the state. It seems that assessment is flexible enough to fail in a number of different and contradictory ways.

Despite a busy industry of commentary from education philosophy, sociology, history and policy analysis, academic debates have found it difficult to clarify the complexities of the problem of assessment and selection. At first glance, academic discussion of the issue seems active and even antagonistic, especially in the on-going debate between philosophical liberalism and marxian approaches. But a closer look shows a certain stability in the terms of commentary. Despite the apparent differences between the liberal and the 'socially critical' positions, each tends to agree that assessment is a failure and that this reflects a deeper failure of education to live up to its founding principles.8

We can characterise the debate schematically, in terms of two main fields of discussion. The first is composed of reflections on the rationales which should inform assessment, while the second is organised around a concerted political and philosophical attack on these rationales. The former can be characterised as a product of liberal humanist philosophy and psychology, combined within the vocational fields of curriculum advice and teacher education.9 This complex has produced an array of texts and manuals, each of them addressing the question of how classroom teachers should understand the relationship between educational principles and the process of evaluating students' development. These rationales are largely concerned with the conduct of the 'teaching relationship', a conception strongly linked

to psychologically-based conceptions of the growth and development of the child or adolescent. For this body of literature, the real goals of education are to realise the needs of the 'whole child', and assessment techniques must be made to serve this end.\textsuperscript{10}

This influential corpus of advice literature sits beside another body of material which is critical both of assessment and of liberal humanist responses to it. Broadly, this is composed of marxian and 'oppositionalist' positions. From these positions, the prospect of a 'totally benign' system of assessment is regarded as little more than a myth.\textsuperscript{11} Education systems cannot be benign, since they are far too deeply linked to the social reproduction of inequality, a

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{10} See G. Withers, 'From Marking Strategy to Assessment Procedure: A Review of Recent Australian Practices', \textit{Studies in Educational Evaluation} 13 (1987): 18. In the eyes of the liberal expert in 'educational evaluation', school assessment is inspired by the educational desire to 'know' the child, a desire apparently frustrated by a rift between the 'technical' and the more natural 'general human activity of personal evaluation'. The administrative aspects of school assessment are legitimate only insofar as they realise the principle of the complete development of the child as moral individual, by developing complete educational knowledge of the child. However, this realisation is apparently frustrated by a rift between the 'technical' and the more natural 'general human activity of personal evaluation'. See Rowntree; D.L. Nuttall, ed., \textit{Assessing Educational Achievement}. (Lewes: Falmer Press, 1986); and B. Johnson, \textit{Assessing English: Helping Students to Reflect on Their Work} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). See also L. Kramer, \textit{Education Examined (Curriculum and Assessment in the 1990s)} (Melbourne: Institute of Public Affairs, 1990).
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distribution naturalised by psychological doctrines of innate individual
difference and by the individualistic assumptions of liberalism.12 Just as
liberal humanist treatments of the issue incorporate a certain ambivalence –
both denouncing assessment and proposing ways to make it organic to real
education – so the marxian critique is attached to various recommendations
for reforming selection and obtaining 'social justice'. If the education system
could be fully informed by the principles of equality and social justice, then
assessment could be made organic to the needs of communities.13 But only
when the processes of education are made transparent to true principles will it
be possible to achieve a fully enlightened understanding of 'culture' and of
'society as a whole'.

In what follows, we shall call both sets of expectations into question. The
project for a transparent 'child centred' form of assessment is confronted by
the difficulty of achieving 'non-normative' forms of educational knowledge
and assessment. At the same time, the ambition to achieve a sociologically
transparent assessment apparatus faces a parallel problem, in that the actual
education system is unable to provide a transcendent political and moral
vision of society as a whole. The common problem is that educational
assessment is dependent on definite and limited intellectual instruments, such
as those of statistics and demographics, used within the milieu of bureaucratic
decision-making. Furthermore, bureaucratic vision is usually trained on a
lower ethical horizon than that of critique, setting its sights on the space

12 See, for example, M. Henry, J. Knight, R. Lingard and Taylor, Understanding
Schooling: An Introductory Sociology of Australian Education (London:
Routledge, 1988) 179; 273; C. Symes, 'More Crosses than Ticks', Education
Links 35 (1989): 5-9; J. Blackmore, 'Curriculum, Assessment and Certification:
Contested Reforms in Victorian Secondary Education, 1930-60', Melbourne
Studies in Education 1991 ed. D. Stockley (Melbourne: La Trobe University

13 P. Broadfoot, A Question of Quality: The Changing Role of Assessment in
Education (Belconnen, ACT: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1992);
P. Broadfoot, Assessment: A Celebration of Learning (Belconnen, ACT:
between technical objectives and their implementation. But the vocation of principled reflection is strongly enough established to encourage the hope that, with the proper exercise of moral and rational reflection, both the teacher and the school system may be able to redeem themselves.

iii. Aspiration and redemption.

This cycle of aspiration, disappointment and redemption has been particularly marked in debates on assessment during the past two decades, no doubt because of the rapid demographic and organisational changes undergone by mass secondary education. Since the 1970s, Australian school systems have been through a series of major reforms and transformations, partly arising from the expansion of student numbers. As we saw in Chapter Five, these changes have particularly affected the upper secondary school, once a relatively small sector of the state school system. During the 1970s and 1980s, retention rates to Year 10 increased dramatically, and similar shifts during the late eighties and early nineties have seen an equivalent increase in retention to Year 12. This increase was in part a reaction to economic recession, but it was also the result of governmental policy developed by bodies such as the Commonwealth Schools Commission. The Commission developed programmes designed to knit the school more closely to the community, to the workforce and to the 'pedagogic family'. As we have already noted, with a larger proportion of the school population remaining, the purposes of Years 11 and 12 have altered. From providing a conduit into the universities for a limited stream of matriculating students, these years have become the main exit point for an increasing proportion of the population, bound for a variety of social destinations. Both schools and the education bureaucracy have attempted to adjust to this change. This has involved adapting a series of co-existing and sometimes contradictory rationales for redefining the purposes of post-compulsory education and its
relationship to citizenship, to work, to community desires, to adolescent development and to the rights and needs of young people.

In these circumstances, questions about the role of certification, assessment and selection have multiplied, as education rationales have attempted to keep pace with the speed of institutional change. These shifts have been the direct result of the removal of the principle of 'matriculation' from the administrative structure of secondary schooling. During the 1970s, a number of States began to move away from the device of the public examination, partly on the basis of arguments concerning the inequity and inefficiency of examinations in comparison with the expertise possessed by teachers themselves, but also in response to demands that the schools should be able to cater for the plurality of destinations and outcomes associated with an increasingly socially diverse high school population. Some States and Territories, such as Tasmania, Queensland and the ACT, responded by developing various forms of continuous school-based assessment by the mid 1970s. Others, such as Victoria and New South Wales, reacted by differentiating the provision of courses within the expanded secondary school, providing a number of vocationally-related and non-examined streams designed to educate for 'citizenship' and for 'choice'. Gradually, however, there has been a general drift to forms of continuous school-based assessment. Curriculum and assessment design have thus been devolved to the school, and the upper secondary school has become increasingly detached from the universities, laying claim to its own level of educational expertise and autonomy. This has entailed the construction of an extensive administrative apparatus of course accreditation, as well as an elaborate array of statistical devices used to retain public confidence and to meet universities'
and employers' requirements for means to compare applicants from different schools and different State systems.14

During the 1980s, the gradual marginalisation of examinations promoted high expectations that it would now be possible to meet the imperative of attending to the development of the 'whole child', while allowing progressive teachers and principals to make schools organic to the community. The prospect was that of recognising cultural difference and opening the schools to democratic participation, while breaking down the division between academic and vocational strands, between school, work and community, between the mental and the manual, between culture and utility. Each of these expectations was driven by the imperative to finally establish a pedagogic space free of the imposition of comparative assessment, tests and grades – a space in which students could be empowered and enabled to explore their own cultural differences, needs and desires within a participatory democratic classroom. In the process, however, schools have had to negotiate a number of difficulties in meeting the dual imperatives of adjusting schools to cultural difference, while providing a machinery of distribution capable of meeting concerns about equity and social distribution, thus setting the scene for a familiar dilemma within debates on assessment.

iv. Dreaming of transparency.

The result of these contradictory pressures has been the development of a variety of new assessment schema, ranging from attempts to remove comparative assessment altogether, to efforts to implant elaborate schemes of continuous diagnostic testing and measurement. During the last decade, new forms of grading, scoring, testing and record-keeping have proliferated, particularly in the lower secondary schools, each of them a new solution to the complex technical and political imperatives applied to school selection and certification, each more intricate than the last.15 This field of debate and experiment is the direct source of the assessment technologies being adapted and trialled during the present reorganisation of post-compulsory education. It is a close-knit and intensely organised field of activity, with a rapid turnover of technique and programme. There are, however, some terms and techniques common to most of the State-based systems. Most, for instance, have made use of a working distinction between 'formative' and 'summative' kinds of school assessment.16 The 'formative' is classroom-based and designed to provide individuals with a personal record of their performance. The second, 'summative' strand is for use in certification and selection, looking 'outward' to employers and selection and concentrating only on recording that which demonstrably has been learned. A variety of new assessment techniques built on this distinction have been advocated. In the zone of 'formative' assessment, designed for use largely within the classroom, a range of record-keeping schema have been devised, which we can collect under the generic heading of 'profiling'.17

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17 For a description of these range of devices, see G. Withers, From Marks to Profiles and "Records of Achievement" (Geelong: Deakin University, 1991); M. Kimberley and A. Anwyl, 'Learning from Descriptive Assessments', Profiles and Profiling: Issues and Practices in the Recording of Student Achievement ed. C.
The assessment technology of 'profiling' has been promoted as a means to obtain intensive pedagogic intimacy, providing ways to know the individual child in a manner made impossible by scores or grades. Some 'profiling' systems make use of an elaborate combination of devices, from records of tests and activities to copies of parent/teacher interviews and teacher-based records. Others have been developed as part of an uncompromising rejection of any tests, comparative marks or grades. These schemes have been promoted as being 'non-normative' and highly personalised, providing an experiential technology shared equally by teacher and student. The schemes include protocols


for student and teacher to sit down together, to review what the student has done in the recently-completed sequence of instruction. They consider each other's individually prepared notes, discuss the extent to which the work was completed, what skills might have been acquired, and what difficulties were encountered. They relive the joys and enlightenment, ponder the less successful (less joyful) experiences and agree on a text which records this negotiated consensus.21

Students are to participate in self-evaluations that will 'help them to discover the skills they need to develop.'22 'Trust and co-operation' is restored between teachers and their students, as they work together to identify needs and make choices.23 Classroom procedures are demystified and, in the process, the child becomes transparent to educational knowledge. Whereas grades fail to distinguish between children, 'blurring the differences between them', 'non-normative' assessment provides a means to know the child completely. In some formulations, transparency is achieved through tautology:

assessment is objective when it conveys what teachers see, for only then can the reader see the student ... Assessment can be transparent or opaque. When it opens up a window through which we can see the student, assessment is transparent. When it obscures the student behind a curtain of grades, symbols and other pseudo-information, assessment is opaque.24

In most cases, the goal has been to extend these schemes through to Years 11 and 12, opening all the years of secondary schooling to less normative, more plural pedagogic methods. However, these ideal schema have encountered a range of problems, both from outside the classroom and from within. To begin with, these schemes have apparently 'failed' to live up to the

21 Withers, 'From Marking Strategy' 7.
22 Australian Association for the Teaching of English 15.
expectations held of them, especially the expectation that schools would be able to form a more organic bond with the community. From the schools' point of view, the range of information provided by descriptive assessment should be able to form links between the schools and their communities, 'empowering' parents by removing the alienation promoted by grades and scores. But often, to the frustration of these communitarian experts, the public response to individual 'profiling' has been one of mystification or indifference. Where educational assessment is concerned, it seems, the community has to be educated in its own needs and desires. Parents have to be taught to decipher the 'transparent' signs of their child's development, and employers have to be discouraged from taking the easy path of using a single score or adding non-aggregable grades together. It appears that before organic educational intellectuals can represent the community they must form it.

These schemes have also failed to meet the expectation that removing tests and grades would enable the classroom to shake off the shackles of normative ranking. In fact, systems of descriptive assessment such as profiling turn out to be highly normative. When the individual is measured against herself, the effect is an intensification of norms. The technology of classroom records and profiles provides the means for ever more concentrated plotting of individual development, background and conduct. Predictably, it was not long before the profiling movement began to feel self-doubt about this degree of normative inspection applied to the individual. As Patricia Broadfoot put it, the fear was that the child's 'transparency' within descriptive assessment might become part of a sinister 'invisible pedagogy', allowing a much greater degree of intrusion into the pupil's life.26

25 McGaw and Hannan 33.
26 Broadfoot, 'Alternatives to Public Examination' 67.
The next modification advanced by the curriculum experts lay (ironically enough) in normative technique, this time applied to teachers. Detailed protocols were developed to correct the teacher's habit of normative and comparative assessment. Teachers were shown ways to make the 'classroom record' into an account of the student at a particular stage of development, 'in relation to particular learning experiences'. All evaluations recorded were supposed to be non-comparative, reflecting only on 'the individual patterns of growth which individual students exhibit'. Such protocols were intended to make 'open-ended' assessment more precise, by distinguishing between observable behaviours and opaque inner states:

We use the word skills here rather than qualities because of the relationship between the development of personal and social skills and the curriculum ... Assessment should be related to specific skills designated as curriculum objectives, actively promoted within the curriculum and based on discrete evidence. In this way it is identified with a specific performance and is not capable of generalisation.

These recommended regimes for managing the normative nature of teachers' observations have been taken up in various ways within the different systems of school-based assessment, particularly in the lower secondary schools. Perhaps the most successful hybrid of the 'profiling' schema of record-keeping has been that of 'criterion-referencing'. This term encompasses a

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27 Garforth and McIntosh 27. Cf. Withers, 'From Marking Strategy' 16, where reference is made to 'benign' and 'malign' record books, warning teachers against the temptation to make comparative judgements.


29 Garforth and McIntosh 27. (emphasis in original)

range of schemes. However, the common element is a combination of descriptive classroom-based assessment, modified by efforts to regularise the norms of the classroom, avoiding personal judgements and producing an unambiguous statement of what has been learned.

Like 'profiling', criterion referencing is designed to be non-competitive. Instead of students being ranked against one another, they are assessed according to their individual performances in particular tasks. These performances are evaluated according to a number of criteria, specifying the judgements of 'competence' integral to 'domains' (or particular curriculum areas).\textsuperscript{31} In English, for example, there may be half a dozen criteria set down by which a certain kind of writing may be judged, a further half dozen for such things as reading comprehension, arguments, breadth of vocabulary and so on.\textsuperscript{32} In this way, it is hoped, judgements of character or personality may be replaced by evaluations of performance, combining flexibility with commonality. Through more elaborate and systematised norms, the education system will be provided with the means to penetrate the opacity of the child, finding instruments 'which dig beneath the murky surface of performance', revealing underlying competence (not character but integrated competencies and knowledge structures).\textsuperscript{33}

The apparently 'natural' will to know the child is thus supported by a battery of prohibitions and specifications designed to avoid arbitrariness and to achieve transparency. These are applied in highly technical routines for the self-management and self-monitoring of both teacher and students. It is difficult, therefore, to see how such efforts could free assessment from

\textsuperscript{32} Power 268.
\textsuperscript{33} Power 270.
\textsuperscript{33} Power 273.
normativity. It is even harder to see how they can be integrated with the statistical means used to measure and differentiate the school population—without, that is, themselves becoming techniques for ranking and social selection. If individual performances are not 'capable of generalisation', how are they to be made intelligible within selection processes? For that matter, how are they to be used in monitoring systematic inequities in educational attainments and outcomes? Eventually and inevitably, it was asked whether such individualistic and culturally-sensitive schemes might not actually serve to marginalise those disadvantaged students who were their object of concern.

In addition to their internal contradictions, each of these new school-based systems of assessment has faced technical problems in attempting to accommodate forms of school-based knowledge with system-wide educational certification and selection. Can the judgements made at different times by different teachers in different schools be equated with one another? Are scores from separate schools, years and subjects comparable? Can an individual's performances in different subjects be added together to make a single score? And to what extent does this provide a full picture of a candidate's capacities? These difficulties are exacerbated by the pressures on university selection, as assessment instruments prove to be too blunt to assist with 'fine decisions' at the 'margin' of those above and below the cut-off line for university entrance—a margin becoming steadily broader as numbers of applicants increase.

36 Power 271.
37 David Beswick describes the familiar tension between means to individuate students (placing them in their environmental context) and the need for
Once again, part of the problem has been in applying grades to performance in particular subjects, especially in subjects within the humanities. Even with the more individualised routines developed by criterion referencing, it has been argued, it is difficult to find reliable technical means to generalise on the basis of classroom performance in these fields. To make these generalisations would involve translating the highly individualised routines of the classroom into numerical scores. However, these educational experiences and performances, so dependent on an intensified relationship to the self, to the group and to the teacher, are not readily translatable into a consistent numerical scale. According to Colin Power, not even the most elaborate normative grids could produce unambiguous definitions of curriculum areas, since there will always be 'fuzzy' areas – especially in those elements of 'cognitive flexibility, coherence, originality, elegance, style and cultural sensitivity' related to the arts. He suggests that one option is to exclude these elements from direct assessment. However, the danger of this strategy lies in its inversion of the relationship between education and assessment, making the 'measurable and the administratively convenient' important, instead of 'mak[ing] the important measurable and reportable'.

The absolute opposition between the measurable and the educationally important, however, is part of the problem rather than its solution. In governmentally organised school systems, measurability is one of the technical conditions of educational significance. In practice, the problem of 'making the important measurable' refers to a specific technical nexus in the apparatus of assessment – the effort to correlate an intensely individualised comparability between tertiary applicants, noting that 'there is a need to recognise descriptive information concerning social and educational backgrounds as providing relevant data for selection, and at the same time intensity of competition sharpens the requirements for fairness and the need for objective data'. See Beswick, 'Current Issues' 58. See also Masters and Hill 62.
system of assessment, relying on detailed normalising observation and record-keeping, with the education system's requirements for systematic comparability in the scores derived from different classrooms and schools. The usual solution has been a pragmatic combination of means and measures assembled in various forms; from reference tests to aptitude and 'core skills' tests, or 'latent trait' psychometric measurement. As it turns out, these problems give rise to an expansion of psychological and statistical expertise, and to projects for designing more precise descriptive norms or targeted tests. Bodies such as the Australian Council for Educational Research have a key role here, in providing aptitude tests and 'common tasks' – devices designed to act as mediating relays between the conflicting imperatives that meet in the school.

There is an important and inescapable irony here. Despite the efforts of reformers to make educational assessment less normative and bureaucratic, and to 'individualise' the student's relationship to her teacher and to her own educational performance, the introduction of criterion referencing and descriptive assessment has in fact increased the technical referencing of the statistical instruments needed to administer the system. This heightened statistical and psychological expertise required by assessment has not escaped the notice of educational critics. Nevertheless, intent as they are on pointing out the poverty of educational principle informing these technical schema, the critics have largely ignored the ethical elements of the routine institutional imperatives that drive these programmes. On the one hand, the critics too are driven by the imperative to know the student's capabilities. On the other, they cannot escape the institutional imperatives of reliability, neutrality and commensurability. These imperatives mean that the education system is prohibited from pronouncing on individuals' social and vocational

destination on the basis of assessments which are too closely tied to 'subjective' judgements of personal qualities ('character', 'personality', 'imagination, creativity'), however important these might be to the individual's self-development. Instead, the effort has been to tie educational selection to directly observable 'performance' in particular tasks, and to refine the instruments of testing and measurement in order to make these observations comparable. At the same time, the institutionalised distinction between 'formative' and diagnostic classroom records and 'summative' systems of certification and selection has meant that the schools could continue to develop schemes in which the child, the teacher, the parent, the counsellor and the group all focus their attention on the individual child's development and self-expression.

Observing this combination of the proliferation of assessment tactics and the sparseness of policy strategies helps to explain two things: both the continuing administrative optimism built into assessment schema, and the settled suspicion of assessment. The hybrid assessment apparatus does not correspond to the pedagogic ideal of a transparent knowledge of the whole child or the whole community. Accordingly, the assessment complex continues to appear both irrational and indispensable – caught between the imperatives of principle and the contingencies of technique, between pastoral concerns and administrative necessities. These are some of the complexities which we will now proceed to explore in the next three chapters. We turn first to a description of the machinery of assessment and of the conditions in which it was assembled.
CHAPTER TEN: FALLIBLE INSTRUMENTS

i. Introduction.

We have noted the competing imperatives of educational assessment.¹ On the one hand, teachers must be able to see the child fully, placing him or her within the context of a unique social background. On the other, the crude notations of the report form or the profile are still a clumsy intrusion on the delicate relationships between the teacher and the child, or between the school and the community. Assessment, it is argued, ought to be organic to the relationships between teacher and child, and intimately related to the individual's development. But if these norms are intimate, they must also be equitable. Similarly, educational assessment must express the school's comprehension of the cultural identities of collective subjects such as girls, the working class or non-Anglo students. But it must do so without marginalising those outside the 'mainstream'.

The terms of the problem remain remarkably stable. Nevertheless, the recurrence of the formulation is curious. When did it become imperative to achieve this elaborate classification of the child and the community's characteristics? Why is it regarded as impossible? What lies behind this ceaseless invention of ever more supple techniques? And why has all this inventiveness and industry failed to produce a final solution?

