DOI: 10.1111/1467-9752.12559

Journal of Philosophy of Education
The Journal of Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain
pesgb

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Learned ignorance: Opposing the scientificising hegemony through Santos, Pope and Hamilton

Ralph Jessop

School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow, Dumfries Campus, UK

Correspondence
Ralph Jessop, School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow, Dumfries, UK.
Email: Ralph.Jessop@glasgow.ac.uk

Abstract

A major strand of opposition to the West's/Global North's scientificising hegemony has recently been retrieved through Santos' reinterpretation of Cusanus' 15th-century doctrine of learned ignorance. Though Cusanus has been marginalised, his doctrine imbues a profound epistemic humility conducive to our present need to reconfigure education. Contributing to this retrieval, I define *learned ignorance* as an epistemic principle of humility, adherence to which conduces towards reconditioning learning and teaching as non-finalised, processual activities within a genuinely intercultural pluriverse of knowledges. Agreeing with Santos' marginalisation thesis and his advocacy of recovering similarly silenced voices from within Western discourse, I argue that learned ignorance in some works of English literature and philosophy has also been marginalised. One of the most famous lines from Pope—'*A little Learning is a dang'rous Thing*'—has been widely misunderstood through failing to recognise the poem's learned ignorance elements. My reinterpretation of Pope suggests a possibly more extensive literary form of opposition to the scientificisation of knowledge. I also examine another marginalised, educationally significant retrieval of learned ignorance by Hamilton. His learned ignorance standpoint fundamentally opposes the scientificisation and instrumentalisation of knowledge and learning. The discussion identifies the counterhegemonic status of this epistemic

principle of humility and intimates its paradigm-shifting opportunities through some brief closing suggestions concerning how learned ignorance enriches Freire's emphases on the importance of 'love, humility and faith' as essential to the 'horizontal relationship' between teacher and student of an educational dialogue founded on trust.

KEYWORDS
Alexander Pope, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Cusanus, ecology of knowledge, Paulo Freire, Sir William Hamilton

INTRODUCTION

The current hegemony constraining educational experience to the instrumental determinants of its usefulness to economic growth, employability, capitalistic economic systems, and how this threatens education, the humanities and democracy, has prompted highly critical responses (Biesta, 2010; Collini, 2012; McGettigan, 2013; Nussbaum, 2010). The struggle against the axiological shifts involved in marketising education, in philosophically and in some cases literary-orientated discourse, often reaches back to the pre-Socratics, Aristotle, Plato, Eastern philosophies and more recent philosophers including, Arendt, Dewey, Freire, Levinas, Marcuse, Nietzsche, Rorty, Wittgenstein and even the novelist and essayist, Robert Musil (Clarke, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; Mahon, 2017; Miller, 2007; Schinkel et al., 2016; Todd, 2015; Tubbs, 2013; Wringe, 2015). Such diverse critiques provide a rich variety of alternatives to the present-day educational status quo, in arguing, for example, for the value of wonder (Hove, 1996; Schinkel, 2017) or (and more closely relevant to this discussion) the *modesty of unknowing* (R. Smith, 2016).

What recent progressive philosophers of education are opposing traces back through the 19th-century's *useful knowledge* movement and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), founded in 1826 by Charles Knight (1791–1873) and Henry Brougham (1778–1868). But I shall only refer to SDUK briefly. Such developments were part of a much longer history of the rising hegemony of Western modernity's transformation of knowledge to accord with the physical sciences.[1]

Through the 18th century, the early post-Enlightenment, and much of the 19th century, the only knowledge deemed legitimate would increasingly consist of exact, observable, quantifiable units/ facts—a hegemony that was permeating epistemological theories at least from the time of John Locke (1632–1704) and the beginnings of mass education in the early 19th century. I summarise this variously instantiated epistemic transformation as the *scientificisation of knowledge*.

Conditioning a scientific consciousness, a legacy of this scientificisation is arguably evident in, for example, the current vaunting of STEM subjects, but perhaps also in a seemingly widespread inability to comprehend alternatives, let alone enable them to displace the excessive instrumentalism so closely associated with the scientificising tradition. But a fundamental form of opposition to this scientific consciousness has recently been retrieved from early modern Western thought to enable an extensive civilisational transformation of the kind so many people today regard as urgently necessary.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues that a marginalised, forgotten and importantly counterhegemonic theory of knowledge can be recovered from the diverse beginnings of modernity in Nicholas of Cusa's (1401–1464) *De Docta Ignorantia/Of Learned Ignorance* (1440) (Santos, 2009, pp. 106–107; Cusanus, 1440/2007).[2] Santos' recovery of Cusanus comprises part of his endeavour 'to intervene in the present' (Santos, 2009, p. 106). Within a more extensive strategy to work collectively for the 'deep and long-term civilizational changes' required to achieve a better world for the human species and our natural habitat, Santos argues that recovering Cusanus' *learned ignorance* is an important

component towards realising such changes (pp. 113–114). He claims that Cusanus' *learned ignorance* was marginalised because his 'theories […] could never be used to support the arrogance with which the West engendered Orientalism and its double image, Occidentalism' (p. 107). Integral to the rising power of Occidentalism's capitalistic modernity of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment, the 'hegemony of science' increasingly subjected 'philosophy, theology and the humanities in general to a process of scientificisation' (p. 110; cf. Nussbaum, 2010, p. 23).