We might expect some clarification of these difficulties from education history. But the problem is that, once again, the available histories tend to replay contemporary concerns, rather than explaining them. In this respect,

histories of assessment repeat the pattern of the 'principled' and 'subject-centred' social histories already discussed. For some years, the history of assessment has been organised by the problem of explaining the non-appearance of social equality and human self-determination. Current preoccupations with the humane principles of 'real education' and the reductive calculations of 'utility' are cast backwards in time, becoming the principles that organise the past. In this way, each of the available instruments of assessment has been traced to a seamy past. Examinations have been characterised as endemic inequitable devices for implanting the bourgeois values of the 'competitive academic curriculum' in the school, ignoring the needs of the community, alienating families from education and offering false hopes of social promotion.\textsuperscript{2} Psychologically-based tests are treated as equally suspect, being mortgaged to conceptions of intelligence and aptitude which derive directly from repressive programmes such as eugenics.\textsuperscript{3} When these layers of interest and ideology are revealed, apparently, the myths of 'merit' and 'intelligence' will be understood as the product of political interests and ideologies — the same interests and ideologies (not coincidentally) which are taken to organise the modern school system.


Such formulations, it will be argued, are unable to attend to the historical complexity of assessment as an education problem; nor do they address the diversity of claims, rights and strategies that make up the modern assessment complex. For instance, they are incapable of explaining why the need to respect the autonomy of the classroom and to recognise each child’s uniqueness have become the uncompromising imperatives of mass education. By the same token, they are reluctant to explain the intersection between such imperatives and other considerations – such as public accountability, pedagogic commitment and concern with standards – without insisting on a clear division between principle and ‘utility’. To what extent, then, have our enquiries enabled us to move beyond these preoccupations?

ii. Individualisation and normalisation.

Our genealogical descriptions of the emergence and establishment of popular schooling give us some new historical points of reference for the problem. Having traced the long-term connections between the imperatives informing governmental education in Australia, we can now see that the frustrated modern will to know the child is neither self-evident nor inevitable. Teachers have not always been beset by anxieties about the means to assess individual development, and nor has the education system always found it difficult to register social differences. Each of these problems is a relatively recent development. The conditions in which each appears is hard to explain in terms of either philosophical ‘enlightenment’ or political will. This is because the problem of locating the hidden depths of character and potential does not stem from the discovery of a deeper educational truth, and nor is it a higher principle to which the education system has learned to aspire. Instead, this endeavour (and its associated difficulties) emerge from within the architecture and arrangements of mass schooling itself.
Some clues to this can be found if we recall our earlier observations, in Chapter Seven, of the negotiations involved in the construction of popular schooling. Here, we saw that the school system was formed through the convergence of two initially distinct historical elements. One element, strongly related to the current emphasis upon unlimited personal development and pedagogic self-expression, stemmed from the regimes of Christian pastoral care, designed to remodel the conscience and conduct of the individual. The other element derived from bureaucratic efforts to monitor and strengthen the forces of a population. These met in the development of state schooling, with its capacity to shape conscience and conduct through managed moralisation.4 There are two aspects to recall. First, the classroom made it possible to conceive of individuality in new ways, by distributing individuals around particular norms of social ability. Differences of ability, character or conduct became noticeable within the classroom where they showed up as deviations from a uniform set of norms. Second, mass schooling also made it possible to conceive of social differences in regular terms.5 In subjecting the population to a common set of norms and behaviours within the one institutional site, the popular school formed a locus from which the governmental grids of 'moral statistics' were cast across cities, states and nations. It is under such circumstances that the child became possessed of an internal dynamic of development that consistently resists even the special knowledge of the teacher. At the same time, this internal

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dynamic acquired a social dimension, one formed outside the routines of the classroom, in the collective environs of the family, the street and the district.\footnote{The argument developed in the range of work cited above has significant implications for the prevailing assumption that the organisational categories of the popular school operated by reflecting (in however distorted a form) the pre-existing class differences and identities of which the surrounding community was composed. Instead, the suggestion has been made the the popular school itself played a large historical part in making categories of class difference thinkable, through its provision of 'ethico-topological categories' applied to specified 'moral districts'. As Smith puts it, in the Australian context, these categories of social difference 'owed much of their visibility and definition to popular schooling'. For a more extended historical discussion of the composition of these categories as defined in inspectorial reports and school routines, see Smith, 'Governing Classrooms' 117.}

The important point to stress is that in the modern school, individualisation and normalisation are inseparable from one another. From the establishment of mass popular schooling, these two elements act as joint tactics, twin poles within the one strategic field.\footnote{Foucault, Discipline and Punish 184.} From this point on, individualised attention became a self-correcting norm of schooling itself, leading to an endless series of 'failures' and reforms. Hence the effort to more finely hone the relationship between the individualising and normalising aspects of educational knowledge, inventing ever more supple and sophisticated devices of assessment.

We began to develop a sense of this inventiveness and adaptability in Chapter Eight, in our survey of the circumstances in which mass elementary schooling expanded early this century. At this time, the school system adapted itself to the devices of public examination and mental testing, even as it was organised by a new set of bureaucratic ambitions. But this was not an easy adjustment. By this time, the popular school system was a densely built apparatus, with self-contained institutional norms, routines and commitments. These commitments were concentrated in the specialised \textit{habitus} of the classroom, with its routines of individualisation and
normalisation, tactics organised around the purpose-built relations of moral supervision between teacher and child. Such regimes adapted uneasily to the demands of the examination room. Like inspection and 'payment by results' before them, examinations and mental tests encountered the pastoral density of the classroom. Nevertheless, as it expanded and extended into mass secondary education, popular schooling began to make use of these devices, adapting itself to its new institutional links to the universities, the private schools, technical education, and vocational sites such as the public service. As it did so, it had to learn to live with the congenital failures of examination and testing. In many ways, however, these were 'productive failures', resulting in a range of unpredictable problematisations, programmes, and transformations in technique. Just as it does today, the failures of assessment provoked the education system to set itself new objectives. In the process, it developed a fresh set of ambitions, including those for addressing disadvantage and ensuring more equitable patterns of social distribution.

These are some of the developments to which we now turn, in our description of the emergence and effects of examination, mental testing and school records. The main element to emphasise is the contingency and rarity of these devices. Tracing the circumstances in which each of them was installed within the education apparatus (with all their attendant expectations and disappointments) we will also begin to chart the co-ordinates intersecting in the assessment complex today. We can turn first to the technique of the examination.  

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iii. Failing the examination.

Examinations are perhaps the most notorious form of educational assessment, provoking complaints in each education system that uses them. They have become identified with inequity and cultural privilege, with the hegemony of the 'competitive academic curriculum' and with the reduction of individuality to the 'single score'. Public examination has long been regarded as being incapable of comprehending either the expression of individuality or the plurality of cultural and social differences. These complaints have been with us since at least the turn of the century. In 1907, for instance, the *Australian Journal of Education* delivered an extremely familiar-sounding denunciation of public examinations and their effects on the school. At the same time, it also anticipated current difficulties of education reform, remarking that the apparatus of examinations was too well

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established to be easily replaced by school-based assessment, or by any other available method:

Are we to continue the Examination System in its unabated fury, or are we to swing to the other extreme and accept the accrediting principle? Or shall we make a compromise? It is plain the matter cannot be settled off-hand. The Examination System has been too long in operation to admit of that. It has impressed itself deeply upon the schools, the teachers, and the public. Moreover, some examinations are clearly required: there is no other method of selecting the recipient of scholarships and business, or of ascertaining the fitness of students, who have been privately coached or belong to non-accredited schools...

The terms of the today's problem of assessment are immediately recognisable in this comment. Equally familiar are the suggestions for reform that accompany it, such as recommendations for the installation of school-based assessment and accreditation. The goal of replacing examinations with school-based assessment apparently continues to elude Australian education systems, as they attempt to assess the individual student in the classroom, while applying common norms (of 'fitness', literacy or numeracy) across the school population.

Consider, for example, Uldis Ozolins's 1981 study of Victorian Higher School Certificate examiners' reports. Ozolins's focus is on the English examination, at that point still the main compulsory subject for final year assessment in most Australian States. His argument, in brief, is that the English curriculum and examination serve the social function of denying 'success of the widest, cultural kind' to most of the population. The norms

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12 Ozolins 144.
of the examination are 'an award for the most complete conformity and submission to an academic culture'.\textsuperscript{13} Although the criteria of the English examination are supposedly based on individual capacities such as 'personal tone, grace, style, and natural ease in language', such capacities are actually a reflection of 'cultural capital'.\textsuperscript{14} While some students depend on the teacher for limited training in 'cultural knowledge, referencing, tone and nuance', others have inherited such cultural attributes from the familial milieu.\textsuperscript{15} Because the classroom cannot guarantee a common cultural starting point for the educational race, teachers are in an 'irresolvable double-bind',\textsuperscript{16} forced to choose between either drilling students in mere skills or providing 'opportunities for student creativity', while knowing that neither of these options will in fact equip their pupils with the capacities required for academic success.\textsuperscript{17} This argument is supported by reference to a number of the reports submitted by Higher School Certificate examiners. Ozolins


\textsuperscript{15} Ozolins 173.

\textsuperscript{16} Ozolins 193.

\textsuperscript{17} Ozolins 193.
draws out the extent to which the examiners call on elitist aesthetic and moral
decisions, discriminating between candidates on the basis of moral
qualities detected in their writings, qualities such as 'maturity, taste,
prudence, vulgarity, and crudity of expression'.

The demonstration is convincing, serving as a corrective to those who regard
'child-centred' aesthetic education as somehow non-normative. But at the
same time, the comments cited to support the case provide some clues to a
different interpretation of the examination process. An instance is where
Ozolins cites an examiner's comment that, in order to achieve success in the
examination, students require the command of a particular vocabulary,
including rhetorical terms such as 'argue, allege, assert, accept, answer'.
The examiner notes students' unfortunate inability to make use of this
vocabulary, commenting that teachers could after all address these
deficiencies by imparting rhetorical abilities in the classroom, in just 'an hour
with a pocket dictionary'. The example is cited to illustrate the proposition
that the opportunity to acquire cultural capital is unevenly available. It is a
telling point. Nonetheless, the instance also suggests the range of
imperatives addressed by the limited device of the public examination
process. In writing the reports, the examiners' task was to provide advice on
success in the examination to a highly differentiated school population. This
centrally-distributed advice was one of the main elements of commonality
within a State-based education system in which schools were supposed to
adjust their curricula to the needs of students from a wide range of social and
cultural backgrounds. The problems which stem from this requirement
include that of designing examination exercises in accordance with the

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18 Ozolins 174.
19 Ozolins 176.
20 These included, as one commentator notes, 'aboriginal kids at Moree, recently-
arrived Vietnamese in Cabramatta, and second-generation Greeks and Italians in
Marrickville'. See Anne Susskind, 'New English Syllabus a Failure, Say
'variety of background and experiences of candidates – mature aged, migrant, city and country.'\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, the examiners' comments indicate that, far from measuring students' performances only against the norm of the 'more complete human', they are also concerned with a different model – that of the responsible citizen possessed of basic social abilities:

> at the end of twelve years of formal education, a student ought to have acquired the communication skills necessary for taking an active part in those aspects of the life of the community (political, economic, social) in which he is entitled and, indeed, obliged to take part.\textsuperscript{22}

The set tasks discussed in the reports indicate that, to some extent, the examination was designed in response to these imperatives. Although half of the English examination (as distinct from English Literature) was composed of literary critical questions to do with theme and character, the other half involved exercises designed to monitor the personal capacities of the future citizen. For example, students were required to react to 'persuasive writing', and to respond to questions such as 'What influence have you had on your parents' lives?' The norms applied to the school population here were as diverse as 'good manners' and 'the ability to form and sustain dispassionate judgements of relevance and consistency on controversial matters'.\textsuperscript{23}

The combination is intriguing. Within a device designed both to monitor standards of literacy across a population and to distribute individuals into differentiated statuses, we find exercises in rhetorical argument, next to tasks requiring the expression of personal insights about one's self-image and familial relations. Certainly, these are normative exercises. But are they normative in the same way? They are more plausibly seen as combining drills linking a range of pedagogic tasks (grammatical, rhetorical and ethical)

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\textsuperscript{21} Ozolins 174, citing 1977 Victorian HSC examiner's report.  
\textsuperscript{22} Ozolins 167, citing 1977 Victorian HSC examiner's report.  
\textsuperscript{23} Ozolins 175, citing 1973 Victorian HSC examiner's report.
to such diverse ends as the moral and aesthetic formation of 'whole selves',
the monitoring of citizens' capacities and the social sorting of school leavers.
The combination is both contingent and uneasy.

iv. Examinations, culture and efficiency.
The example will immediately recall the debates on the turn of the century
discussed in Chapter Eight, particularly those on the central role of English
within the curriculum, and on its relationship to the governmental purposes
of providing commonality in the life skills and moral capacities made
available to citizens. It will also recall the school system's resistance to
adapting its curriculum to the demands of university-dominated public
examinations. Seventy years on, it seems, the negotiations begun by Board
and Tate continued unabated. The relationship between the schools, the
universities and the Boards of Examination remained difficult. So too did the
problem of negotiating between the rival imperatives of commonality and
differentiation, of forming a citizenry and of shaping a workforce.24

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24 We should also recall that our account draws on historical arguments which depart
significantly from Ozolin's account. Strongly influenced by Richard Teese's
important study of the hegemony of the academy and of private schools over the
state school system, Ozolin treats the examination as a tool of the private
schools and the universities, joining forces to impose the 'competitive academic
curriculum' on the state education system (Teese, 'Social Function'). Recent
accounts have revised this history substantially. For one thing, given historical
evidence that the English curriculum actually emerged from the reformatory
regimes of the nineteenth century elementary classroom, it is difficult to identify it
with 'middle-class' or 'academic' culture (Hunter, Culture and Government).
Furthermore, it is harder to sustain the argument that examinations have been a
relay of middle-class and academic interests, given the historical evidence that
matriculation examinations were in fact adapted from the routines of the popular
school system itself, particularly from teacher training examinations. Here, we
can recall some of the arguments canvassed in Chapter Eight. The circumstances
in which university-designed examinations were installed as matriculation devices
early this century, I have suggested, were determined quite as much by the
objectives of the state school system as by those of the universities. Indeed, if
Bruce Smith's revised historical account of the history of the Australian Arts
faculty stands, then it would seem that the universities' bargaining power was
weak and their control over the curriculum was limited. See B. Smith, 'Crime and
the Classics: The Humanities and Government in the Nineteenth Century
Australian University', Accounting for the Humanities: The Language of Culture
and the Logic of Government. I. Hunter, D. Meredeth, B. Smith and G. Stokes
These observations can be elaborated if we return to the terms of the public
debate on examinations at the turn of the century. At this point, as we have
noted, public protests against examinations were widespread. The private
schools, universities and state schools all objected to the expansion of the
'examination principle'. However, there were marked differences in the
objections stemming from each set of institutions.25 The grammar schools,
for instance, protested against the 'moral degradation' caused by the 'spirit of
place getting', arguing that 'character' and 'moral vigour' were
'inassessable'.26 While the state schools made similar statements about the
problem of assessing character, their concerns were primarily related to the
threat which examinations posed to the status of the teacher and to the
pedagogic relationship. To cite the Australian Journal of Education from
1904, we find arguments that examinations 'tend ... to lower the teacher to
the educationally contemptible position of a mere coach, watching the gamut
of the examiner's questions for tricky points in order that his coaching may
be efficient. Now everything savouring of this is bad and should be given

25 Some objections were common and constant, particularly medically-based
objections to the effects of 'cramming' on the body and on the faculties. This was
a complaint taken up by doctors, teachers, parents and the 'hygiene administrators' of
child study. See A. Herbert, The Sacrifice of Education to Examinations.
Letters from "All Sorts and Conditions of Men" (London: Williams and Norgate,
1889) 4, 52, 64, 150, 162-3; and F. Warner, The Study of Children and Their

26 See W.C. Kernot, Examinations, Their Uses and Abuse (Melbourne: Stillwell and
Co, 1889) 5. See also Kernot 10-11, which provides a representative discussion of
the alternative of selection of cadets through personal interview, as distinct
from public examination. Public examinations also failed to provide the range of
normalising information required by either the parent or the employer, especially
those who had their own normative systems of 'character'. As one employer put
it, 'Long experience has taught me to find out in five minutes which are the
reliable boys, the untrustworthy boys, the plodding boys, and the quick, clever
boys' (Herbert 88-9). For historical discussion of the examination's long-standing
incapacity to register the element of 'character', see J. Roach, Public Examinations
in England 1850-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 267. For
further instances of the discussion of the question at the turn of the century, see
also C. Brereton, 'A New Method of Awarding Scholarships', The Australian
Journal of Education 4.10 15 February (1909): 10-11, where it is remarked that
'the Examining Board of Life gives a very large proportion of its marks to force of
character, earnestness, grit, endurance, enterprise, firmness, pertinacity, self-respect
and sense of duty, which the academic pundit either ignores or else roundly declares
to be inassessable for examination purposes'. See also H. Latham, On the Action
of Examinations Considered as a Means of Selection. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell
and Co., 1877).
short shrift. Similar protests were published throughout the first three decades of this century.

Nevertheless, by the 1920s, there was more optimism that examinations might in fact be dispensable. This prospect was raised by the new technology of psychological testing. Above all, it was the state school publications which urged the adoption of mental testing in the schools, and which advocated it as a replacement for examinations. In mounting these arguments, advocates were able to draw on a range of expert criticism of the examination, supplementing medical evidence of the effects of 'cramming' with statistical analyses of the examination's inaccuracy, its inefficiency, its inability to identify ability and its incapacity to make use of the laws of large numbers in predicting academic success.

Philip Hartog's 1918 text *Examinations and their Relation to Culture and Efficiency*, widely cited in Australia, provides an example of such arguments. To modern eyes, the text is an odd mixture of progressivism and utilitarianism. On the one hand, Hartog defends the educational importance of 'general culture', an element regarded as immeasurable by

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30 Hartog's remarks draw on 'hygienist' critiques of the classroom, and on the positivist regimes of early experimental psychology. 'In the absence of adequate statistics and medical inquiry', he remarks, 'the whole hygiene of the examination room remains unclear.' See P. Hartog, *Examinations and Their Relation to Culture and Efficiency* (London: Constable and Co. Ltd, 1918) 102-135.
examination. Culture, he argues, 'is as individual a thing as conscience ... culture may be killed, but it cannot be caught, by examinations'. But at the same time, he advocates 'more real and drastic tests of technical efficiency', making use of 'scientific measurement'. Such tests, he argues, should be able to distinguish between 'literary sensibility', and the more calculable capacities which he labels 'efficiency'.

For those who object to both examinations and measurement as equally 'anti-educational' and equally indifferent to culture, it may be surprising that advocacy of mental tests was couched in terms of the 'immeasurability' of culture and of capacities such as imagination, conscience or character. For many modern critics, mental tests and examinations are interchangeable as objects of critique. After all, it is said, competition between these rival technologies does little to disturb underlying educational inequality. Instead, it is argued, each serves only to reinforce embedded class interests, by disguising inequality as the effect of pre-existing individual differences. Like the examination, it is argued, the mental test was applied as a 'neutral' utilitarian mechanism, deaf to the call of educational or democratic principle and indifferent to the rights of citizens.

However, the striking element of comments such as Hartog's is their apparent sensitivity to pedagogic preoccupations with 'conscience' and 'culture', and with the autonomy of the classroom. In fact, the routines of testing which he advocates are devised on the basis of a distinction between 'culture' and 'measurable efficiency'. The latter is examinable, while the former is not. In this respect, the recommendations are sharply reminiscent of the current division between 'formative' and 'summative' assessment,

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31 Examinations are characterised as a highly unreliable measure of 'general ability', equivalent to taking readings from a cold thermometer placed in warm water. Hartog 9.
32 Hartog xv.
with their distinction between 'subjective' records of personal development and 'objective' registers of observable competence. These pragmatic divisions, it seems, are long-standing, but still difficult to implement. Does this mean that debates on assessment and selection have gone nowhere in seventy years? In part, perhaps. But could it also be that the sorts of *modus vivendi* reached by early educationists such as Hartog represent the only available accommodations?

v. **Means of measurement.**

With this question in mind, we now turn to a more detailed description of the expansion of mental testing and psychological measurement, as it implanted itself in the school system. Here, we see the aggregation of many of the devices and expert arguments that now compose the 'assessment complex', particularly the range of statistical and psychologically-based calculations now used in the form of aptitude testing, profiling, criterion-referenced assessment and 'competencies'. Then, as now, the question was the extent to which these devices could replace the differentiating functions of the public examination. And then, as now, the main alternative was presented by psychologically-based forms of testing, measurement and observation. Neither of these instruments fitted smoothly into the operations of the school. Each was adapted to pedagogic procedures, being transformed in the process. But to understand these developments, we must first overcome the now habitual suspicion of the notorious mental test.

The expansion of mental testing was rapid, progressing quickly from early campaigns to detect 'defectiveness' to the broader demands of organising educational streaming and selection. In 1907, the NSW Department of Public Instruction conducted a survey of 30,000 school children, gathering data on
'the social, climatic and physiographic effects on the child's stature',\textsuperscript{33} and in 1911 the Australian Medical Congress set the level of 'feeble-minded' school children at four per cent.\textsuperscript{34} By 1913, the NSW School Medical Service had announced that 39 per cent of school children exhibited signs of physical or mental defect. By the late 1920s, mental tests had a key role in forms of educational selection and streaming, alongside an ensemble of examinations and scholastic tests.\textsuperscript{35} In the next three decades, a combination of internal examinations, objective tests and aptitude tests was gradually to infiltrate the early years of secondary education, replacing most external school selection examinations apart from those geared to Matriculation.\textsuperscript{36}

The origin of psychological testing in the detection of defectiveness has been regarded as one of the most telling signs of its repressive character. It is here, if we believe recent accounts, that we can locate the frankest expressions of the repressive and discriminatory assumptions underlying modern educational assessment systems. Psychological measurement has been exposed as a device designed to promote the racist programmes of eugenics and racial hygiene, and various recent studies of the assumptions underlying anthropometric programmes and early measurement programmes have made this argument. Just as psychologists rationalised away the racist, sexist and class-based assumptions built into early testing programmes, it is argued, so they continue to cloak the discriminatory individualism of modern


forms of psychological measurement beneath the mantle of expertise, 'scientificity' and 'neutrality'.

Lately, however, the historical co-ordinates have changed. Recent histories have suggested that such accounts bear little relationship to the more tortuous and contingent historical circumstances in which mental testing emerged.

The existence of measurable 'intelligence', it has been suggested, may not have been the product of a philosophical programme. Nor did it stem directly from the expansion of psychology as an academic discipline.

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39 There were certainly fierce debates between 'hereditarian' and 'environmentalist' theories between the 1890s and the 1930s. However, as Sutherland has pointed out, these theoretical positions do not by themselves explain the political intelligibility of the interventionary options available to governments or philanthropists. See Sutherland, Ability, Merit 37-8. She points out that, because the policing of 'defectiveness' deployed a limited field of tactics, it was quite possible for the opposed ideological currents of hereditarianism and environmentalism to be combined within identical programmes.

40 Although child study, experimental pedagogy and medical inspection established the field of techniques on which the psychology of individual difference was later to establish itself, these shifts were not produced by the emergence of psychology as a discipline. Psychology was not capable of providing an organising principle to link this range of techniques – partly because, well into the 1920s, the modern discipline was barely established at an institutional level in university and teacher training courses. See the discussion of its status in A.H. Martin, 'The Present Status of Psychology', Australasian Journal of Philosophy and Psychology III.1 (1925): 40-50. He notes the lack of university courses in experimental psychology, and the poor facilities for research. See also C.R. McCrae, Psychology and Education, 3rd ed. (Sydney: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1929); E.G. Boring, A History of Experimental Psychology (London: Century, 1929); and W.M. O'Neil, 'Teaching and Practice of Psychology in Australia in the First Phases', Psychology in Australia: Achievements and Prospects, ed. M. Nixon and R. Taft (Rushcutters Bay: Pergamon Press, 1977) 2-22; and M. Bucklow, 'Applied
Instead, it emerged as a local solution to difficulties in governmental strategies for monitoring the 'moral and physical condition' of the population.\textsuperscript{41} The most successful of these strategies were primarily remedial, medical and preventative. Furthermore, far from being an imposition upon the school from an alien domain of pseudo-expertise, the registers of mental testing were devised from within the normative environment of the popular classroom.

In brief, these accounts indicate that measurable intelligence, as it appeared at the turn of the century, was an object which emerged from the remedial tactics of medical inspection and child study, strategies formed to the end of reducing infant mortality\textsuperscript{42} and improving infant welfare, diet and

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\textsuperscript{41} These comments are not intended to dismiss the historical fact that eugenic proposals for the sterilisation and institutionalisation of the 'unfit' were vigorously advocated early this century. A number of such proposals may be located. See for example: Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales Memorandum and Articles (Sydney: Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales, 1901); and W.E. Agar, Eugenics and the Future of the Australian Population (Melbourne: Eugenics Society of Victoria, 1939). But the point is the circulation of eugenic proposals should not be confused with their actual implementation. These early testing programmes were too diverse in origin to be explained adequately in terms of the implementation of 'progressive' and 'conservative' political programmes. As both Rose and Gillian Sutherland have pointed out, the debate on heredity and environment actually bore little relation to conventional distinctions between political positions. Nor, for that matter, is there a direct historical connection between the advocacy of eugenic or segregationist options and the actual implementation of such strategies. As it turned out, eugenicist strategies were quite quickly marginalised by a co-existing set of 'neo-hygienist' strategies, including preventative programmes for stemming the degeneration of the population's health by addressing the effects of poor physical condition and bad diet. See Rose, The Psychological Complex 62-89. In Australia, the key component of these strategies included programmes as innocuous to modern eyes as the delivery of school milk. See Meredith, Anxiety Over Assessment for further discussion. See also R.A. Lowe, 'Eugenics and Doctors and the Quest for National Efficiency: An Educational Crusade, 1900-1939', History of Education 8.4 (1979): 293-306.
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sanitation. Since the turn of the century, the effect of physical health on school progress had been a pressing governmental problem, one precipitated by the establishment of mass compulsory education. In arranging the child population in large numbers, the school (like the army) made it possible for widespread physical incapacity and mental defectiveness to be registered as national 'unfitness'. Accordingly, it became possible to set new norms for the health of the population. As a response, various programmes of medical inspection and 'child study' were mobilised, many of them conducted by private individuals and philanthropic bodies. These programmes deployed an array of anthropometric measurement and largely medical procedures for diagnosing 'defectiveness' in school children, regimes designed to distinguish between children who were backward in school (for reasons of remediable physical problems with sight, hearing, diet, fatigue and so on) and those who were suffering from more severe physical and mental abnormalities. The main tactics included inspecting the child for any obvious bodily defect, or measuring his or her progress against that of the rest of the school class. However, these means of identifying 'deficiency'

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43 of Education 6.10 15 April (1909): 1; W.G. Spence, The Child, the Home and the State (Sydney: The Workers' Print 1908); C.S. Willis, School Hygiene for the Use of Students in the Teachers' Training College (Sydney: W.A. Gullick, Govt. Printer, 1916); and C.K. Mackellar, The Mother, The Baby and the State (Sydney: W.A. Gullick, Govt. Printer, 1917).


46 Rose The Psychological Complex 131-145.

The manuals for child study and medical inspection indicate range of problems identified by such programmes of diagnostic classification. Here, for instance, is a table of norms used by one expert in 'child study' for identifying 'Groups of Children Below the Normal':

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were soon characterised as unwieldy and unreliable.\textsuperscript{47} Given a large and often malnourished school population, it was very difficult to distinguish the normal child from one who was 'retarded' in some aspect of development, or who was suffering from physiological problems such as poor eyesight or hearing. Nor were these observation-based methods of detection capable of being extended and standardised across a wider population.\textsuperscript{48}

The key shift to intelligence testing, usually identified with the 1905 Binet-Simon tests of 'mental age', emerged as a direct answer to these problems.\textsuperscript{49} The form of the test was not based on new psychological theories. Rather, it adjusted the existing technique of the medical interview and pedagogic test, in order to assemble information on exactly what tasks a child could perform at a particular age, within norms calculable across large numbers. It involved requiring large groups of students to perform a standardised set of tasks based on observations of what children of the same age within the popular

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Normal children ... Nervous children ... Dull and backward ...
children. ... Schedule of dull boy. Schedule of boy normal but
dull. A small and backward boy. A boy overworked. A small
girl, overworked and too high in school. A backward girl, head
small, eye movements faulty. Boy bright at arithmetic, dull at
"feebly gifted mentally"... Deafness causing mental
dullness ... Children presenting defects in development ...
Children with abnormal nerve-signs ... Delicate children; delicacy
due to inheritance ... Epileptics and children with history of fits
during school-life ... Children crippled, maimed, paralysed or
deformed. Children who appear to require special care and
training.

F. Warner, \textit{The Study of Children and Their School Training} (London: Macmillan, 1915) xiii. See also Child Study and Adult Health
Association, \textit{Health and Longevity According to the Theories of the Late
Dr. Alan Carroll}, \textit{With an Account of the Child Study Association}
(Sydney: Epsworth Printing and Publishing House, 1915); and G.S. Hall,
\textit{Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education} (New

\textsuperscript{47} Rose, \textit{The Psychological Complex} 112-145.

\textsuperscript{48} In England at least, this presented immediate administrative and legal difficulties,
given debates on assigning children to either special schools or to the custody of
state agencies. See Sutherland, \textit{Ability, Merit}, 116-7 and 122-3.

\textsuperscript{49} R.G. Cameron, \textit{The Measurement of Intelligence: The Binet Tests Applied to
Australian Children} (Sydney: Sydney Teachers' College, 1913); B. Dumville, 'A
Trial of Binet's Tests on Five-Year Olds', \textit{Journal of Experimental Pedagogy and
Training College Record} 2.2 (1913): 113-118.
school system were able to do. Having recorded the actual 'performed capacities' of hundreds of Parisian school children, Binet and Simon derived an average performance at a particular age. Accordingly, the 'advanced', 'retarded', 'feeble-minded' and 'imbecilic' child could be compared on the same rough diagnostic scale. When the age of the child was correlated with the tasks which she could perform, she became either 'advanced' or 'retarded' for her age. Later, the deployment of statistical averages and the Gaussian normal curve made it possible to correlate 'mental age' with physical age, producing an object of measurable 'intelligence' (or 'IQ') that could be applied to a population as a set of frequencies and averages.

It is a familiar story. But the main point of difference from existing histories of 'measurable intelligence' is the suggestion of a close historical connection between the norms of the classroom and those of early mental testing. What the new studies have suggested is that the socially-administered regimes of the popular classroom actually provided the normative framework of medical and statistical observation, making it possible to observe the frequency of particular traits and capacities amongst a population and an age group. It was these normalising and individualising regimes that early psychological tests used as the basis of their classifications of mental age. With the deployment of the normal curve, medical observations of 'performed capacities' were mapped out as detailed frequencies and averages. By these means, individual children's performances could be plotted against those of the whole school population, producing both pedagogic diagnoses and predictions of future rates of development. The important point is that these capacities were formed by the particular conditions of social existence within the popular classroom. Reapplied to the classroom, these norms came to

50 Rose, The Psychological Complex 114-7, and Sutherland, Ability, Merit 126. On the adoption of the Binet test in Australia, see McCallum, 'The Theory of Educational Inequality' 44-45.
51 See Hunter, Culture and Government 296-7.
constitute the objects of governmental regulation, reshaping pedagogic norms and procedures in turn.

The implication of these arguments is that the existence of measurable psychological function was not a specifically political or 'ideological' product. Rather, it had its source in modifications to the long-standing normative regimes of the popular school, as a local solution to quite contingent administrative problems. The school was not captured by psychology. Instead, it provided one of the main fields in which psychological observation and measurement could emerge.

vi. Rival technologies.

During the 1920s and 1930s, psychological testing was to some extent adapted within each of the State education systems. But this process is more complex than the colonisation of the classroom by psychological norms. What occurs, it appears, is a more mixed and reciprocal process, involving a psychological modification of long-standing pedagogic techniques of normalising observation and correction: techniques which had provided the original basis of psychological classifications of 'intelligence', 'character' and 'development'. This was a matter of mutual exchanges between pedagogic and psychological expertise. On the one hand, where schools made use of psy-based forms of inscription, they did so in terms that suited their own long-standing strategies. On the other, these programmes drew many of their normative registers from the classroom itself. Reapplied to the classroom, psychological norms partially transformed pedagogically-based norms, adjusting them to governmental objectives.

An indication of this can be gained from the 1926 edition of the N.S.W. Institute of Inspectors' publication, *Testing and Teaching*. Here it is made
clear that, despite the advantages of the new tools of standardised testing made available by psychological expertise, and despite its promise as a replacement for examinations and mental tests, the school was by no means a 'psychological laboratory':

We put on an overcoat when we feel cold without consulting a thermometer, we sweeten our tea without using a chemical balance and we even choose a life partner without calling in a eugenicist. So in school we judge and must continue to judge whether children are orderly, attentive, interested, self-active and the like, although we have as yet no standardised test for the purpose.  

According to the same volume, the 'truly objective test' of teaching can only consist in information gained from children's 'revelations of themselves' in discussion. This information is to be secured through the familiar devices of supervised play:

we are not getting to a satisfactory degree, the permanent cultural results desired because our tests rarely pass beyond the four walls of the classroom. The pupils are not being followed out of school or to their homes, and yet, it is what is taking place there that is of the highest importance.  

This insistence that the school must incorporate the 'real life of the child' is hardly new. The tactic of supervised play and diagnosed self-expression continues the long-standing strategies of 'non-coercive moralisation' developed within the purpose-built environment of the popular school, with its characteristic method of incorporating the activities of the street and the home within its reformatory environment.  

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54 See E. Claparede, *Experimental Pedagogy and the Psychology of the Child* (New York: Longmans Green, 1911); J.A. Green, 'The Teaching of English II:
complex' extended the regimes of classroom 'person-formation within a therapeutic register, in diagnostic exercises based on self-expression and the 'opportunity to play'.55 The techniques of the clinic involved a 'scientific adaptation of free play', and we now find the psychologist offering these pedagogic devices back to the classroom. As the child development expert Susan Isaacs put it, at the 1937 New Education Fellowship Conference:

school and public examinations should be of two types, those which are designed to measure honest but modest competence in the fundamentals and those which test the child's real enthusiasms, in so far as these are capable of assessment. Here we may put in a word of caution: Do not attempt to measure that which cannot, and indeed, should not, be measured. It is enough for the child that he loses himself in his enthusiasms; it should be enough for us.56

The comment is significant. In her identification of 'that which cannot, and indeed, should not, be measured', Isaacs reformulates the familiar problem that plagued both examinations and mental tests, in their efforts to replace the popular classroom's capacity to combine individualisation and normalisation. The classroom had a range of means to locate the child's 'real enthusiasms', by aligning exercises of self-expression against a register of norms, specifying differences of performance in terms of environmental influences and desirable characteristics. In comparison, the clinical psychologist's attempts to measure 'personality' relied on a limited normative register,

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largely derived from the classroom itself, but standardised by the statistical laws of large numbers.

Nevertheless, these limitations did little to stem the administrative expansion of psychological measurement and diagnosis. Despite the difficulties of achieving reliable and objective norms of ability, the mobilisation of mental tests was quite rapid. Nor is this surprising, given that the tests did not emerge from a purely philosophical project. The successes of mental testing were administrative rather than philosophical or 'political' ones. Consequently, just as the examination had done earlier, it was quite possible for the apparatus of mental testing to expand and establish itself, even if its objects remained somewhat indeterminate and even as it was routinely accused of failure and inaccuracy. As P.B. Ballard put it,

The new examiner cannot measure originality; and he cannot measure felicity of expression. And he does not pretend to ... But he is not unhappy about it. When the old examiner reminds him that he cannot do these things he turns to his critic and asks; Can you? 57

Observing these early connections between pedagogic norms and psychological measurement does much to explain why it was that mental testing was so enthusiastically advocated as an alternative to public examinations, and so rapidly adapted within the schools. As a replacement for public examinations, psychological and objective tests promised to maintain some degree of uniformity in a diverse schooling system, while retaining the autonomy of the classroom as the central point for the distribution of educational norms. This was precisely because, as we have seen, psychological testing had adapted actual classroom tasks and norms.

The terms in which teachers and educationists advocated the use of mental tests give us further reason to doubt that they can be described as the product of a philosophical or ideological programme. In fact, if contemporary commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of mental testing is anything to go by, it seems that educationists were quite agnostic about questions concerning the balance of hereditarian and environmentalist factors in shaping mental capacity. Many also remained undecided about whether individuals' mental ability was measurable. For instance, in 1920, the teachers' journal *Schooling* advocated the use of mental testing in 'streaming', even though it was made clear that measurable 'ability' was probably indeterminable at an individual level. Nevertheless, the journal remarked, there did appear to be a gap between school performance and the abilities measured in psychological tests. Accordingly, it recommended to teachers that they use tests of 'mental age' as a supplement to their own personal judgements of ability levels in the class, on the basis that the 'laws of large numbers' were better able to chart frequencies and regularities of scholastic performance, making it possible to 'predict for any age group the probable number of children possessing the various degrees of scholastic ability'. For instance, it suggests, measurements of 'mental age' might be used to identify a problem within the classroom, if the number of 'forward' children in each class did not equal the number of 'backward' ones, or if 'forward' and 'backward' children were 'buried in the mass of normal children'.

These concerns with identifying patterns of ability might seem less arbitrary if we remember that one of the major difficulties of administering popular schools in Australia had been to maintain some degree of uniformity in the

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58 See for instance 'Experimental Education: The Distribution of Scholastic Ability Shown by Age and Class', *Schooling* 5 July (1920): 131.

standards applied to often small and dispersed schools, varying greatly in size and resources. In these circumstances, psy-based tests were advocated on the premise that they were both more equitable and more accurate than classroom grading. In lieu of the provision of actual commonality in education provision, it was hoped, mental tests might be better able to identify ability and aptitude than scholastic tests or examinations, since the capacities they tested were based on 'common knowledge'. In this way, it was anticipated, they might serve to locate inherent ability, by compensating for differences in school training and resources. In other words, the 'laws of large numbers' were expected to monitor and eliminate the variability which irregularities of age, sex, school training, and family circumstance produced in school results:

As the school opportunities are less uniform than the opportunities afforded by life outside school, it is likely that tests based on this supposedly uniform experience will be better than tests based on school attainments. ⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the comment above suggests some of the reasons why the enthusiasm for mental testing did not result in the removal of examination. Then, as now, the problem seems to have been one of negotiating the relationship between scholastic provision and social background. As we saw in Chapter Eight, the provision of commonality in schooling was a prime concern for education administrators such as Board and Tate. However, we also took note of Peter Board's ambivalent reaction to the opportunities presented by mental testing in comparison with examinations. For Board, the tactic of using mental testing as a measure to compensate for uneven provision in education resources can only have been a poor substitute for actually meeting the institutional imperative to provide greater commonality in education resources. If it is indeed the case that this commitment to

⁶⁰ 'Experimental Education IV' 44.
commonality had been built into the education system itself, then it is less surprising that it continued its efforts to differentiate between students on the basis of what the classroom and school provided (rather than on 'common sense'), even if this entailed the compromise of retaining academically-defined public examinations.

vii. Technical hybrids.

From the 1920s on, then, forms of psychologically-based testing were gradually adapted within the schools, most often in the form of 'objective tests' based on classroom routines. Bearing in mind the concerns of the classroom, the piecemeal nature of this adaptation is not surprising. Nevertheless, in adapting this new technology to its needs, the school system was itself partially transformed by its contact with the sphere of psychological and psychiatric expertise. It is in this intersection that our third main cluster of assessment techniques had its origins.

This brings us to the description of the dissemination of those forms of school-based record-keeping now associated with continuous assessment, 'profiling' and the registration of competencies. From the 1930s through to the 1950s, a range of psychologically-based technologies was installed in the popular school. Organised around the objects of measurable 'aptitude' and 'potential', these instruments were forged within a new cluster of psychosocial experiment, concentrated on vocational guidance, adjustment and child development.  

These developments occurred during a period of expansion in secondary schooling, culminating in the 1950s in the establishment of comprehensive schooling and the removal of the differentiation between general and technical

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61 See Rose *The Psychological Complex* 163-4.
strands of secondary schooling that had been established at the turn of the century. Gradually, throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the different State school systems began to reorganise themselves to this end. The early years of secondary schooling were devoted to 'general education', while post-primary streaming was postponed until the later years of secondary schooling. Where streaming occurred, it was usually conducted by means of a loose ensemble of internal examinations, scholastic tests and mental measurement. In the process, it became possible to identify the difference between 'ability groupings' and 'social groupings'.

These changes were accompanied by a further hybridisation of psychological classification. During the 1920s and 1930s, education bodies such as the New Education Fellowship began to urge that, in the elementary and early secondary years, the child's full potential and development must be monitored by records. As K.S. Cunningham put it in 1935, 'from his first entry into school, the child's record will be kept and studied in a scientific way'. These records were to combine pedagogic and medical observation with psychological and psychiatric diagnosis of delinquency, 'adjustment' and environment. They were to be used for pastoral and disciplinary purposes as well as for use in internal decisions on the streaming of children into ability-based classes. But they were also to provide information for the expert assessment of vocational guidance. Record-keeping, it was argued, would strengthen the school's role in promoting the moral formation of the future citizen. Furthermore, compared with examinations, it was better able

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63 McCallum The Social Production '75.
65 K.S. Cunningham, 'Admission Requirements' 262.
to identify differences in ability and aptitude, separating the ability and character of the child from her social and familial background.

It is from these systems of record-keeping that the modern school derived its institutional claims to be able to provide forms of school-based assessment systematic enough to provide an alternative to centralised public examination, and many of the techniques used at this point resemble those now deployed in current forms of descriptive assessment. But the main ways in which these early forms of record-keeping differed from modern 'descriptive assessment' and 'profiling' is that they were unapologetically normative. They were also far more comprehensive. In 1928, for instance, the New South Wales Inspectorate advised teachers to develop elaborate systems of school records, combining classroom-based observation with psychiatric diagnoses, physical measurement and intelligence testing. Teachers were to list the familial, environmental, emotional and physical factors in the child's progress, while the principal kept a central store of records, including scholastic and mental test results, as well as details of home environment, physique and fitness. In addition, the child's 'social adjustment' was to be mapped out by assembling teachers' assessments of attitude, industry, and literary or artistic taste, alongside 'vocational indications', 'individual and group adaptation', 'community evidence' and 'play evidence'.