This scientificisation of knowledge involved the West in wasting the experience and knowledge of the East through colonialism, but 'many of the problems confronting the world today result … from the waste of experience that [the West] *imposed upon itself* to sustain its own imposing upon the others' (Santos, 2009, p. 106, emphasis added). Elsewhere, Santos explains this waste of experience as a direct result of Western epistemologies' enforcement of boundaries on what constitutes 'relevant knowledge', resulting in 'a massive epistemicide [during] the past five centuries' (Santos, 2007, p. 74; and see Santos' example of Bali rice fields, pp. 73–74). He argues that 'the relation of modern science with other ways of knowing' involved 'the violent destruction or concealment of other ways of knowing', tantamount to 'epistemological fascism' (Santos, 2009, p. 118, 116).

To end this epistemicide, Santos proposes a major shift away from scientificised epistemological standpoints (p. 107). This involves reinterpreting 'the dialectics of finitude/infinitude' in Cusanus' doctrine to adapt it to our times' non-transcendental infinitude of 'an infinite plurality of finite ways of knowing human experience' (p. 115). He argues that (unlike Cusanus): 'The infinitude we face is not transcendental [not about the infinitude of God], resulting, rather, from the inexhaustible diversity of human experience and the limits to know it' (ibid.). But the scientificisation of knowledge deeply implicated in the West's epistemicide, 'turned the infinite into an obstacle', with a corresponding:

> infinite zeal to overcome it …, reducing it to finite proportions. Thus, infinitude [in Cusanus, identical to God], which from the outset ought to arouse humility, becomes [under the dominance of modernity's scientificisation of knowledge] the ultimate foundation of the triumphalism underlying the hegemonic rationality, that of orthopedic thinking. On the contrary [… for Cusanus] infinitude is accepted as such, as consciousness of a radical [total] ignorance (p. 114).

As Santos expresses the position of *learned ignorance*, most simply, for Cusanus: 'The important thing is not to know … the important thing is to know that you do not know' (ibid.).

But within this deceptively simple formulation, there is at least one point that is more difficult to grasp: knowing that one is ignorant of infinitude and thus infinitely ignorant, involves becoming aware that the accuracy of our knowledge of *finite* things is profoundly limited/ conditioned *by* our ignorance of *infinity*, which we can never transcend. This implies that knowledge is emphatically not an object, target, goal or learning outcome; rather, knowledge is an endless pursuit, a *learning*, a continual process of searching, that crucially involves dialogue with others and is thus inherently intercultural and anti-instrumentalist (pp. 114–115; cf. R. Smith, 2016, pp. 280–281).

So, Santos' reinterpretation of Cusanus' theocratic infinitude: rejects the scientificisation of infinity (as something to overcome/dominate); agrees with Cusanus that infinity is unknowable; replaces the infinitude of Cusanus' God with 'an infinite plurality of finite ways of knowing human experience in the world' (Santos, 2009, p. 115); and, therefore, reconditions our ignorance of infinitude as something that commits us to acknowledge 'the limitations it imposes on the *accuracy of the knowledge we have of finite things*' (pp. 114–115, emphasis added). But Santos adds an important claim, equally applicable to Cusanus' infinite God and his own adaptation of infinitude (as 'the inexhaustible diversity of human experience'): 'Before the infinite, no arrogance is possible, only *humility*' (p. 115, emphasis added).

This humility concerning knowledge is highly relevant to the possibility of an urgently needed reconfiguration of how education may be conducted within the infinite complexities and differences of a pluriverse of knowledges. Santos' secularising reinterpretation of Cusanus' *learned ignorance* provides an epistemologically potent component towards achieving the epistemic, and thus social, justice of a pluralised knowledge through which a genuine interculturalism may be established, to enable humankind to flourish in and through our infinite diversity (p. 104, 112, 122; cf. Nussbaum, 2010, p. 44). Emerging out of this reinterpretation of *learned ignorance*, the new epistemological ethos

Santos recommends is described as an 'ecology of knowledge', through which 'Knowledge exists only as a plurality of ways of knowing' (Santos, 2009, pp. 116–117).

Santos' ecology of knowledge relies upon the humility—and hence openness to other knowledges—that is attained through learning one's ignorance of the 'infinite plurality of finite ways of knowing', as limiting 'the accuracy of the knowledge we have of finite things'. Thus, truth is conditional, never absolute, all truth claims becoming open to modification. Truth may no longer be described as a determinate, quantifiable entity, but rather (as intimated above) as a *searching for truth*: 'if the truth exists only in the search for truth, knowledge exists only as ecology of knowledge', conducted within an infinite field of 'the plurality of knowledge' (p. 116).