The records did not, in fact, remain long in the hands of the teacher or the principal. Instead, by the 1950s, they were usually collected and collated by a new figure, that of the school psychologist or guidance officer, endowed with the responsibility for managing the development of the increasingly troubled figure of the adolescent. A variety of experts enter the school at this point, collecting themselves around the figure of the 'maladjusted' youth.

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Since this point, the sphere of expertise has widened, to include the statistician, the 'learning theory' expert and the sociologist.

What would it mean to say that contemporary routines of 'profiling' and continuous assessment stem from such reformatory pastoral programmes? For many, this might confirm the worst suspicions about the area of assessment, demonstrating the murky history of even the most apparently progressive forms of educational assessment. It seems that although programmes such as 'profiling' appear as the product of new and enlightened educational theory, these techniques are far older than this, and far less innocent of 'utilitarian' tactics than we may imagine. This has certainly been the suspicion of those who have commented on the expansion of these networks of 'vocationalism', character training and 'social adjustment'. Insofar as the development of school records, streaming and vocational guidance has attracted historical attention, it has done so as an instance of the false promise of 'social democratic' reform.\(^{67}\) These reforms failed to produce equality (so the story goes) since they did not alter the dominance of the competitive academic curriculum or the relationship between private and independent and state schools. Nor did they make the relationships between school and work more democratic. Instead, their main effect was to confirm the marginalisation of technical education, and to install 'vocationalism',

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\(^{67}\) See for instance Miller, *Long Division*. According to McCallum, what is occurring here is that the state 'adopted the role of overseeing the exclusion from extended education of the great bulk of the school population, while at the same time endorsing the cultural yardstick . . . embodied in the academic curriculum'. McCallum, *Social Distribution of Merit* 85. The case here rests on the argument that psychological testing was largely applied to the state schools rather than the private schools. This latter group, he remarks, 'was absent, and remained absent, in respect of the problem of social differences in education'. The reform of the curriculum was pertinent only to the state school system, for it was apparently here that diversity of ability and interest resided. Cf. Smith, 'Governing Classrooms' 272-3.
'meritocracy' and human capital assumptions throughout the education system.68

Once again, the 'villain' of the story is psychology, with its reductive insistence on measurable individual difference and its imperviousness to the shaping effect of social environment and cultural privilege. Psychological expertise, it is argued, promised to promote individual self-realisation. All it did, however, was to defuse resistance to class control.69 Inequality remains conceptualised in terms of 'inequality within ability groups'. Furthermore, psychological expertise continues to provide an 'apparently neutral means of measuring class discrepancies within "natural" ability groups.70

These historical characterisations are not to be lightly disregarded, stemming as they do from a strong ethical commitment to redressing educational inequality, and to removing the obstacles to equity-oriented education reform. From within the perspective of 'socially critical' historiography, the gap between these ideals and the rationalities outlined above is a considerable one. But it should be clear by now that these modes of critiques have their limitations. Not the least of these is their tendency to underestimate the complexity of institutional, pedagogic and political commitments which fall outside of the ambit of the 'socially critical', or which are more concerned

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68 In her revisionist history of 'vocationalism', Jill Blackmore describes this period of 'social democratic' reform as one in which the rhetoric of 'aptitude', 'choice' and 'equal opportunity' concealed the development of a 'class and gender differentiated system'. The assumptions behind vocationalism, according to this account, are that 'there is a labour market in which individuals freely compete on the basis of their skills as signified by educational credentials, that those with necessary skills get the best jobs, that there is a correlation between education and life chances'. J. Blackmore, 'What's New About the New Vocationalism?' Paper Delivered at the Annual Conference, Australian and New Zealand Historians of Education Society, 25-28 August 1988: 3. Once again, the battle is one between the political ideologies of 'liberalism' and of 'utilitarianism', a battle waged at another level between class interests. Cf. R.W. Connell, D.J. Ashenden, S. Kessler and G. Dowsett, Making the Difference: Schools, Families and Social Divisions (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983): 20-22.

69 See McCallum, Social Distribution 79. Cf. Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett 25

70 McCallum Social Distribution 101.
with means to immediate ends of reform than they are with more absolute principles of human perfectability.

To address these limitations, we will need to focus on the question of the 'politics' of the technical. As we have noted, much of the sociological and historical criticism of mental testing and psychological measurement is organised by a suspicion of the truth claims of psychology, its ambitions to identify individual differences and to locate normal and abnormal human capacities. Accordingly, much effort has been put into displacing these claims, undermining their epistemological hold by showing that the mental measurement programme had unstable historical formation, was based on false assumptions, and is unable to account for itself coherently. We have encountered similar treatments of the expert and the technical in discussion of each of the main devices of educational assessment. In each case, the account is organised by the analysis of the 'discourse' of technical rationality, by the discovery of 'truth-claims' and by the effort to refute these claims.

This suspicion of the 'truth-claims' of expertise is now entirely familiar to us. We have argued that humanistic critique tends to arrogate to itself a transcendent position of truth-seeking and observes the education system from these critical heights. This mode of commentary may well be appropriate to the self-contained and 'other-worldly' environment of academic reflection. But often, where the task is one of description or applied advice to the actual school system, this stance is less than helpful, often offering either unrestrainedly oppositionalist advocacy of particular humanist positions, or sectional arguments from within academic disputes between sociological, psychological or economic forms of expertise. The problem is exacerbated in the applied field of policy analysis. Here, we have argued, the colonising tendencies of critique often prevents critics from
engaging constructively in the zones in which education planning occurs and in which different commitments and kinds of expertise reach their settlements. In many instances, critique over-steps the mark of its own range of expertise, entering into regions where a different language is spoken, and where the ethical and vocational customs are foreign to it. But rather than attempting to pick up the *lingua franca*, or adapt itself to local conditions, it simply tends to pronounce its own commitments more loudly.

There are good reasons to modify these habits. What we must learn to do is to appreciate the autonomous character of the zones of expertise with which sociologically-informed educational critique must deal routinely. To do this, it will be necessary to put aside the standard distinctions between the ethical and the technical, between truth and ideology. On the one hand, critique needs to recognise that its own exercises of appraisal and normative judgement are themselves technical, just as they are historically contingent. Equally, while its modes of truth-seeking might not be susceptible to doubt within its own ethical and vocational zone, they also have a local and limited character. By the same token, critical engagements with autonomous and adjacent areas of expertise need to begin by conceding that they may also incorporate ethical components. This concession will require a degree of pluralism and restraint, particularly in avoiding the clash between irreconcilable and internally fixed epistemological positions. But it may be that sociological and historical treatments with psychological or statistical expertise might be more usefully conducted away from epistemological border clashes.

**ix. Conclusion.**

It may well be the case that expert calculation is far from neutral. However, this does not mean that its political or governmental role is easy to dismiss on
the basis of an epistemological critique. For one thing, the habitual suspicion of critique means that it gives little credit to the negotiational elements of expert knowledges. In other words, expert adjudication often has a role as arbitrator, defusing tension and moving the issue away from rather than onto 'the territory of truth'. As Jeffrey Minson has pointed out, the role of expertise in government is often that of 'trouble-shooter, negotiator or mediator'.

This arbitral role, he argues, is based not on the truth claims of expert knowledges, but on their capacity for agnosticism. As he put it, they are usually 'more truce than truth oriented'.

Epistemologically-based critique does not help to explain the circumstances in which these knowledges have been adopted, adapted and transformed within governmental programmes. Often, in fact, epistemological unassailability is irrelevant to the operations or effects of particular intellectual technologies. At points, the use and adaptation of the specialist vocabulary occurs in different professional zones from the development of 'theory-programmes'. In many cases, the implementation of these expert discourses within governmental programmes occurs despite both internal and external critiques of the epistemological or empirical elements of the theories in question. Indeed, a degree of indeterminacy in expert deliberations and doctrines gives them the suppleness and flexibility to act as relays between the imperatives, claims and interests which compete within the formulation of governmental programmes. This has certainly been the case with both 'economic rationalism' and with 'human capital' theory, just as it has with the statistical identification of desirable levels of educational participation. We will find that this has also been the case with psychologically-based determinations of 'intelligence', 'ability', 'vocation' and 'aptitude'.

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This is a proposition which we will proceed to explore further in Chapter Eleven, as we continue to grapple with the description of the relationships between expert calculation, educational practices and 'political' negotiations. Our next step is to undertake the description of early versions of continuous assessment, record-keeping and vocationalism, developing a broader sense of the historical context in which these techniques were developed. In the process, we will begin to locate some of the imperatives and expectations that accompany the expansion of mass secondary education, and that are still being negotiated in educational and social welfare domains today. We will also continue to address the question of the 'politics' of expertise and its relationship to critical principle, focussing particularly on the negotiational roles of expert knowledges, their unpredictable outcomes and their relationship to current conceptions of equality of opportunity.
CHAPTER ELEVEN: EXPERTISE AND EXPECTATION

i. The will to know.

In this chapter, we continue to trace the circumstances in which current forms of school-based assessment were formed, in the intersections between the school system and the adjoining 'psycho-social' complex. Tracking through the undergrowth of institutional debate and technical invention, we will be exploring a particularly dense historical zone, one in which the registers of pedagogic, psychological, statistical and psychiatric expertise begin to merge within the school.

We can begin with an historical emblem that will bring home the tortuous quality of this cluster of developments. It is provided by a now-obscure volume entitled *The Examination Tangle and the Way Out*, published in 1935. Within the volume, we will find sketches for assessment schema that strongly resemble the current forms of school-based assessment. But in other ways, they remind us of the oddity of the not-so-distant educational past, exhibiting expectations and aspirations now disturbing to modern educational sensibilities. Observing these similarities and differences will provide us with a clue to the contingency of current educational concerns, a well as to the degree of historical achievement that they represent.

*The Examination Tangle and The Way Out* was produced by the International Commission on Examinations, a body sponsored by the New Education Fellowship. The volume collected the reflections and discussions of a number of eminent progressive educationists and administrators, each of them committed to addressing the endemic problems of educational

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assessment and selection. The Commissioners agreed that, in all the advanced Western countries, examinations had failed to answer the most urgent imperative of modern education – that of comprehending the full character of the child. Accordingly, they canvassed various alternatives. Internal school examinations and mass 'efficiency testing' were both considered, but each of these was rejected. In their stead, the Commissioners recommended that school systems experiment with a variety of record-keeping systems. The advantage of such systems, they argued, was that they made it possible to know the child completely. In collecting together all the relevant information on the individual, plotting this against norms and averages, they provided a profile that would be instantly comprehensible to teachers, parents, school administrators, employers and guidance officers.

One variant proposed is that of the Cumulative Record Card, a 'biotypological record book', designed to incorporate all aspects of 'personality, physiology, psychology, pathology, and psychiatry'. This record system, it was suggested, could accompany each individual to school and home, be used in secondary selection and perhaps even be employed to determine retirement by 'biopsychological' rather than chronological age. Such a scheme, they commented, would improve the connections between the school, work and the family, detailing the child's home environment, physique, abilities, aptitudes, school attainments, and temperament. By these means, the child's mental and physical character could at once be summarised and disaggregated, individualised and charted against an average.

The Commissioners were also taken with a second model of a record system at that time already used in Leicester City. Teachers in this city were able to

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produce a whole profile of the child by means of an elaborate graph, plotting various test results, including measurements of the degree of intelligence (or 'factor G'), of mechanical and artistic aptitude, of two types of dexterity and of 'fluency of association', (or imagination):

The results of such tests, together with those of certain temperamental tests and rating scales, to which we shall come later, are combined with a determination of physique and of school attainment in mathematics, English, Science, languages and Handicrafts, and are inscribed on a circular graph which is divided into ten concentric circles and twenty-three sectors, one sector representing each physical or mental characteristic. A pupil's achievement in each sector is marked and the points connected. The resultant shaded shape gives a clear picture of outstanding abilities or weaknesses as measured against the heavy middle circle which represents the average values for each characteristic. The whole profile can then be compared with that required by an occupation. 3

In some ways, this device prefigures today's profiling systems. Like the Cumulative Record Card, 'profiles' are designed to specify individual differences, to provide 'an account of the student at a particular stage of development, in relation to particular learning experiences', to detect deviations from desirable norms, and where possible to effect appropriate transformations. Profiles are also positioned on a grid of individual and social indicators, compiled through the close pastoral surveillance of the school. In fact, the Leicester City model is a 'profile' in a very literal sense. This image of the 'shaded shape', plotted against the elaborate grid of 'biopsychological norms', provides us with an emblem of the kinds of intersections and ambitions that have shaped continuous assessment as we now know it.

Some possible interpretations of the image immediately arise. Are we seeing here, for instance, evidence of the psychological and psychiatric invasion of

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3 Rawson 57.
the school system? The 'Cumulative Record Card' is a compilation of intelligence tests and other measurements designed to discover differences of 'fitness' and temperament, and in commending it, the Commissioners make unblushing reference to the testing of comparative mental fitness as one of the 'compulsions of nature'. The standard reaction to such examples is one of retrospective embarrassment for the educational past. After all, what we can see here is an unalloyed 'will to know', unmodified by many of the restraints and self-restrictions that now hedge modern forms of assessment about. What drives it, as we can now see, is at least two centuries of unremitting inquiry and investigation. Embarrassing as it might now be, these are the impulses that still drive the education system and the surrounding social welfare cluster, giving rise to the constant anxiety that not enough is known and that not enough is being done.

Let us explore some of these similarities and differences further. A mere fifty years ago, it seems, it was possible for progressive educationists to regard every aspect of the individual child as measurable, and to treat the physiological attributes of the individual as equivalent to those of personality, pathology and psychiatry. The Commissioners showed little concern that these measures were normative. On the contrary, their enthusiasm was for the proliferation of norms, for comprehensive enquiry and inspection and for ever more intricate and supple collection of indicators. Furthermore, if they were unconcerned about the normative and technical elements of these procedures, neither were they troubled by the prospect of intrusion into the life of the child. In fact, they were quite matter-of-fact in their interest in the child's home environment. The proposal is in fact a blueprint for intensifying governmental relations between school, home, work and social welfare, making every aspect of the child's development transparent to pedagogic, administrative and therapeutic observation. The ambitions inscribed in the
device are also unapologetically concerned with vocational placement and with the requirements of the workplace, charting such elements as mechanical aptitude and dexterity, and placing these next to physiological attributes. This alone would be enough to arouse the suspicion of modern educational critics, concerned as they are to locate the colonising tendencies of vocationalism, human capital assumptions and the interests of industry in forming a workforce for its own ends.

Placed in this critical light, the 'shaded shape' of individual capacities charted on this grid becomes an emblem of the ways in which the individual child is mishandled by the education system, strung across normative vectors and pinned by the normalising gaze. Alternatively, the image of the individual charted on the graph becomes symbolic of the way in which popular education attempts to fragment and disempower collective subjects, from girls to the working class, in accordance with the ideologies of liberal individualism, eugenicism, vocationalism, meritocracy, and economic rationalism.

From such a point of view then, the example presents little that is puzzling. The main question which might arise would be the issue of how it is that such a repressive device is proposed and promoted by self-styled progressive educationists. After all, in conventional histories, the New Education Fellowship is regarded as the representative of the international movement towards enlightened, child-centred and democratic education.4 Within the socially critical framework, however, the answer arises promptly enough – progressivist educators entertain such schema because of their politically ambiguous relation to political doctrines such as liberal individualism, and

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because of the infection of popular democratic thought by the technocratic concerns promoted by industrial interests and psychological expertise.

Such an analysis might find its confirmation in the rationales in which the Commission developed the proposal. For instance, in discussing the different available options for assessment, the Commission distinguished itself from 'over-romantic' concerns with organic child development. Instead, the rationale offered for comprehensive record-keeping and testing was a political and administrative one. The Commissioners noted, for instance, that various elements within the 'New Education' movement had begun to question the need for assessment and evaluation, on the basis that there was no need to record the 'harmonious progress' of child development. Their response to this was that 'life demands that we should measure our powers against those of others'.\textsuperscript{5} For them, too, it was a question of democratic rights. Not only is it imperative to know the child, but the child must know herself within the group. This information is a natural need, but it is also a social problem — 'one of the gravest problems of our time':

\begin{quote}
the problem of finding a substitute for the intimate contact and immediate intuition possible to small groups, within the large and amorphous communities of which the modern civilised world is composed. In the political realm the problem is that of representative government. In the sphere of education it is that of school records ... We need to know what we are temperamentally and by ability and training fitted to do, and such fitness must in part be determined in relation to the fitness of others. This comparison is nature's compulsion, not man's.\textsuperscript{6}
\end{quote}

This comment might indeed seem like an individualistic expression of a liberal conception of educational 'opportunity' — a philosophical and administrative tradition treated with some ambivalence by modern critics. Nor is it far distant from the terms of the Schools Commission's analysis of

\textsuperscript{5} Rawson 11.
\textsuperscript{6} Rawson 11.
the citizen's rights to be equipped with a particular range of basic competences, and to be provided with adequate vocational and civic opportunities, according to ability. To that extent, it could indeed be treated as an expression of a (limited) philosophical position on 'rights' and 'equality'.

Casting further back, however, the more striking similarity is to the kinds of ambition and rationale developed by early education bureaucrats such as Peter Board. The 1935 Commissioners' goal of devising portable records in fact recalls Board's projection that in time, 'the desk of the pupil and the bench of the artisan, or the office of the businessman will be bridged'. We have identified this ambition to align the school with the workplace and with citizenship as a specifically bureaucratic one. In Board's time, it was possible to express this goal in terms of the interests of 'the state as a state', an interest in promoting public well-being and industrial productivity, while providing the citizen with the means and capacity to pursue the 'personal progress of the individual with regard to his own private interests'. The ambition (still with us in the competency reforms) is clearly still alive in 1935, not just in the political imaginations of bureaucrats, but also in that of these international administrative intellectuals and education reformers. In other words, the mundane project of developing portable school records is not an expression of a philosophy or a political doctrine, but a rearticulation of what had been a long-standing bureaucratic goal, one of considerable longevity and still-continuing vigour.

We should however bear in mind that these are utopian proposals, formulated by administrative intellectuals charged with the responsibility of producing a

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7 P. Board, 'Mental Science and Education' (Brisbane: Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, 1910) 708.
8 Board, 'Mental Science and Education' 71-2.
visionary projection for the educational future. In fact, their proposals were perhaps too visionary and 'other-worldly' to be incorporated in the school system. As utopian statements, the proposals could afford to ignore the enormous practical difficulties entailed in implementing a scheme of this sort. But simply recalling the complexity of current debates on profiling, criterion referencing and competencies is enough to give a sense of what these difficulties might be.

The point brings us to the issue of the differences between this historical moment and the educational present. Modern educators, as we have noted in Chapter Nine, now have a reflex set of concerns about the need to balance the pedagogic commitment to individualised attention to the child with an equally powerful concern to ensure that normative judgements are not imposed arbitrarily. Sometimes, the concern is that the effort to make the child transparent to educational knowledge might be an intrusion on the dynamics of individual development – a concern that leads at times to qualms about imposing any educational norms at all. In other versions, however, the concern to maintain accountability and to avoid arbitrariness in normative judgements results in elaborate efforts to ensure that judgements exported from the classroom in the form of 'summative' records should be based only on observable performance, and should avoid subjective assessments of an individual's personal qualities or background.

In other words, we are now accustomed to the requirement that school systems should be able to promote intensive pastoral attention to individual difference and cultural contexts, while aiming for a degree of administrative commonality when applying educational judgements. These objectives are of course difficult to achieve, as we have seen in the process of reviewing current assessment debates. However, some protocols have been developed,
providing alternative and optional tactics for separating individual performance from social norms. These, it will be recalled, include schemes for precise forms of measurement, as well as protocols for descriptive assessment. Even in the most resolutely individualised assessment schema, the effort has been to restrict pedagogic and diagnostic judgements to the classroom, and to retrain the teacher in the discipline of careful observation. Each of these new kinds of assessment technology has been developed within elaborate labours of definition, negotiation, planning and training. By contrast, the Examination Tangle proposals seem extraordinarily bold. At this historical point, the elements of the 'summative' and the 'formative are intricately combined, intertwining the pastoral elements of character-development and conscience formation with the distributory function of the school. In that respect, the proposals resemble many of the elements of the English examination as we have described it – a device which these schema were of course designed to replace.

The comparison between early and modern forms of 'profiling' and record-keeping is an important one for our purposes, but not because it reveals the extent to which modern assessment is morally mortgaged to the normative, to the utilitarian and to the crude assumption of measurability. On the contrary, what is striking about the comparison is that it enables us to appreciate the degree of ethical and technical achievement entailed in installing concerns with parity, institutional objectivity and commensurability within the distributory functions of the school system, however partial that implementation may be. The achievement is all the more notable because it involves the development of a degree of restraint on the part of educationists and teachers, especially given the long-installed ethical commitment to individualisation and to moral confidence in pastorally-based pedagogic judgements.
The main point to emphasise is the recent and circumstantial nature of these developments. What we are beginning to mark out is an historical space in which, over only a few decades, the education system incorporated within itself various new calculative vocabularies and learnt how to use new instruments, while also adapting itself to a variety of resulting and unexpected problems. In the process, the education system was enabled to set itself new targets, and ambitions. In doing so, it has marshalled a complex process of negotiation between teachers, educationists, psychologists and statisticians. Observing this brings us back to the question of the 'politics' of expertise and its relation to education 'principles'.

ii. Expertise and educational expansion.

What was it that occurred in the intervening decades between the 1930s and the 1990s which allowed these marginal and utopian proposals for democratic record-keeping and vocational distribution to resurface in the movement of national credentialling? The answer appears to lie in exchanges between the school and the shady sector of the 'psycho-social' cluster. These exchanges occur as a series of alignments and institutional compromises, connected by a series of problematisations, moral campaigns and institutional expansions. It is in this dense cluster of exchanges that we can locate the emergence of current educational ambitions and the means to pursue them.

We have noted that proposals for record-keeping emerge at a time of large-scale education reform and expansion. What is occurring at this point, according to recent histories, is the development of new governmental strategies that reshape the sphere of the 'social' from the middle of this century in most Western social democracies. Associated with this is the

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congregation of a number of new institutions, including those of industrial arbitration, social welfare sites, philanthropic organisation and parental associations. According to Jacques Donzelot, many of the tensions within the modern social welfare state can be located at this point, due to the unpredictable expansion and interaction of these social agencies. For one thing, a number of new rights-based claims emerge, particularly those now associated with social and industrial rights. As an 'employee of society', the citizen becomes possessed of a new series of rights, duties and responsibilities. In the process, the social welfare system develops a certain 'inflationary logic' creating the expectation that the state will take responsibility for all problems. Accordingly, in areas such as education, as in as health or social welfare, the modern state negotiates between competing demands which are in principle infinite and limitless.\(^{10}\)

As it happened, however, a series of social technologies emerged which provided various means to defuse social conflicts. This entailed the building of a network of statistical, economic and welfare-based forms of arbitration, making up an 'insurantial' technology. This now spreads between public and the private, the state and civil society, forming the area of 'social solidarity'. According to Donzelot, the strategy of the 'insurantial' works by displacing political tensions into the area of technical arbitration, by means of

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\(^{10}\) J. Donzelot, 'The Mobilisation of Society', *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (London: Harvester and Wheatsheaf, 1991) 176. Donzelot's outline of the problem is perhaps one specific to the social history of France, and not to be generalised too broadly. To a large extent, he is concerned with the role of the state in allaying class-based tension and social unrest. But perhaps the most useful point to be gained from this account is the description of the circumstances in which 'the problem of the welfare state' was displaced from the terrain of 'a crisis of the social' to that of 'a crisis in the growth of the social.' (Donzelot 177). This description can be of some assistance in understanding the inflation of demands upon welfare state provision, previously discussed in Chapter Seven. Part of the problem, Donzelot notes, is that the role of the state has changed from that of 'a guarantor of progress' to that of a 'manager of destiny', charged with 'providing a form of security whose cost weights ever more heavily on the economy' (Donzelot 176). See also B. Hindess, *Freedom, Equality and the Market: Arguments on Social Policy* (London: Tavistock, 1987); and M. Foucault, 'The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century', ed. Colin Gordon *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books) 1980.
network of expertise, such as those involved in superannuation systems, in industrial arbitration and in the technologies of adjustment and vocational guidance. As Donzelot puts it, these 'insurantial' tactics entail making use of conflicts, instead of trying to eliminate them, 'applying a newly realistic awareness of conflicting needs and interests by disseminating among social partners and individual citizens new procedures for the acceptance and shaping of responsibilities (permanent retraining, self-management, decentralization).

In some respects, this account is directly relevant to the history of mass education in Australia, and to the areas of social welfare that surround it. From the beginning of this century, as we have seen, the rapid extension and consolidation of mass schooling in this country was accompanied by a series of debates on the rights of citizens and on the school's responsibility to develop the capacity to exercise those rights. Associated with this was a series of endemic difficulties in negotiating between the rival imperatives associated with the formation of an efficient workforce, the policing of public morality and the shaping of a citizenry. The extension of common general education to all citizens, through the gradual construction of mass

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11 See D. Defert, 'Popular Life and Insurance Technology', *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (London: Harvester and Wheatsheaf, 1991) 211-234; and E. Ewald, 'Insurance and Risk', *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* ed. G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (London: Harvester and Wheatsheaf, 1991) 197-210. Each of these chapters indicates the extent to which these new developments are tied to two elements of social policy, each stemming from the late nineteenth century. The first is described as the technology of 'tutelage', while the second is identified with the more general mechanism of 'solidarity', entailing means to defend citizens against social risks. To my knowledge, there has as yet been little work relating these arguments to the history of social welfare in Australia. For some recent examples, see D. McCallum, 'Problem Children and Familial Relations', *Child and Citizen: Genealogies of Schooling and Subjectivity*, ed. D Meredith and D Tyler (Brisbane: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, 1993) 129-152; D. Burchell, 'Economic Government: Economic Rationalism and the Rationalities of Government', unpublished working paper, 1993. Burchell makes the point that the current emphasis in Australia on credentialling and on-the-job training can be treated as an instance of instances of the 'autonomisation of the social'—a shift, as he describes it, from 'passive security to "active solidarity", even in the heart of the "economic rationalist moment"' (Burchell 34).

12 Donzelot, 'The Mobilisation of Society' 178.
comprehensive schooling, was designed in part to satisfy these imperatives. However, it also brought further pressures, especially as the effort to delay the moment of vocational distribution until the later years of secondary education intensified the pressure on secondary selection.\textsuperscript{13}

Vocationally-oriented record-keeping provided one of the means to negotiate these difficulties and to manage these pressures. In developing this technology, the school system called upon the expert vocabularies of the expanding 'psycho-social' network. The vocabulary of 'adjustment', 'aptitude' and vocation served to defuse a number of tensions which had arisen in various sites. In the workplace, it served to allay tensions between the new sphere of workers' right and the prerogatives of employers.\textsuperscript{14} And in the school, it acted as a relay between the classroom and the family.

This 'psycho-social' network can be mapped along the lines of two main intersecting co-ordinates. The first runs between a number of agencies which supplied industry's demands for vocational selection and psychological tests.\textsuperscript{15} These institutes of industrial psychology were engaged in a new task of managing labour, replacing the 'Taylorist' emphasis on the productivity of the individual worker and of the machinery of production with an emphasis on the morale and motivation or the group.\textsuperscript{16} This emphasis on adjustment


\textsuperscript{16} On Taylorism, see Donzelot, 'Pleasure in Work'. See also Miller and Rose, who revise the standard accounts of Taylorism as merely a 'scientific' attempt to provide a rationale for economic interests. Instead, Taylorism is discussed as 'one of a set of programmes articulated in the language of "efficiency", entailing an alliance
gave rise to the new figure of the 'occupational misfit', the maladjusted worker placed in a position unsuited to his or her natural aptitudes.\textsuperscript{17} Psychological institutions such as the Australian Council for Educational Research, and centres of research and teacher training such as that at the Sydney Teachers' College provided the co-ordinating circuitry for these developments, as psychological expertise found its 'professional niche' in educational advice and industrial testing.\textsuperscript{18} Their connection to the schools was constructed via the problematisation of 'occupational maladjustment', a problem that directed industry's attention to the deficiencies of educational assessment and selection. One of the main effects of this was the development of vocational guidance, vocational testing and the apparatus of 'continuous retraining'.\textsuperscript{19}

The second co-ordinate runs through an even more dispersed collection of sites, composed of various parental, philanthropic and social welfare associations. During the 1940s in Victoria for instance, these included Parents and Citizens Associations, the Council of Public Education, the Trades Hall Council and the Victorian Teachers Union, as well as the private Vocational Guidance Association, formed by a combination of women's associations, city councillors, educationists, parents and charity organisers.\textsuperscript{20}

Extending outwards, the cluster also incorporated private and voluntary


\textsuperscript{19} Donzelot, 'Pleasure in work'; see also Rose, \textit{Governing the Soul}.

\textsuperscript{20} Blackmore 4.}
groups such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, the YMCA and YWCA, and the Character Education Enquiry. These agencies were also concerned with the problem of 'social adjustment', character and aptitude – and were equally critical of the school system's inability to form or identify these attributes. Each, in different ways, was engaged in a set of overlapping campaigns for the social and moral reformation of youth and for building education for 'character' and citizenship. Their 'great work of preventative social medicine', as one proponent put it, was later to consolidate itself in the form of professional 'youth welfare'.

Then, as now, this field placed pressing demands upon governmental resources and action, in order to address the problem of the 'maladjusted' adolescent or delinquent. As we saw in Chapter Five, this figure still appears before the school and social welfare system in the shape of the 'at risk' youth, and in the statistical figures of youth unemployment. In each case, these figures focus a series of demands for institutional reorganisation in school management and educational assessment, particularly in calls to build stronger connections between school, work, 'leisure' and citizenship, preparing young people for uncertain vocational outcomes and life chances, and forestalling problems of social unrest that arise from this uncertainty.


'Occupational misfits', maladjusted workers and delinquents, the school was informed, were the products of the gap between the school and the workplace, a gap which had left them in careers unsuited to their aptitudes. The delinquent who appeared before the Children's Court was identified as the 'maladjusted' adolescent, unable to find his or her place within the 'ability groupings' of streaming and educational classifications.\textsuperscript{25}

the dull child in a class too high for him, the bright child in a class too low for him, the child of lively spirits disciplined with an almost military strictness, the boy with a special mechanical bent for which an academic curriculum can find no place, the girl with a peculiar disability in arithmetic, the weakling who from the poverty of his home or the peculiarity of his person becomes a butt for his companions, all are in a mood for grave or petty misconduct.\textsuperscript{26}

Part of the problem, it seemed, was that the school's pastoral networks had failed to address the deficiencies of the child's domestic environment.\textsuperscript{27} If classroom classifications were clumsy, the real causes of 'maladjustment' lay in the family.\textsuperscript{28} In tactics familiar from the early campaigns of moral statistics, surveys of urban areas were used to demonstrate the school's inadequacy in the face of 'the vicious home, with its infuriated, drunken or tyrannical father, or its weak, slatternly mother, and its poverty'.\textsuperscript{29} Such inquiries served to 'humble[e] the teacher' by demonstrating that she had less moral influence on the child than the mother, father, club or scout master, in


\textsuperscript{26} Quoted by H.T. Lovell, 'Psychological and Social Characteristics of Adolescents', \textit{The Education of the Adolescent in Australia} ed. P.R. Cole (Melbourne: ACER, 1935) 85-6.

\textsuperscript{27} See B. Smith, 'Governning Classrooms' - A Genealogy of Classroom Management', diss. (Brisbane: Griffith University, 1991) 186-7.


\textsuperscript{29} Lovell 82.
that order. If the school was to succeed in 'generating suitable personalities rather than moral failures or mere instruments', it was argued, it must compensate for the failure of home, kindergarten, primary school, Sunday school, social group, and physical environment.

We must cease to pigeon-hole the child into 'the child at school' or 'the child at home' and the 'child in society'. Rather, must we gain the co-operation of the parent, the teacher, medical man, priest, social worker, and artist in the task of educating the children of the nation.

At this point, the 'psy complex' offered its expertise back to the classroom, through the provision of vocational record-keeping and of diagnostic advice on streaming, vocational aptitude and adjustment. The main relay between the school and this field of 'preventative social medicine' was provided by the school psychologist, installed in the school as the answer to its own failures. This agent served to warn the schools about the moral delicacy of the 'maladjusted' child, providing expert diagnoses of the individual child's relations to normal patterns of development, and on the effects of the familial and social environment. At the same time, the school psychologist offered

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31 Malherbe 583-4.
advice to parents on their children's vocational aptitudes and choices. Part of
the aim was to overcome parents' indifference to their children's educational
and vocational choices. But it was also to modify inappropriate parental
expectations and harmful pressures on the developing adolescent. In this
way, the indifferent, repressive or over-ambitious parent was to be replaced
with the educative parent, equipped with conscientious interest in the child's
development and vocational future.35

This combination of sectional agitation, institutional pressure and rights-
based claims will be immediately recognisable in the tensions that now attend
the development of national credentialling. In the development of the
competency programme, as we saw in Part II, a psychologically-based
vocabulary of choice and self-development is used to elicit personal and
parental ambitions, even as it sets limits to these demands and expectations.
Equally familiar will be the central role of psy-based expertise in negotiating
the tensions. Just as 'vocational guidance' acted as a relay between school,
work and the pedagogic family in the 1930s and 1940s, so it is used today
for negotiating 'choice', vocational distribution and patterns of educational
participation.

Following our survey of controversies on assessment in Chapter Nine, we
can now more fully appreciate the delicacy of these negotiations. Their
success, as we noted in Chapter Five, depends on the 'translatability' of the
competency norms, and therefore on the extent to which they avoid installing
sectional or 'subjective' criteria. Instead, the models being developed are
designed to avoid contentious issues such as the measurability of inner states,

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Living: The Challenge of Today, ed. K.S. Cunningham and W.C. Radford
(Melbourne: ACER, 1938).

Smith, 'Governing Classrooms' 256. See also B. Smith, 'Educational
Consumerism: Family Values or the Meanest of Motives?', Child and Citizen:
Genealogies of Schooling and Subjectivity ed. D. Meredyth and D. Tyler
adopting instead the tactic of recording observable capacities and conduct. This tactic is intended to enhance the 'transportability' of the credential, letting it find a place within the registers of different vocational and educational sites. It is also intended to allay concerns about the reliability and commensurability of competency-based assessment, defining its norms in terms designed to ensure commonality and consistency.

What these tactics cannot do, of course, is to provide all students and their parents with equivalence in the social prestige and economic rewards attached to different educational and vocational outcomes. Neither do they have the capacity to level the differences between individual students' familial and social backgrounds, or to remove disparities in the resources of schools and their communities. Nevertheless, as we have seen, what was built into the programme of psychologically-based vocational advice and testing was a professional commitment to separate 'ability' from familial background and privilege.

These were difficult commitments to realise. In fact, the utopian project of 'vocationfulness' had limits built into it, limits which continue to confront those engaged in the expert networks of vocational, intelligence and educational testing today. Nevertheless, the technical problems which arose in this exchange had a number of unpredictable effects. The most important was the unexpected formation of new objects of investigation, particularly the object of 'disadvantage'. This was one of the contingent outcomes of the implementation of expert knowledges within the school system, and of their use as means to negotiate between competing claims and expectations.
iii. Contingent outcomes.

As we have noted, the 'truth-claims' of psychological measurement came into question almost as soon as they appeared, and each of the objects of measurement continued to be the focus of recurrent internal doubt within the psychological field. Despite intensive experimentation, it proved to be difficult to define an objective measure of 'intelligence'. Although professional psychologists continued to pursue this chimera, 'intelligence' was soon identified as an unstable object. For one thing, it proved to be extremely difficult to determine whether the capacities measured in intelligence tests derived from natural ability or from the effect of familial environment or school training. Psychological measurement was plagued by such methodological and administrative problems from its inception. The problems stemmed directly from the institutional relationship between psychological classification and the school itself. In *The New Examiner*, for instance, P.B. Ballard remarked that 'intelligence' and 'defectiveness' are arbitrary categories, dependent on the variable requirements of institutional arrangements:

What precisely can mental tests do? They can enable us to arrange roughly a group of children in order of general intelligence, the term 'general intelligence' being interpreted in a technical sense. They cannot tell us where falls the line

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37 For example, see J.A. Green, 'Intelligence', *Journal of Experimental Pedagogy and Training College Record* 6.5-6 (1922): 65-72; and J.G. Cannon, 'Do Linguistic Group Tests of Intelligence, Non-Linguistic Tests of Intelligence and Scholastic Tests Measure the Same Thing?', *Australasian Journal of Education* 5.4 (1927): 276-295. See also W. Anderson, 'Psychobiology and Democracy II; Psychic Inequalities', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy and Psychology* 4.3 (1926): 191-204.

of demarcation between the normal and the subnormal, or between the normal and the supernormal ... In point of fact, mental deficiency, as the term is at present used in education is ... a matter of school accommodation. In London at the present time there is sufficient room in the special schools to accommodate about 1.5 per. cent. of the total number of school children. This 1.5 is labelled mentally defective. If there had been accommodation for 5 per. cent., 5 per. cent. would be mentally defective. It was not mental tests that fixed the 1.5 per. cent.: that was fixed before mental tests were invented.39

This was not of course the first time that proponents of mental testing had pointed out the limits of its claims, and their dependence on institutional arrangements, whether those of the remedial school or those of the classroom. Nor was it the last. But this made little difference to the implementation of these devices. They continued to extend their role, even as their epistemological claims were challenged. As we have seen, this was possible because the expansion of mental testing stemmed not from its 'truth claims', but from its capacity to adapt itself to long-standing problems within the school. Devices such as mental tests were certainly forged and honed within zones of technical expertise, and were attended by epistemological debate and empirical experimentation. But it was by no means on the basis of these 'truth-claims' that they were advocated or implemented. The relations of exchange between the institutional regimes of the popular school and the identification of the objects of expert inquiry were far more mixed than this.

There are two points to make here. First, as we have seen, the objects of mental measurement were pedagogic objects. Normal intelligence and aptitude became thinkable as an effect of local and contingent problems peculiar to the sphere of the school itself. In each of these cases, the measurement of these capacities emerged from the problem of trying to find a systematic way of recording the capacities of individuals within a diverse

39 Ballard 127-8.
population, finding a common grid or scale on which to place capacities shaped in uneven scholastic and social environments. These are not so much philosophical or theoretical problems, as difficulties which emerged from the administrative arrangements of the school system itself.

Second, the epistemological claims made on behalf of mental testing bore at best a tangential relation to the terms in which these objects and instruments were adapted and installed within pedagogic sites. Then, as now, psy-based expertise served to defuse tensions and negotiate between political rivalries, while also acting as a relay for a range of governmental norms. However, they did not do so by virtue of their 'scientificity'. In fact, part of the difficulty with establishing measurable intelligence, as we have already seen, was in separating the norms of psychological testing from the effects of social environment and the influence of school training. However sophisticated the devices used to differentiate between performances, it was still necessary to conduct these experiments on a flat and stable surface. In other words, the project assumed the existence of a common environment and common resources. But the problem was that neither the classroom, the family or the social environment could supply this. As it turned out, in fact, the technical problems of applying such tests actually served to identify the unevenness of these scholastic and familial environments and to locate elements of social and educational disadvantage.

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40 An early example of the problem is provided by R.G. Cameron's report on the experimental Australian revision of the Binet-Simon tests in 1913. R.G. Cameron, The Measurement of Intelligence: The Binet Tests Applied to Australian Children (Sydney: Sydney Teachers' College, 1913): 11. Here, we can find in a practical form many of the limitations of mental tests which have since been recurrently exposed and expounded. Cameron's main problem was in excluding areas of 'special knowledge' (which could be gained from home or school) from children's answers to the test questions. Since 'mental age' was demonstrated by children's capacity to perform particular tasks, it was hard to be sure that the child was not merely repeating classrooms drills. For further discussion of the example, see Meredeth, Anxiety.
Throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, the empirical problems with mental testing continued to be located, even as psychology expanded into the field of vocational advice and distribution. Experimental attempts to measure 'development' in young children were frustrated by detecting the influence of school training even in early childhood. In fact, the effort to establish stable norms for 'mental age' faced problems from its inception, partly because of the observable difficulty of separating the results of testing from the influence of familial background and scholastic training. The measurability of 'general ability' continued to be the subject of intense internal debate, as did the question of the measurability of 'character', 'temperament' and 'aptitude'. Even if it was possible to isolate identifiable aptitudes (as distinct from intelligence), it remained difficult to predict future performance. The problems remained the constant object of epistemological and empirical debate, even as the administrative use and academic study of the new applied field of psychology continued to expand. In fact, this process of technical problematisation had some unpredictable but important effects upon the school system.

At the same time as psychologists and teachers conducted the search for a 'raw material' of individual ability, they were also enabled to monitor the effects of social disadvantage. Even as such programmes attempted to eliminate variables of personal rate of development, family environment, locality, class and gender, the objects of social and individual difference were being reformulated. During the 1920s and 1930s, for instance, the influence of the home environment and the 'pedagogical parent' were monitored in terms not far removed from present-day analyses of 'cultural capital':

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41 Adams 181.
42 See Phillips 165-7, and McRae 'Bases of Grading'. Cf. C.R. McRae, 'A Note on Sex Differences' 8. He notes that '[t]he only conclusion to be drawn is that this attempt to discover sex differences has ended in the same way as so many other experiments undertaken with the same aim, namely, in failure'.

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A child who has had a lot of attention paid to him, who is used to hearing people talk about him, and who has some acquaintance with picture books, will find these tests easy ... the child of the professional man, unless he is mentally deficient, is bound to have a wider vocabulary, at least in the field of vocabulary employed by the tester, than the children of the ordinary worker.\textsuperscript{43}

In the same way, expert debates on the deficiencies of mental testing gave rise to studies of the effect of social background on school success, studies that established the terms in which the school's relation to social disadvantage is understood even today. It is at this point that we begin to see the emergence of current bureaucratic calculations concerning desirable levels of educational participation across the population and amongst particular social groups.\textsuperscript{44}

In the 1940s, for instance, various calculations of the inequity of educational outcomes were conducted as part of a sustained internal critique of mental testing.\textsuperscript{45} For instance, in a seminal 1938 essay on 'ability and opportunity', Gray and Moshinsky queried mental testing's capacity to distinguish measurable ability from the effects of class background.\textsuperscript{46} The issue was pursued in the largest sample of the English school population then examined, one establishing statistical correlations between socio-economic background, scholastic achievement and tests of intelligence. The important development here was the correlation drawn between class background and scholastic achievement. This statistical and demographic observation provided a model for the now routine modern methods of identifying educational disadvantage in terms of social and scholastic background. At points such as this, we begin to see the emergence of the modern statistical


\textsuperscript{44} McCallum, \textit{Social Distribution} 75.

\textsuperscript{45} See the discussion of these developments in McCallum, \textit{Social Distribution} 110-5

maps of social and vocational outcomes now so indispensable to modern education planning.

Such projects of demographic investigation were pursued throughout the 1930s and 1940s, in studies such as La Nauze's important analysis of social disadvantage, again correlating familial background with scholastic outcomes. La Nauze undertook the task of compiling statistics on scholastic achievement and familial background, in order to demonstrate the disproportionate number of those entering universities from private schools and from middle-class backgrounds. Again, the concern was linked to the conceptualisation of the 'wastage' of ability within disadvantaged social groups. By the 1940s, these goals had been taken up by international bodies such as the OECD, in extensive research programmes identifying desirable levels of educational participation in different OECD countries and tying these scholastic and vocational outcomes to the effects of socio-economic background. In these international postwar surveys – prompted by the 'failure' of educational measurement and assessment – the pattern of educational outcomes began to be placed next to those of social background, establishing the modern equity calculus.47

This intersection between technical calculation and pedagogic and welfare concerns made new ambitions possible for public education, adding the goals of reducing inequality and social disadvantage to the institutional imperatives of commonality and equitable distribution amongst 'ability groups'. By the 1950s, the ambition to achieve 'equality of opportunity' became installed as

one of the self-regulatory norms of international educational research and administrative expertise. The important point to make, however, is that such statistical maps were in fact made possible by the existence of programmes of measurement and educational registration, even if the imperative to pursue these investigation was prompted by the consistent 'failure', problematisation and reform of these devices.

These developments, we should note, do not occur as part of an organic realisation of pre-existing rights, and nor do they stem from a set of philosophical or political insights. Instead, the conceptions of 'disadvantage' and 'equity' now built into the school system occurred through local and contingent intersections between remedial governmental concerns and expert technologies. Furthermore, action upon them did not depend upon the expression of rights, but upon a set of administrative and technical innovations, made available by the school's long-standing institutional capacity to provide both commonality and differentiation. In other words, 'equality of opportunity' became thinkable as an ambition for the education system as a by-product of the extension of state schooling and of the instruments that it made available.

iv. Expectations of equality.

For education historians, the emergence of demographic and statistical studies of educational disadvantage was a faltering step towards real educational equality. But although these early studies of disadvantage were on the track towards a fully critical conception of equality and social justice, it is argued,

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49 Gray and Moshinsky 336.
they were limited by their reliance on assumptions concerning a native 'ability' and by their use of the conception of 'ability groupings'. Still mesmerised by the powerful appeal of psychological expertise, it is suggested, they could not understand that the question at stake was not that of individual difference, but of the effects of systemic social inequality. Because of their liberal emphases on individual ability, they failed to recognise the higher ethical and political imperative of equality of outcomes. Nor did they promote the school system's responsibility to make its institutional arrangements and purposes organic to the needs and rights of the (culturally plural) community.

Clearly, there are significant gaps between administrative categories of disadvantage and of cultural difference – however plural – and the realisation of ethical and political goals of 'equality' or cultural reconciliation. There is little need to dispute the fact that, despite its historical achievements, the school system does not provide a neutral method of assigning social outcomes, and nor is it able to erase familial and cultural privilege. It remains the case, for instance, that students from private schools are more likely to enter universities, and that there is a strong correlation between academic success and the occupational and income levels of parents. No doubt there are indeed strong links between these educational outcomes and social background, links which can partly be registered in terms of the effects of familial environment and 'cultural capital'. As Connell and his co-authors put it in *Making the Difference*,

Facts like these have turned up in every study of school retention and social background that has been done in Australia for the last thirty years. Facts like these have piled up in all the advanced industrial countries; and they are even piling up in third-world countries as they develop education systems on the Western model. Social class inequality is a massive fact of our system of secondary education. It has
persisted though a transformation of schooling that many hoped would abolish it.\textsuperscript{50}

Such social facts are undeniable. But does this mean that the school systems itself is illegitimate and that all systems of assessment and social selection are equally arbitrary? Such dismissals of the school system, we have argued, stem from the assumption that the education system could or should be the vehicle for the expression of a pre-existent set of rights and political will. But as we have seen, the ambitions of the education system stem from a different order, from the momentum of its own drive towards commonality of provision and toward equity and efficiency of (unequal) differentiation and distribution. The fact that, since the post-war period, it has set itself the ambition to achieve 'equality of opportunity' is a contingent achievement, made possible by the bureaucratic and technical organisation of the education system itself.

Before we rush to judgement on these programmes, we should remember that the formulation of a distinction between 'ability groupings' and 'social groupings' was a significant and in fact unexpected intellectual and political achievement. As we have seen, the calculation of education 'outcomes' across a school-age population is a late and quite contingent addition to the strategic arrangements of the popular school. Each of the limited devices we have tracked is connected to quite different administrative ways of thinking of a population as a field of frequencies and averages, whether these were to do with health or literacy, crime or character. The important point then is to emphasise the contingency and rarity of current devices. For all the bewildering array of schemas available, the alternatives remain remarkably few.

Nothing makes this clearer than the fact that the instruments which critique uses to expose the failures of the system emerge from the intellectual technologies and statistical apparatuses of the education system itself.\textsuperscript{51} Such devices are indispensable to those who have the task of keeping the social conscience of the education system and whose duty it is to train a teaching service equipped with appropriate professional concern over educational inequality. Nevertheless, such critics continue to express the familiar self-defeating suspicion of the technical and expert components of the school system.

v. Conclusion.

Our survey of the emergence of the main instruments of educational differentiation helps in part to explain why the problems that plague educational assessment are so recurrent. These debates, as we have noted, recycle a set of long-standing problems, imperatives and prescriptions. In addressing them, educationists and administrators call upon a limited array of instruments and devices. Each of these techniques is the product of particular convergences between contingent requirements. Each emerged from the often uneasy relations between pedagogic, statistical and psychological registers, within programmes as wide-ranging as medical inspection and the policing of mental deficiency, delinquency and vocational maladjustment.

Replanted within the school, these techniques have spread and hybridised, knitting themselves to the root systems of pedagogic routines. Given this, there is little point in attempting to pick them up by their 'ideological' assumptions and uproot them from the school system. Instead, they are now part of the dense undergrowth of the education system. Of course, as we have noted, it is by no means only the critics who have the ambition of

\textsuperscript{51} For an extended argument to this effect, see Hunter, \textit{Rethinking the School}. 

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clearing this educational undergrowth. This is of course also the ambition of those administrative intellectuals who have undertaken the task of reforming the national education system, turning the maze of current assessment practices into pathways and rational patterns of participation. For them, as much as for critical intellectuals, the root systems of expertise and practical adaptation are hard to slice through. We have begun to suspect, though, that neither political will nor philosophical reflection is capable of clearing such a path. Instead, on the ground, the work will be done in patchy stages, by ad hoc methods of negotiation and with unwieldy instruments.

With this in mind, we are now in a position to return to current anxieties about school assessment. Here, we return to the encounter between the ambitions of the education bureaucracy and the expectations of critique, to address once more the implications of our major theme on the need to 'govern expectations' of educational provision, while valuing more highly the means by which targets for reform are set. The first step is to recognise the utopian expectations of transcending the technical, the normative and the administrative.

To pursue this point we turn, in Chapter Twelve, to our final example, that of the 'equity calculus'. The debate, in this instance, arises from the fact of unequal 'gender outcomes' from aptitude testing. In exploring it, we begin to clarify some of the effects of the education system's ambition to make 'equality of outcomes' an institutional norm. This expectation finds its limits in rival imperatives applied to the school system, such as the requirement that it respect pedagogic autonomy, while maintaining public confidence in the reliability and commensurability of assessment and selection, or that it foster individual choice and self-determination, while ensuring that such choices are aligned with governmental concerns to equalise gendered patterns of
educational participation. Once again, the main mechanism available to act as a relay between these intractable difficulties is that provided by psychological and statistical expertise. This expertise is called upon to serve a key negotiational function, removing the field of debate from the question of the 'truth' of the origins of gender differentiation and moving it to the question of the commensurability of different forms of measurement. As it turns out, this task is formidably complex, both at a technical and a political level.

Following these delicate negotiations will entail a certain discipline, scaling down our expectation that all these processes will be transparent to non-expert eyes. Here, we will need to take to heart the injunction to give appropriate acknowledgement to the efforts and achievements of those engaged in the task, giving the ethical, technical and political complexity of the 'equity calculus' its due. This is the task to which we turn in Chapter Twelve.
CHAPTER TWELVE: ETHICS, TECHNICS, POLITICS

i. Introduction.

In October 1983, the Sunday Telegraph announced that 'male high school students in Canberra are being discriminated against in final exams because of their sex'. This statement was precipitated by the Australian Capital Territory Schools Authority's identification of a 'bias against girls' in the Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test (ASAT), and by its efforts to compensate for this by raising the test scores of all female students. Within the resultant public debate, the overall credibility of the ACT system was cast into doubt, opening, as the Canberra Times put it, 'a can of worms in the debate about sex bias in schools'. What also emerged from the can were some confused debates about assessment and equity. From the earliest stages, as various commentators set out to account for the disparity between male and female scores, some odd conjunctions started to emerge. Psychological accounts of the effects of menstruation on test performance sat alongside feminist descriptions of girls' 'natural ability' in literary self-expression. In their turn, these


mingled with statistical and psychological calculations of how certain variables affected performance, including such disparate elements as socio-economic status, hours of mathematics studied and levels of 'confidence' as measured by questionnaire.\(^5\)

Within Australian education debate, ASAT has been notorious for some time, providing critics of testing with a ready example of the political ills of measurement, administrative rationality and psychological discourse.\(^6\) ASAT is understood to be a direct successor to intelligence testing, perpetuating in its turn the myth of meritocracy and neutral educational measurement. The tests, it is argued, systematically favour science-based training, serving to maintain the fiction of scientific objectivity by bolstering public confidence in systems of selection that are fundamentally inequitable.\(^7\) But in pursuing the case further, we will find that these oppositionalist rhetorics are too inflexible to negotiate the range of ethical, political and technical considerations raised by the debate.

ii. Aptitude and equity.

Before pursuing these arguments, some technical clarification is required. First, it is necessary to stress that ASAT is neither a scholastic test nor a test of intelligence. It is distinguished from scholastic tests, in that it tests problem-solving capacities rather than memory, and from intelligence tests in that its object is specific aptitudes rather than 'general ability'. Instead, it is described as a means to scale students according to

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5 Adams, Sex Bias.
7 Henry 289-91.
norms linked to the prediction of future success in higher education, measuring particular aptitudes such as 'the ability to reason, comprehend, interpret and make inferences from a variety of verbal and quantitative material in the humanities, social sciences, sciences and mathematics'.

In the Australian Capital Territory, ASAT is a key component of a complex system of continuous school-based assessment, maintained within a Senior Secondary College system in which courses are designed and assessed by teachers and in which both staff and students have considerable autonomy. Students in the Senior Secondary Colleges are ranked by teachers in various unit results and these scores are then adjusted to a mean, giving students' overall course scores. These scores are in turn aggregated into individuals' Tertiary Entrance Scores. At this point, the administrative difficulty is that the 'value' of teachers' rankings may vary, depending on the level of difficulty and performance in particular courses and different Colleges. Accordingly, students sit for system-wide aptitude testing, as a means to moderate and provide commonality between different teachers' and schools' assessments, compensating for the absence of a common examination, while maintaining the autonomy of continuously assessed and school-based

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8 ACT Schools Authority 15.

curricula. Each student gains an individual score, which is then aggregated into average scores within a particular course or a particular College. These group ASAT statistics are used to rescale teacher-assessed course rankings, so that an individual's original course score is adjusted upwards if there is a high overall aptitude in the group within which he or she is ranked, or downwards if the group ASAT score in this subject is comparatively low.

This brings us to the terms of the 1983 dispute on ASAT and gender outcomes. This was not the first time that ASAT had been called into question. In fact, ASAT was the subject of constant public controversy in the ACT, Queensland and Western Australia. But from 1982, the main point at issue was the statistically significant gap between the individual ASAT scores of male and female students. This gap was not evident in teacher-based assessments of male and female students and there were marked disparities between males and female students' 'raw' course scores and their individual scores in ASAT. Such disparities became even more strongly marked at the point where the ASAT scores were used to adjust course scores:

A girl and a boy can be assessed as equal by their teachers, but after the present ASAT adjustments the boy goes up and the girl goes down ... The differences between boys and girls, as assessed by teachers, were both small and statistically fairly constant over a period of years. Their differences as measured by ASAT were larger and varied

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considerably, seemingly almost at random, from year to year.\footnote{12}

Due to the system of aggregating individual scores into course scores, the effects were particularly marked in single-sex schools and in courses with predominantly female enrolments. Here, individual girls' relatively low ASAT scores resulted in significant disparities in overall course scores:

for example: assume Jennifer and Richard went to a mixed-sex college and each received a TES of 260 in 1982. If Jennifer had been at a single-sex college her score would have been 246; if Richard had been at a single-sex college his score would have been about 274.\footnote{13}

In 1983, a special report by a committee convened to review tertiary entrance scores found that 'about a third of the sex difference in average scores could not be explained in terms of differences in retention rates and patterns of subjects studied by males and females'.\footnote{14} Initially, the remaining disparity was assumed to be the product of 'item bias' in the test.\footnote{15} While this matter was investigated, it was decided that as a short term measure, the scores of all girls from the 1983 ASAT test were to be statistically adjusted in order to remove the disparity. Accordingly, girls' individual scores were 'increased by an amount equal to one third of the difference between the male and female mean scores'.\footnote{16}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] ACT Schools Authority 3.
\item[16] G. Davidson, 'Canberra's ASAT system adjusted to cut the misunderstanding', \textit{Canberra Times}, July 17, 1985: 1.
\end{footnotes}
However, this notorious measure was temporary. Subsequently, R.J. Adams' 1984 study *Sex Bias In ASAT?*, conducted on behalf of the Australian Council for Educational Research, investigated the question of bias further, examining the language of the tests for sexist exclusions or inclusions of particular terms. Despite some interest in the possible effects of the inclusion of terms such as 'hot rods', 'plumbing', or 'body surface', Adams announced that the search did not yield conclusive evidence of test bias. Furthermore, having interviewed girls who had taken the test, he found that female students were not conscious of any intimidating language or images within the test questions. In that case, he argued, it was not intelligible to refer to the unequal outcomes as instances of 'bias' or 'disadvantage'. The only detectable disparities found related to the statistical evidence that girls had lower levels of maths training, and had more 'fear of success' than boys. Accordingly, Adams advised against adjusting girls' scores to compensate for any bias in the test.

Since the major conclusion of this investigation was that a student's sex had no significant direct effect on performances on ASAT it would appear questionable to adjust the scores of individual students for bias in ASAT. However, the appropriateness of an adjustment in relation to subject or school groups is unclear. In some groups that have a high proportion of, or that are exclusively composed of, females, the mean ASAT scores may be depressed by the lower confidence in success of females in general. Several questions may be asked. Whether an adjustment because of this lower confidence in success is justified ... Furthermore, what of the male students who have a lower confidence in success? Do the single sex boys' schools have an unfair advantage?

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17 Adams, *Sex Bias*.
18 Adams, *Sex Bias* 103.
20 Adams *Sex Bias* 110.
In the policy discussions that followed the release of the 1986 Report of the Committee for the Review of Tertiary Entrance Score Calculations in the ACT, the problem was approached in slightly different terms. Although the committee did not delve deeply into sociological or feminist accounts of the origins of sexual difference in qualitative and quantitative capacities, neither did it adopt Adams' psychologically-based theories of girls' lack of 'confidence'. Instead of entering into the same terrain of debate established by Adams, in which psychological explanations of the origins of gendered attributes were counterposed to sociological formulations, the committee avoided all speculation on whether such differences were natural or social. Instead, it restricted its comments to 'observable performances and outcomes'. Rather than arguing that the problem was in girls' incapacities (such as their poor course choices or lack of confidence), it found that the test was unable to measure girls' positive capacities, particularly their skills in qualitative and humanistic areas.

female students find humanities and social science items easier than male students, but find science and mathematics items harder. More detailed inspection of the items revealed that those easier for females than males were verbal items requiring careful reading or literary criticism rather than verbal items requiring simple recapitulation. With quantitative items, those involving numbers favoured males more than items involving graphs.

The committee concluded that a 'secondary effect' bias existed in the ASAT format, because ASAT was more appropriate for rescaling maths and science scores than for humanities, and because girls performed better on 'open-ended' teacher-assessed essay questions than on multiple-choice items. Accordingly, the multiple-choice ASAT test

\[\begin{array}{ll}
21 & \text{ACT Schools Authority 6.} \\
22 & \text{ACT Schools Authority 41.} \\
23 & \text{ACT Schools Authority 28-31.}
\end{array}\]
was supplemented by an open-ended essay component, designed to
draw out hitherto neglected self-expressive and humanistic capacities.\textsuperscript{24}
The kinds of material chosen as 'stimulation materials' in the 1986 test
included sociologically-based extracts on female adolescence, on gender
and class-determined career choices, on teachers' self-fulfilling gender
expectations and on student resistance to cultural hegemony.\textsuperscript{25}

In this way, the aptitude tests were adjusted so as to incorporate an
essay-based exercise, marked and moderated by classroom teachers and
conducted within the school. Drawing on the advice of English
curriculum experts, the test assembles a range of stimulating textual
materials and requires students to 'discuss a major issue', drafting and
editing their thoughts in much the same way as they might do in existing
process-based English and social science courses. Like the English
teacher, the stimulation materials and questions pose ethical, political and
social questions to the students, asking them to display their proficiency
in highly moralised exercises of self-reflection and self-expression −
exercises that are regarded as assessable only by the teacher.

In making the decision to introduce the Writing Test, the committee took
into account advice from statisticians Masters and Beswick, who argued
that

\begin{quote}
the source of the sex difference is the inappropriate
target attempt to treat all course scores and scores on ASAT
as measures of the same general academic "ability".
Students who do well on courses like English (these
tend to be females) do not have their superior
achievements in these courses reflected in their ASAT
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{25} Australian Council for Educational Research, \textit{Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test −Writing Test} (Hawthorn, Victoria: ACER, 1986).
scores, because English scores and ASAT scores are measuring very different dimensions of student achievement.26

In their advice, Masters and Beswick stress the statistical problems of determining a single Tertiary Entrance Score capable of summarising an individual's performance and capacities. In particular, they emphasise that it is statistically unintelligible to place subject-specific assessments on a single scale, or to aggregate them within a unitary score. As they put it,

in view of the wide variety of subject matter and skills covered in Year 12 courses (from Pure Mathematics to English Literature, from Vietnamese to Metal Engineering, from Ceramics to Economics), the attempt to interpret all these scores as indicators of the same general ability seems doomed from the start.27

'Quality', they explain, is a variable defined only by a range of observations, which can only be assumed to be relevant.28 In statistical terms, such a procedure demands often arbitrary equations between very different elements:29

Just as there is no obvious answer to the question: "What length in centimetres is equivalent to a weight of 170 pounds?" because measures in centimetres and measures in pounds are not measures of the same variable, there may be no meaningful answer to the question "What level of attainment in Chemistry is equivalent to a score of 65 in Chinese?" or "What score in Drama is equivalent to a score of 72 in Electronics?"30

27 Masters and Beswick 16.
28 Masters and Beswick 13.
Taking up this advice, the committee advocated abandoning single measures derived from an aggregation of separate course scores. The ASAT system became an assemblage of various different devices, incorporating separate scores within the overall test result. The Writing Test was assessed by teachers within the school and aligned with the Qualitative score, which remained quite distinct from the Quantitative score.

iii. Missing the mark.

What can be made of the terms of this dispute? Following the standard rhetoric of cultural criticism, there are a couple of tacks to take. The case invites oppositional analysis of the clash between unified political interests: progressivists and feminists versus conservatives; educationists versus administrators, psychologists and statisticians. It also provides rich material for the analysis of oppositions between global principles: culture versus utility; meritocracy versus equality; pedagogic principles versus education measurement; social difference versus statistical norms and so on.

Let us turn first to the analysis of the oppositions between political interests. Here, there seem to be two tactics. The first can be identified with the reading of the issue by Adams and ACER, in which girls' attitudes and choices were identified as a target for reform, since they were found to be 'underconfident' and liable to make poor choices in their school subjects, opting for the humanities instead of quantitative career-oriented subjects. In opposition to this 'pathologising' tactic, we could identify the committee's 'compensatory' tactic of altering the test so as to incorporate girls' positive capacities in qualitative and humanistic
areas. Clearly, the issue lends itself to analysis in terms of the effectiveness of feminist intervention.31

However, the political outcomes here are far from clear-cut. Generally, it has been accepted that, with the implementation of the writing test in both the ACT and Queensland, 'girls and humanities-orientated students will have a fairer chance'.32 But we might be concerned that this has been at the price of reinforcing the essentialist assumption that girls have a natural facility in qualitative and humanistic areas. Should the committee's strategy be read as a recognition of sexual difference and women's culture? Or is it another case of the marginalisation of girls into the low-prestige area of the humanities?33 Furthermore, in making what appears to be a pragmatic intervention into the problem, the committee could also be accused of political compromise, since the decision allowed the ACT Schools Authority to retain the test, without seeking a more fundamental analysis of unequal gender outcomes and the social origins of sexual difference.

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31 See for instance press reactions at the time: M. Gibson 'Radical Views "Dominate Body"', Canberra Times 19 May 1985: 5.
The committee could also be taken to task for over-emphasising one equity issue at the expense of others. The equity measure of the writing task is likely to introduce other inequities, if only because the set reading material requires a certain level of literary and rhetorical competence.\textsuperscript{34} As one commentator put it, 'academically inclined girls would benefit most. Non-academically inclined boys would benefit least ... School by school, the effect would be a unilateral advantage for the single-sex girls schools'.\textsuperscript{35}

The change to the test, it could be argued, serves only a limited political end. Although it might produce more balanced educational outcomes, in the end it serves mainly to reinforce the apparent coherence of a system such as ASAT testing – a system that has been as strongly accused of preserving inequities of class, race and ethnicity as of producing unequal gendered outcomes.\textsuperscript{36} After all, although the adjusted ASAT tests might serve the short-term goal of equalising gender outcomes, this will not solve the problem of the differences in students' access to cultural capital and to educational experiences. Will such a short-term solution bring us any closer to a realisation of the greater principle of social justice? The real political target – from this point of view – is the relationship between socio-economic background, differences in educational experience and the normative systems of educational distribution. The usual position is that this can only be fully understood by teachers working at the ground level, sensitive to social and cultural and ethnic differences, able to work democratically within a pluralist, socially-sensitive curriculum. To do this (many commentators add), teachers must be freed from assessment, which acts only to impede the

\textsuperscript{34} Cf. the discussion of Ozolins in Chapter Ten.
\textsuperscript{35} 'School Test Decision Questioned', \textit{Canberra Times} 3 Dec. 1983: 3.
\textsuperscript{36} Henry 289-311.
necessary intimacy of the teacher's and the school's knowledge of individual and social differences. Only when the fiction of neutral educational measurement is undermined will it be possible to achieve a fuller educational knowledge of social differences. And only then will it become possible to develop education practices that are fully informed by political and ethical principles of social justice and equality.

On this basis, we might turn to the second and related mode of oppositional analysis. Accordingly, we would interpret the case in terms of the struggle between the pedagogic recognition of individual and social differences (on the one hand) and psychological discourse and technocratic rationality (on the other). At first sight, the example presents as good a target as any for sociological comment on the false assumptions of quantitative rationality – particularly in the instance of R.J. Adams' *Sex Bias in ASAT*, with its concern with the 'confidence' of girls, its turn-of-the-century interest in the effect of menstruation on test performance, its literal reading of questions of 'gendered content' and its central finding that the test contains no detectable 'bias' according to the technical definition of the term. This study, and its place within the debate, would seem to bear out sociologists' arguments that psychologists and statisticians have acted to perpetuate the myth of objective and neutral measurement, denying evidence of the socially and culturally variable nature of human capacities and ignoring the contamination of test norms by socially normative research assumptions.

But, using the same form of analysis, could we not also treat the case as an instance of the *triumph* of pedagogic principle over psychological rationality? Surely what happened was that ASAT testing was
discredited as a means of assessment and that the credibility of teachers' assessments was vindicated? After all, the committee maintained a firm commitment to continuous teacher-based assessment, despite its statistical difficulties. It also expressed strong support for dismantling the 'single score' of tertiary entrance, on the basis that the single score bore no relationship to the quite diverse and incommensurate nature of classroom learning experiences. If we take this as a partial realisation of the educational principle that the pedagogic and the self-expressive are irreducible to measurement, we could understand the dispute in terms of the defeat of the reductive norms of measurement. From this point of view, while there may have been political compromises, the ASAT debate represents a triumph of principled intervention into the schooling system, one in which the agents of educational principle made it past the forces of utilitarianism and technicism.

But before we decide to treat the case as an instance of the grand opposition between global principles, we should recall our comments on the limitations of these forms of analysis. In this case, the immediate problem with this interpretation is that the terms of the committee's discussion are not purely 'principled', any more than they are exclusively concerned with the technical and the utilitarian. The forms of calculation here are more mixed and diverse than this.

iv. Testing critique.

Clearly, the administrative decisions being made in the case are affected by the political/ethical principles of equality and difference. The decision to adjust scores in order to produce a gender balance is a clear instance of this, in that it installs the principles of balance and equity as

37 ACT Schools Authority 16.
administrative reform targets. But at the same time, these reform targets and principles can only be articulated and activated by means of definite and limited technical calculations. In fact, the very conception of 'balance' and 'imbalance' in educational outcomes depends upon technical means of inscribing differences of educational performance. This is not a case where absolute principle triumphs over normative, administrative and technical calculation. Nor is there a clear distinction here between political and educational 'principles' and the application of 'norms'.

Some clues to this can be found by recalling our earlier discussion of the tension between individualised forms of assessment and the administrative elements of tertiary selection. The available forms of school assessment fail to know the child fully, or to monitor closely enough the inchoate elements of development and potential. They are either not individualising enough (being unable to reproduce the teacher's intimate knowledge of each child's development or social background) or too individualising (being based on subjective judgements). These standard dilemmas of modern school assessment reappear in the ASAT dispute. Again, if it is difficult to free teaching from the imposition of administrative norms, it is also difficult to purge the statistical of contaminating social norms and subjective judgements. In this case, the problem is that composite statistical measurements are imprecise and incommensurate, since the single score involves arbitrarily adding scores derived from various normative pedagogic regimes. If these formulations of the problem of assessment are familiar, so too is the standard range of tactics for addressing them. Again, there are two main options, used here in flexible combination. The first involves making norms and measurements more precise (by isolating different
scores), while the second entails an expansion of pedagogically-based forms of individualised observation (adding the Writing Test and retaining the semi-autonomous zone of pedagogic appraisal).

But if the decision in the ASAT case represents a shift from efforts to derive or apply a norm of 'general ability', it should not be mistaken for a move away from the educationally normative. Instead, the incorporation of the Writing Test is an effort to more closely bind the norms deployed in statistically-based administration to the normative and individualising capacities of classroom teaching. This does not of course add up to removing the normative from individualised assessments. On the contrary: the effort to disaggregate the assessment exercises makes it possible to apply a more finely honed set of normative pedagogic judgements, this time applied to students' writing. Far from being treated as irreducibly intimate and incalculable, teachers' assessment of students' performances are treated as a more accurate means of applying norms of educational appraisal. As a matter of fact, their normative efficiency was assumed in the earliest premises of the dispute. Remember that initially, the inequity of the gendered education outcomes and the issue of the 'bias' within the test results was identified by comparing the test scores with the course scores derived from teachers' assessments across the different subject areas. These overall figures derived from teachers' assessments stand in for a 'natural norm' of a basic ability, which is presumed to be constant between male and female students.

The important point here is that, despite the extent to which the debate invites oppositionalist analysis, there is in fact no clear separation between the strategies of normalisation and those of individualising
pedagogic knowledge and gender identity. Instead, the contingent circumstances of the debate make them supplementary to one another. Rather than a grand opposition between the absolute principles of the individual and the normative, between difference and equality, the educational and the administrative, then, what we are beginning to locate is a more mundane technical difficulty caused by the uneasy co-existence of two distinct systems for distributing educational norms.

v. Pedagogic and numerical norms.

Some of these issues can be untangled if we pick up the thread of discussion within the more technical section of statistical debate incorporated within the dispute. Here, there are some intriguing points of overlap between technical, administrative, pedagogic and 'principled' imperatives. Recall the central role within the dispute of Masters' and Beswick's comments on the statistical problem of equating quantitative and the qualitative scores within the one register, or of attempting to treat test scores as if they could be placed on a common statistical scale. 'The source of the sex difference', they argued, 'is the inappropriate attempt to treat all course scores and scores on ASAT as measures of the same general academic "ability"'. This was directly related to the decision to introduce the Writing Test and to differentiate between qualitative and quantitative scores.

Now, bearing in mind the sociological criticisms of arbitrary psychological and statistical classification, it is something of a surprise to find at least some of these questions appearing within Masters and Beswick's detailed analysis of the difficulties of statistical distribution, as a routine methodological problem. There is no need to inform the advisers of the arbitrary nature of the 'single score', or any call to remind
them that the notion of measurable 'general ability' is arbitrary and unreliable. Rather, they explicitly acknowledge that indices of 'aptitude' or 'quality' are products of contingent administrative decisions to construct 'commonality of scale'. They explain that the existence of 'commonality' is assumed within the statistical procedures of educational distribution in the ACT, in order to achieve comparability for the purposes of selection, even though such commonality rarely exists in the case of educational performance.

Furthermore, they go on to point out that rationales for correlating different scores into a general norm of 'ability' are statistically faulty, being based on an unstable analogy with physical measurement. Unlike the statistical norm of 'height', there is no consistent norm of 'ability' that could be used as an instrument across a school population:

Suppose that the heights of a group of students are measured in both centimetres and inches independently. We could use these measures to estimate a conversion factor to transform measures of height from inches to centimetres. The resulting conversion factor should be just as appropriate for transforming the heights of any subgroup of students from one scale to the other: it should be just as appropriate for converting the heights of boys from inches to centimetres as for converting the heights of girls, and just as appropriate for short students. If it is not, then that suggests that something has gone wrong in the attempt to bring all measures of height to a common scale.38

What are we to make of such a statement? It seems startlingly frank and 'political', given the controversy surrounding educational measurement. The implication is that, since there is no common scale, then 'something has gone wrong' in the statistical normalisation of school performances. Scholastic and aptitude test scores cannot be correlated into a common

38 Masters and Beswick 40.
scale of 'ability', and the scale is not as adequate for converting the scores of girls as it is for converting the scores of boys. Should we treat this then as a long-delayed realisation of the errors of 'the quantifiers', for once free of the insistence on neutrality and objectivity? But if so, why is the matter treated in such a matter-of-fact and mundane way, as part of a routine if difficult set of administrative problems?

Part of the problem is the dual sense of 'norms' in this context, and the difficulty of separating the numerical norms applied in statistically-based distribution from the normative social and educational regimes from which they derive. We are used to the complaint that statistical norms prevent the pedagogic process from becoming fully individualised. But there is a reciprocal exchange here. Statistical norms are both numerical and pedagogic, since the numerical norms of educational distribution are based upon the normative regimes of the classroom, even if the goal is to systematise pedagogic norms and to apply them more broadly. Since the relationship between the normative regimes of the classroom and the derivation of statistical norms is so close, it is hard to imagine a testing or scoring system which could purge its statistical norms of the contamination of the socially normative. By the same token, it is difficult to imagine a teaching system which could free itself from administrative and technical norms.

vi. Social and statistical norms.
The point requires some expansion. In particular, we need to clarify the relationship between 'norms' and social (or individual) difference understood as a pedagogic or political principle. For this, we require a less polarised account of the relationship between statistical and social 'normalisation'. At this point, we can begin to tie the problem of
aptitude testing to our previous account of its historical formation. In Chapters Ten and Eleven, it was argued that the expansion of educational measurements did not depend on philosophical coherence. Even though the advocacy of mental testing was linked to particular political programmes and rationalities such as 'eugenicism' or 'national efficiency', the circumstances in which these tests were developed and applied were not dictated by these intentions or interests. On the other hand, testing was never 'neutral', in the sense of being developed at a remove from social or educational sites. On the contrary, the technical innovations of the mental test stemmed from the capacities of the classroom itself. Assembling children in large numbers within a common regime, the popular school provided a site for the systematic observation of human abilities. The relationship between pedagogic and psychological and statistical norms was a reciprocal one. On the one hand, the normative registers of testing adjusted themselves in relation to existing routines and problems within the school itself. On the other, the technical innovations of testing served to adjust the routines of the classroom, providing new classifications and modes of organisation. In the process, it became possible to conceive of certain objects and to inscribe them as averages, norms and frequencies. The result has been that particular exercises, particular to the *habitus* of the classroom, have come to be inscribed and measured as normal human traits.

For a clarification of this issue of the relationship between social and statistical norms, we can call upon some remarks made by Georges Canguilhem, in the context of his genealogical work on conceptions of the 'normal' and the 'abnormal'.⁳⁹ Although Canguilhem's concern is

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with the measurability of physical rather than mental or dispositional attributes, his historical comments are highly pertinent to our understanding of current debates concerning mental and emotional human capacities and their definition in terms of social and statistical norms. Existing debates, remember, have examined the extent to which statistical norms misrepresent, distort and reshape social life. But in Canguilhem's account, what requires historical explanation are the techniques, regimes and devices that make it possible to conceive of physical 'life' as a norm.\footnote{Canguilhem 90-1.} If, as we have seen, the concept of normal intelligence entered social administration and psychological and statistical calculation through a circuitous route, so too did the very notion of the norm.

As we have observed in the case of Masters and Beswick, modern statisticians are confident of statistics' capacity to apply physical measurement to human capacities such as height, identifying an average and setting a norm that could safely be applied across a diverse schooling population, whatever the social conditions and differences prevailing. Height is taken as a neutral norm, easily correlated with 'life itself'. Canguilhem, however, is less certain and more curious about this device of deriving a reading of the 'normal' height of a population. He returns us to the efforts of early anthropometricians such as Quetelet to derive natural laws for averages of physical attributes such as height: efforts which, as we have seen, were only contingently related to the project of deriving natural laws for 'true averages' of mental capacities. Despite the modern familiarity with the conceptual device of the normal curve, he notes, this equation between measured frequencies, the application of a norm and the conception of a 'true average' is a highly complex technical
construct. The capacity to produce statistical averages which make it possible to calculate the average of frequencies such as height, and from that to locate 'normal' or 'abnormal' height, or ratios of height to weight is one of the key elements of modern social existence. It was a specific but very significant cultural achievement, which involved the technical feat of making an equation between measurable frequency, the application of a norm and the formulation of an average. The derivation of a true average of human height, in this case, relies upon an identification of 'statistical frequency' with 'norm', 'for an average which determines that the greatest divergences are the most rare is really a norm'. This could only take place within socially administered programmes which Hacking has described as the 'avalanche of printed numbers'.

Unlike other commentators, Canguilhem avoids treating the calculation of frequencies and averages and the definition of norms as distortion, myth or misrepresentation. In his account, social normativity is not something that has invaded and infected 'pure' statistical measurement. Statistical norms do not merely represent or mirror the social, and therefore cannot be treated as misrepresentations. Instead, the interconnections between the statistical and the social are far more intricate and constitutive.

To make this point, Canguilhem begins by establishing that the body is a product of socially normative conduct, inseparable from the norms of social administration. Historically, he demonstrates, the distribution

42 On this point, see also M. Mauss, 'Techniques of the Body', Economy and Society, 2,1; 70-87; M. Mauss, 'A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self', M. Carrithers, S. Collins and S. Lukes eds., The Category of Person. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 1-25; N.
of physical qualities within a population has been produced by specific means of organising social existence. For instance, the norm of height is inseparable from the social administration of diet, of health levels and so on – which constitute the formation of bodies within a particular population. As he puts it, the distribution of such capacities is organised by 'norms of life'.

If it is true that the human body is in one sense a product of social activity, it is not absurd to assume that the constancy of certain traits, revealed by an average, depends on the conscious or unconscious fidelity to certain norms of life. Consequently, in the human species, statistical frequency expresses not only vital but also social normativity. A human trait would not be normal because frequent but frequent because normal, that is, normative in one given kind of life.

Canguilhem's comment must be understood in the context of his historical discussion of human capacities as the product of the social administration of health, diet and social environment. The frequencies measured by statistical distributions are constituted by 'norms of life' which are historically and culturally variable and highly dependent upon social administration. Consequently, there can be little expectation of removing socially normative elements from statistical measurement. But at the same time, in representing human attributes as a field of frequencies, statistical inscription made it possible to change the distribution of such frequencies, through their deployment in the social administration of 'norms of life'. If the statistical cannot be purged of the socially normative, then we cannot expect to free the social from the imposition of statistical norms – if by that we mean allowing social and individual differences to appear transparently and to be quite distinct.

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43 Canguilhem 90-1
from administrative categories and techniques of classification and inscriptions.

If we can apply the statement that 'statistical frequency expresses not only vital but also social normativity' to physical attributes — apparently measured by stable and invariable units — then how much more applicable is it to the measurement of academic capacity and 'aptitude'? Here, the same points about the reciprocal nature of social and statistical norms would apply. There is little problem with noting that these traits are 'frequent because normal' (normative in the 'given kind of life' of scholastic and familial training). Nor should there be any problem in agreeing that the formulation of these statistical norms has reshaped the norms of social life, being applied within the schooling system and beyond. This conception of a reciprocal exchange need pose no great difficulties within psychological understanding of the social role of measurement. Indeed, we have located similar formulations within both sociological and psychological and statistical debate. From quite different disciplinary perspectives, it is acknowledged clearly enough that the frequencies of performed capacity required by instruments such as ASAT are difficult to distinguish from the effects of social environment. From this, it is not a big step to say that these traits are constituted by 'norms of social life' — by the regimes, habits and training acquired by the student in a number of normative environments: the school, the family, the peer group, the street, the clinic, the cinema.

Of course, the implications are immediately damaging for any universal truth claims on the part of psychology to be deploying neutral or

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'objective' norms of real and invariable human attributes. As in the case of physical attributes, it is difficult to distinguish between 'vital' and social normativity in locating the capacities and performances registered by the instruments of psychological measurement, if only because the inscription and application of the norms of measurement have so profoundly affected the 'norms of life' to be found within a range of social sites. In other words, the norms distributed and registered in modern educational environments are at once 'vital', social and numerical. This would apply, for example, to the particular range of capacities measured by ASAT. While these traits may be frequent and observable (given certain instruments), they are frequent because they are normal 'in a given kind of life'. They are both objects of measurement and elements of *habitus*. As such, they are far from being essential or invariable. But on the other hand and more importantly, we cannot describe these norms as 'ideological' if by that we mean that they are misrepresentations of the real range of human capacities.

This is the important shift provided by Canguilhem. If he does not treat the classifications of psychological/statistical measurement as records of vital and invariable human characteristics, nor does he treat them as misrepresentations of a 'true average' or object (human life). The most crucial aspect of the argument, for our purposes, is its intractably historical basis – its emphasis on the contingency and the variability of human traits and of their connection (for us and amongst us) to the application of norms and averages.

Of course, stressing the interrelation between the statistical and the social and between the pedagogic and the normative is by no means the same as insisting that these means of distributing norms are entirely symmetrical.
On the contrary: for historical reasons, statistical calculations are quite unlikely to be fully commensurate with the classroom's regimes of individuation and normalisation. These normative environments are extremely particular, as are the kinds of human attributes which they are capable of forming. We have noted that this problem recirculates within the ASAT debate, in the form of the recurrent confusion between the norms used in assessing test performance, those used by teachers in appraising school performance and those derived from contingent administrative and political decisions, such as that of taking the aggregation of teachers' estimations to represent a general norm of scholastic 'ability'. We have also seen some of these points of intersection between statistical norms, frequencies of capacity and social normativity worked out at a practical level, in Masters and Beswick's discussion of the problem of separating statistical from social, pedagogic and administrative norms. As they note, there is a significant gap between norms of educational performance regarded as statistically intelligible and those regarded as quite coherent within the normative systems of classroom-based or school-based assessment. For that matter, the 'norms of life' in the Drama or English classroom bear little relation to those within Electronics. But in noting this, we should be careful to avoid supposing that there is a clear and absolute distinction between the norms of psychological testing and the safe space of the classroom, in which student's human capacities could unfold fully, free from the imposition of norms.

The ASAT case has provided a striking exemplification of the argument that the administration of educational difference is not composed or organised by principle and nor is it uniformly assignable to political interest. Instead, the case demonstrated far more complex relationships
between the principled and the technical, the administrative and the political. For all the apparent applicability of the oppositional rhetoric of critique, the example afforded a glimpse of the more complex and cross-cut terrain on which educational provision and policy is situated. The case invites analysis in terms of fundamental oppositions of principle (education versus administration; culture versus utility; difference versus normalisation). It also lends itself readily to explanation of oppositions between philosophical concepts (humanist versus technocratic; progressivist versus 'meritocratic'; sociological versus psychological discourse) and to the analysis of oppositions between political interests (progressivist and feminist versus conservative). In each case, the example could be analysed in terms of the extent to which the imposition of norms of measurement has prevented the possibility of realising purer principles such as equality, emancipation, and the self-realisation of particular subjects (individual or collective). But we have found difficulties with all of these formulations. In short, it has begun to appear that the terms of the debate are far more complex and cross-cut than this.

We can now return here to the question of the 'politics' of expertise. Without in the least wishing to argue that ASAT tests as they stand are unproblematic, we should be wary of dismissing their technical function as a moderating device. The particularity of the ethical, administrative and technical debates surrounding the ASAT case should remind us that there is no clear separation between the technical and administrative zone of calculation and the domain of ethics and educational principle. Instead, there is a dual and reciprocal action. Conceptions of 'balance' and 'equity' are installed within administrative decision making, acting as norms and targets. At the same time, these norms and targets are also
made thinkable through technically and administratively produced forms of calculation.

Having cleared the ground, we are now in a position to return to the difficult task of finding more flexible terms of political analysis and applying them to our example. To begin with, we should remind ourselves of the complex relationship between the political and administrative purposes served by the tests. ASAT is designed as a limited device to ensure statistical commonality and comparability across a range of different teaching sites and institutions and to check against advantage or disadvantage arising from variation in teachers' judgements. In that respect, it is designed as an equity measure, even if the measure produces other inequities in turn. Furthermore, the tests actually did demonstrate a significant difference between male and female students' capacity to perform a set of very specific quantitative and qualitative exercises, bearing some relation to their school performances and course choices. We can note this even while reminding ourselves that these capacities are historically contingent and culturally variable (formed by the norms of life which organise the habitus of sex and gender) and even while noting that the 'thinkability' of these differences depends upon the particular forms of social classification, pedagogic observation and statistical inscription which register these frequencies as averages and norms of human capacity.

Because it furnished educational administration with a common norm of performance (questionable or not), the test also provided the instruments with which it is possible to identify imbalances in education outcomes. Quite apart from the effects which occurred as the test was used in statistical adjustment to the course scores of groups of students,
it did serve to alert educationists to the problem that there were disparities in the educational experiences of certain groups of students – in this case, a group which stretched across separate courses or Colleges. When read in a particular way, what the results registered was a disparity between the overall test scores of girls as a statistical group and the overall course scores of the same group (the latter derived from adding teachers' scores across all subjects). Note also that within the debate, there was little substantial dispute that the test instrument itself did give some indication of a difference between the qualitative and the quantitative capacities of male and female students. In fact, the decision to introduce the Writing Test, as an equity measure designed to record the relatively strong qualitative capacities of girls, presupposed that such differences reflected the 'real' differences in the educational capacities of boys and girls as registered by teachers' assessments of course performance.

Of course, the 'diagnostic' function of the test in this case (as a means to signal imbalance and inequity) has only a contingent relationship to the use of the test in assigning education outcomes and tertiary places to individual students. But the case remains that without the device of the test – or some other central assessment component – it would be difficult to monitor the success of administrative and reform goals such as the more balanced distribution between men and women of various capacities and vocational dispositions. It would be hard to imagine a gender equity programme which did not rely upon technical means for identifying a problem within the educational outcomes of a target educational population, or which did not employ the instruments of educational distribution in order to monitor progress. This would apply to programmes as diverse and apparently antagonistic as the building of
desirable levels of female participation in 'non-traditional' vocational areas, or the coexisting efforts to defend the humanities as an key area for the expression of girls' identity and self-esteem. While these programmes are certainly shaped by equity principles, they are also heavily dependent on exactly the instruments of calculation which are so often denounced as either impervious to the organic unity of gender identity or as repressive of real difference.

In themselves, these instruments for identifying imbalance bear little relationship to absolute ethical values of 'difference' or 'equality'. Neither do the definite and limited processes of setting administrative targets for adjusting these outcomes. But the point is that these difficulties will not be resolved by separating the principled from the technical or by freeing education from the norms of measurement. Rather than being implacably ranged against the proponents of enlightened education principles, the technical arsenal of assessment actually provides means to make problems of equity and difference thinkable. Formulations to do with 'equity' and individual difference are inseparable from pragmatic administrative means of locating norms and standards applicable across the scattered institutions and pedagogies of the schooling archipelago.

ix. Conclusion.

These arguments raise some substantial points of dissent from existing accounts of the opposition between educational principle and the reductive calculations of educational measurement. No doubt some would find them politically questionable. There may be advantages, however, in putting aside the more familiar terms of oppositional political analysis, if only because this may allow us to avoid some of the
circular dilemmas that characterise current reactions to assessment. For many progressive teachers, conscientiously responsive to the prevailing terms of critique, the normative judgements made in assessing students can only sharpen the already existing tension between competing professional imperatives. As noted above, these can include respecting the rival and often incompatible rights and claims attributed to children, parents, employers, the community and the state. But they also include tensions within the imperatives of progressive pedagogy. These imperatives include the need to regard each child as unique (while remaining aware of differences of race, class, gender and ethnicity), the need to register the social and individual differences (without imposing normative assumptions) and the need to give 'feedback' which is organic to students' learning processes (while monitoring equity in education outcomes).

In each case, an absolute principle is at stake – and in each case, the principle is likely to be more partially applied within classroom practice. While these principled formulations may have a key role in equipping the teacher trainee with routines of conscience, they can also make it difficult for many educationists to carry out the more technical and administrative tasks attached to their roles without a conviction of professional failure or compromise. Without in the least wishing to remove an emphasis on the ethical from educational debate on good practice, the common problem of teacher 'burn-out' might be enough to make us consider the advantages of less uncompromisingly 'principled' approaches to education. Once the suggestion is made that the current education system was not founded on an historical promise to realise the absolute principles of equality or cultural self-realisation, but is instead the product of more piecemeal and partial historical achievements, then there
is less cause for either the bitter disappointment or the utopian expectations that characterise so much discussion of education policy.

A more historically-based approach to these problems can help to allay some of these anxieties and to displace the emphasis on failure. The more prepared we are to recognise the piecemeal and contingent historical conditions which shaped our current schooling system, the less confusing will be the range of discursive, political, technical and administrative elements that intersect to form the modern problem of school assessment. The more prepared we are to acknowledge the historically-based argument that the classroom is a key site for the governmental production and adjustment of the 'norms of life', the more possible it becomes to regard these pedagogic norms of life as contingent, variable and adjustable. There is little reason to doubt that this would assist equity-based educational and social reforms, not least by removing some of the more curious confusions that have come to shape our educational understanding. And there is every reason to suppose that equity-based initiatives are helped very little by the insistence on measuring their failures against the goal of an education system which understands itself in purely principled terms, without the use of statistical, technical or administrative instruments. All the more reason, then, to understand the problem of assessment in more nuanced terms.
CONCLUSION
Within critical educational studies, the convention is to close works of this kind with some reflections on the gravity of the situation facing us, on the urgency of the issues that have been raised and on the prospects for political action. At no time – so the rhetoric goes – has the need to solve the problems of the education system been more imperative. At no time have so many pressing injustices required redressing. And if they are not addressed now, the consequences will be grave.

These appeals to crisis are familiar enough. The education system, it is urged, is in danger of succumbing to the spread of instrumentalism, of economic rationalism, of corporate managerialism and of market interests. Educational values are being traded in the marketplace, and education institutions are being turned into annexes of industry. The education bureaucracy has lost its vision and its democratic values, and has cashed in its principles, trading them for industrial productivity and electoral advantage. For those within the critical academy, the moral condition of the education system is self-evident. As keepers of the national conscience, the duty of this cadre of critical intellectuals is to comment on public policy from a removed and 'other-worldly' position, in accordance with the disinterested pursuit of truth and the maintenance of cultural values. Unless critical intellectuals are able to intervene in these processes, it is maintained, then all the gains of social democratic educational reform will be lost, and Australian education will be prey to amoral administrative necessity and unregulated economic interest. So, once more, the call goes out for the intensification of critical reflection, for a rediscovery of fundamental principles, and for a politics that will live up to these principles.

Such invocations of crisis have been the convention for so long that it may seem inappropriate to alter the pattern. But the enquiries pursued in this
thesis do not support the view that the education system is in crisis. Neither do they equip us to make prophetic pronouncements on the state of the education system or to predict its future. I have argued instead that we should learn to adopt a less emphatic and more pragmatic approach to education problems. The exercise of critical reflection, it has been argued, is not enough to lift us beyond the mundane difficulties of education reform, to a higher plane of perception. Instead, we have begun to treat these kinds of elevating reflections as exercises of self-problematisation and self-cultivation, specific to the hyper-ethical environment of the critical academy.

We have seen that, for all their absolutist claims to a privileged access to truth and ethical perception, these modes of reflection are both specialist and sectional. Furthermore, despite critical intellectuals' conviction that these exercises will enable them to transcend the mundane sphere of technocratic calculation and institutional normativity, these modes of reflection are themselves technical exercises, taught and assessed within the norm-soaked institutional environment of the academy.

This scepticism concerning the absolutist claims of critique has been a central theme of this thesis, and a key component of our applied investigation of the relationship between the education system and its critics. I began these investigations by identifying some characteristic elements of the criticisms applied to education reform, elements which have been identified with 'perfectionist' and 'principled' approaches to public policy. Despite the often vehement disagreements within the fields of sociological and philosophical discussion of educational issues, it was argued, the available modes of reflecting on educational issues share a consistent tendency to treat the education system as if it were a conduit for democratic principles, or a means for the expression of the pre-given rights of the rational citizen and the political community. Where education fails to live up to these expectations, it
is treated as a failure and regarded as a travesty of its true self. Once this failure is detected, the proclamation of a crisis soon follows.

My interest has been in the consistency with which these expectations and disappointments are repeated. This has been understood as an effect of the broad distribution of a critical ethos. Although the exercises and attributes of the critical intellectual were once possessed only by a specialist caste of ethical adepts, they have since spread well beyond this sphere, via the agency of the school system itself. Forms of critical reflection are incorporated within various fields of social administration, shaping the vocational formation of a substantial proportion of teachers, public servants and social welfare workers. In this way, public personnel have been equipped with the means to reflect on their own conduct, on that of others, and on the general ethical condition of 'society', 'men' or 'the community'. Such routines of critical reflection are incorporated, for instance, within teacher education courses, as students are required to develop 'critical insight' on failings within themselves, schooling and 'society' – failings recognised through meditation on the importance of various principles and on the school system's failure to realise them. One effect of these exercises, no doubt, is that they equip public personnel with models of conscientious conduct and with positive ethical attributes. But at the same time, this training in principled reflection also implants an unhelpful suspicion about the mundane technical and bureaucratic elements of organisational existence. This ambivalence shapes the day-to-day anxieties of bureaucrats about their decisions and of teachers about their roles as assessors and classroom managers, just as it recurs in more general public discussion of the 'failures' of the education system. In each case, the problem identified is that the 'human' elements of this sphere – the elements of conscience, culture and critical thinking, of pedagogic intimacy and ethical commitment – are constrained and
compromised by the imposition of bureaucratic norms. What is really at stake, it is said, is the fundamental opposition between human possibilities and institutional limitations, between culture and utility, between education principles and institutional procedure.

Statements such as this form a routine part of the institutional realities of schools and universities, focussing some important ethical and vocational commitments. Problems arise, however, at the point where those making these statements imagine that they describe the events and operations shaping actual institutions, or that they provide a basis for constructive practical activity or institutional reorganisation. In fact, it has been argued, such formulations are often too schematic to provide either information about educational problems or prescriptions for action.

One aim of the thesis has been to develop a more specific and limited mode of description, identifying the circumstances in which problems appear now and in the past, without rushing to judgement about their global significance. This was the aim of our three case studies. We first undertook these descriptive tasks in addressing debates on higher education. Here, we encountered the concern that the fundamental principles underlying humanistic scholarship and teaching were under threat, due to the imposition of bureaucratic norms of accountability. The humanities, their defenders claim, are by definition non-instrumental, having no end apart from the higher principles of culture and critical reason. But these self-definitions, I argued, are able to tell us little about the actual practices and purposes incorporated within modern Australian Arts faculties. First, far from being non-instrumental, the forms of humanistic teaching in these faculties are both technical and normative. Nor are they particularly 'traditional'. Many, in fact, stemmed from the contingent response to problems caused by the
expansion of popular schooling in the post-war period. We went on to explore the precarious practical arrangements which have linked schools, universities, families, public administration and social welfare strategies within a governmental network. For instance, we established that tertiary education in the Arts faculties has a number of vocational outcomes often overlooked in the search for deeper foundations. Far from being the final refuge from government, the Arts faculty can in fact claim to be one of the main spaces for the formation of public personnel.

Making this point entailed describing the relationships between humanistic education and bureaucratic work, in terms of the pragmatic connections between the academy and public administration. The emphasis here was on routine and reciprocal exchanges between otherwise distinct ethical environments and modes of self-formation. On the one hand, we identified the normative and technical elements of the academic 'seminar of conscience'. On the other, we also took note of the ethical components of bureaucratic conduct, and the historical achievements entailed in building a 'non-partisan' ethos of commitment to the duties of office. These observations suggested how unhelpful it is to claim that humanistic education lacks calculable objectives and can only be treated as an end in itself. As a result, we have attempted to describe the social and vocational outcomes of the humanities in more informative and pragmatic terms, describing their positive role in the formation of identifiable skills and attributes, especially (but not exclusively) the shaping of ethical attributes.

There are advantages, then, in developing a less elevated and abstract approach to the mundane institutional facts of education practices and vocational commitments. The curious thing is not that these domains of life have been subjected to bureaucratic monitoring and administration, but that
'culture' and 'critique' have for so long been regarded as indescribable and incalculable. The education system is asked to fund, promote and protect a series of activities that appear to have no identifiable outcomes and no coherent rationale. It should do so, it is asserted, as a matter of principle. The pedagogic routines capable of forming character, conscience and critical reason, it is maintained, are irreducible to governmental calculation and bureaucratic administration. Since each of these elements is regarded as stemming from the self, and from the special relationship between teacher and student, none of them are regarded as normative, observable or measurable as outcomes. Although their composition is mysterious, their importance is immeasurable. If such statements are unintelligible to those allocating funding and setting priorities, all that critical intellectuals can do is to shake their heads at the philistine ignorance and anti-intellectualism of bureaucrats.

Such attitudes, I have argued, are unbecoming to responsible educators. Furthermore, I have suggested, the assumption that the critical academy possesses a privilege beyond the claims of public accountability sits uneasily with populist appeals to democratic values and to critical citizenship. By contrast, there is something to be said for bureaucrats' bluntness about their interest in organisational outcomes, their impatience with appeals to ineffable principles and their distrust of privilege and special status. In fact, it is arguable that, for all their limitations, the bureaucratic reform programmes described in this thesis have some substantial ethical and political claims to make on their own behalf. While they have not at any point promised to realise educational equality or to set 'society' free from all restraints, these programmes have been consistently shaped by a distrust of arbitrary privilege and elitism and by a concern to broaden educational participation. Certainly, these programmatic purposes have been accompanied by plans to promote enhanced industrial outcomes and economic efficiency – a fact which has
given immediate ground for suspicion. But such suspicion, I have argued, stems from some key misconceptions about the government, about its objectives and capacities and about its operations.

Because educational critique tends to evaluate education provision and planning in terms of the extent to which they realise absolute principles (human emancipation, equality, cultural self-realisation), it is frequently impervious to the more limited calculations of social administration. Critique tend to assume that complex areas of social administration – from economic planning to legal regulation – could be reorganised as the expression of humanist principles. In part, this problem stems from an over-global conception of 'the state'. On the one hand, as we have noted, critics tend to exaggerate the state's capacity to colonise all areas of educational life, to override all existing commitments and reshape all educational practices. On the other, such misconceptions of the capacity of government encourage the equally romantic expectation that, if government could only be redeemed by a rediscovery of its core values, then it would be possible to achieve 'real' education reform, to secure social justice and to liberate human potential, speeding the realisation of human destiny. Neither of these expectations, I have argued, gives serious attention to the capacities and operations of government, to the organisational attributes of the education system itself, or to the kinds of labour entailed in negotiation between the often competing imperatives applied to the management of education systems.

This point was pursued in our second case study on post-compulsory education and the competency programme. Here, we began to see some of the practical effects of the perfectionist approach to education problems, in the political and practical confusions attending the debate. The example provided us with a key point of contrast between the different ethical orientations of
critique and bureaucratic planning, even while it exemplified the manner in which particular individuals move between these modes, in making 'critical interventions' in policy areas. One of the most striking elements of the example was the limited purchase of these principled recommendations on policy formulation. In fact, 'critical interventions' promoting ideal goals of participation, equality and critical citizenship were generally unintelligible to those engaged in the task of tracking the movements of an educational population and of devising categories that could be used for remedial governmental action. The moral of this story concerned the complex ethical, technical and political demands negotiated within bureaucratic programmes, the difficulty of addressing competing rights-based claims, and the limited means available to government in pursuing its objectives.

This lesson was extended within our treatment of the problem of assessment. Here, once again, we encountered the claim that the education system was unjust and illegitimate because it had refused to cast instrumental calculation from its breast. The critics argue that because education has failed to find ways of knowing the 'whole selves' of the child and the community, it is guilty of repressing human potential and human rights. Furthermore, because it distributes individuals into unequal educational outcomes and social destinations, the education system has broken its historical pledge to realise human equality and freedom. Instead, it seems, these ideals have been shrunk to the scale of assessment grids, tertiary entrance scores and normal curves. The numerical score and the statistical scale have thus become the emblems of all that is repressive and reductionist in education. As in the other case studies, the appeal is to a crisis of conscience and principle – although in this case, it seems that the 'crisis of instrumentalism' is extremely long-standing, having been invoked since at least the turn of the century.
Such historical observations make it harder to claim that the education system is in 'crisis'. Few of the problems and objectives addressed within these programmes are new. From the beginning of this century, the education bureaucracy has had the ambition of forming a consolidated education and training system capable of meeting various national goals. These have ranged from that of providing a skilled and internationally competitive workforce to that of forming a citizenry possessed of the basic capacities required to exercise its democratic rights. Since at least that time, the school system has been consistently accused of inefficiency, inequity and failure, and recurrently reorganised to adjusted governmental ends. It is no new thing, for instance, to encounter complaints that the education system has been overtaken by instrumentalism, that universities are dominating the curriculum, that educational outcomes are unequal, or that forms of educational assessment are inefficient or inequitable. This makes it seem much more unlikely that the education system could move as precipitously towards disaster as its critics imagine. The apparatus of state schooling is too massive for this, and too solidly grounded in its own institutional purposes. Crisis, we might say, is far too routine a matter to carry the epochal force that the critics invoke.

Perhaps the most consistent of our historical themes has concerned the piecemeal and contingent historical character of modern education problems, and their irreducibility to general principles or single causes. The institutional objectives of the education system are not unified by either political or philosophical principles. Nor was the school system founded on an historical promise to promote the human capacity for self-determination. Instead, I have argued, the institutional regimes and instruments of the modern education system were shaped by more contingent intersections and more complex technologies. Rather than being the expression of political
will, popular schooling was part of governmental strategies for transforming the population's mental and moral capacities, for creating a conscientious citizenry, and for constructing literate, healthy, productive and self-regulating populations. We have begun to treat these objectives as ethically worthy goals of social administration and as indispensable elements of educational organisation, developing a sense of the bureaucratic labour entailed in building the modern mass education system.

We have recorded these activities from various angles. Let us review our historical snapshots, placing them side by side and noting the shifts in educational development in this country since the turn of the century. The strongest impression to be gained from our historical images is the combination of crudity and solidity in the construction of these early education institutions, rough-hewn and improvised as they were, straggling in an often unplanned way across extensive distances and difficult terrain. From our modern point of view, of course, the historical landscape of these early education system looks curiously bare. Many of the familiar landmarks were there, but much of the work that has since gone into building the modern civic landscape was still to be done. Now, of course, these spaces are filled by extensions and annexes of education institutions, as they have stretched to accommodate the populations surrounding them. The secondary schools have consolidated their operations into the modern comprehensive school system, now expanded to incorporate a larger and more diverse population. The university has also extended its edges, as its borders and buildings have spread into the surrounding suburbs and industrial centres. At the same time, forms of training and technical education have been built up between the schools and the surrounding industrial area.
It is only rarely, of course, that we have the opportunity to observe such patterns of development and civic construction – to obtain a view from the air, as it were. At such moments, it seems, it is possible to see the state of society at a glance, to perceive the eyesores of civic organisation, to pronounce on the ills of the education system, and to identify areas of disrepair and disconnection. Much educational commentary seeks to extend such far-sighted moments, assessing the moral condition of the education system from a higher ethical plane. But such observations are too abstract and unfocussed to provide a clear view of the ways in which such problems might be addressed at 'street level'. In particular, they are blind to the routine work of planning and repair which actually maintains large-scale mechanisms of social administration such as education systems. This routine construction and maintenance work requires the specialist techniques, equipment and kinds of expertise co-ordinated by bureaucratic departments. As we learned from the instance of the competency debate and the long history of bureaucratic reform that lies behind it, such construction projects are not quickly completed. Instead, mass education systems are built up in a painstaking way, by means of elaborate, fallible and repetitive routines of information-seeking, target setting, consultation and negotiation.

If critical intellectuals are to contribute more constructively to such policy programmes, they will need to acquire a greater capacity to respect the efforts of those equipped by training and location to undertake this work, making allowance for the limited means available to them. To say this is not, of course, to underestimate the importance of constructive 'critical engagement' with policy programmes, or to deny the need for academics to maintain a conscientious interest in educational development, and a 'political' concern with their effects on specific social groups. On the contrary, I have argued that such issues should be treated with gravity and monitored with
commitment. But it is not as if the education system has to be taught to aspire to such commitment. To assume this is to underestimate the historical achievements of the still-recent education system and to maintain too absolutist a position on its failures. In place of this emphasis on failure, let me end by suggesting the need to cultivate more 'civic pride' in the Australian education system. After all, it is this imperfect civic zone in which most of us live and work. It is not to be mistaken for the phantasmatic images of the democratic polis or the debased market place. Instead, it is a far more concrete and complex domain of social life.
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