For Santos, *learned ignorance* implies a massive *expansion*—a pluralisation—of what constitutes knowledge, enabled by a consciousness of *epistemic limitation*. This expansion through becoming conscious of the limited nature of one's knowledge, is illustrated by Santos' reference to Cusanus' dialogues—*De Sapientia*, *De Mente* and *De Staticis Experimentus*—which bring an illiterate craftsman into dialogue with the scholar, thus placing the scholar 'in a territory … for which he was not trained … of practical life … the territory of the *ecology of knowledge*' (pp. 118–119, emphasis added). These dialogues suggest an important trans-disciplinary (beyond academe) dimension of *learned ignorance*, in which the cultural norms and assumptions of the erudite philosopher are importantly tested (and humbled) through contact with people immersed in and knowledgeable about life's practicalities. Such engagements are inherently intercultural, bringing into relation two very different, *culturally shaped ways of knowing*. This exemplifies the very sort of epistemic differences likely to be encountered today, both in conspicuously intercultural situations, and (sometimes much less obviously) in any given trans-disciplinary encounter, classroom or seminar discussion.

Santos is generally right to claim that Cusanus' doctrine of *learned ignorance* was marginalised. However, Cusanus *did* receive attention from the 19th and 20th-century neo-Kantian philosophers, Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) and Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) (Schwartz, 2013). And, long before this, at least a few educationally relevant 18th and 19th-century works of English literature and philosophy involve *learned ignorance* as an experience of learning that imbues the epistemic humility that Santos regards as fundamentally contra to the West's colonialist arrogance of scientificising knowledge and education. These radically different inclusions of *learned ignorance* testify to the presence of discourses of fundamental dissent in Western literature and philosophy. But the marginalisation of their *learned ignorance* significance at least suggests *that*, consonant with Santos' understanding of Cusanus' marginalisation, this *internal* epistemic opposition to Western modernity's scientificisation of knowledge has been effectually eliminated.

Hence, I focus on two main literary and philosophical examples of this marginalisation of *learned ignorance* in the poetry of Alexander Pope (1688–1744), and a neglected philosopher, Sir William Hamilton (1788–1856). Pope has often been quoted by educationists, including Hamilton, but one of his most famous lines—'*A little Learning* is a dang'rous Thing'—appears to have been widely misunderstood through a failure to recognise that it introduces a figurative description of *learned ignorance*. Once we detect this, Pope's work can start to emerge as a literary/cultural form of *fundamental* opposition to the Enlightenment's ascending scientificisation of knowledge—Pope can thus be rehabilitated as an ally to progressive philosophy of education discourse, to aid educational purposes he has so often been used to undermine. But a similar, yet also hitherto largely unrecognised reliance on *learned ignorance* recurs in Hamilton's *Edinburgh Review* article, 'Philosophy of the Unconditioned' (1829). In contrast to Pope, Hamilton's philosophical mode of opposing the scientificisation of knowledge involves an advocacy of *learned ignorance* as the only true knowledge.

Though there has been a recent resurgence of interest in Cusanus (Casarella, 2018), my discussion only refers briefly to his work. Instead, I have outlined above, and shall later occasionally refer to, Santos' *reinterpretation* of Cusanus. For, Santos draws attention to the marginalisation, silencing, and loss of *learned ignorance's* counterhegemonic potency with regard to the West's/Global North's epistemicidal scientificisation. These principal characteristics—the marginalisation of *learned ignorance* and its counterhegemonic import—are relevant both to discerning *learned ignorance* in Pope and Hamilton and towards resurrecting their lost educational significance. Thus, I am supplementing Santos by 'giving voice to western traditions and experiences that were forgotten or

marginalized'—marginalised perhaps largely *because* they were so fundamentally opposed to the scientificisation of knowledge (Santos, 2009, pp. 105–106).[3]

Bearing these points in mind, I define *learned ignorance* as an *epistemic principle of humility*, genuine adherence to which can only be achieved through a learned consciousness of the infinitude of our ignorance. This epistemic principle of humility bears within it the possibility of markedly reconditioning learning and teaching as significantly modest, non-finalised, processual activities within a maximally and genuinely intercultural pluralistic domain of knowledges.

LEARNED IGNORANCE IN ALEXANDER POPE'S POETRY

In two major poems by Pope—*An Essay on Criticism* (1711), and *An Essay on Man* (1733-34)—a significant dependence upon *learned ignorance* appears to have been overlooked by Pope scholars (Barnard, 1973; Noggle, 2001; Nuttall, 1984; Parker, 2003; Rogers, 2004, 2007; Srigley, 1994). But, if Santos' marginalisation thesis is warranted, how *could* scholars trace the importance of *learned ignorance* in Pope's poetry? The term 'learned ignorance' is not used by Pope, nor do editors of his poems refer to Cusanus as the principal source of this notion (Pope, 1950, 1961, 1965). To re-apply to Pope, an idea from Santos' discussion of Cusanus: 'the paradigm of modernity' that has marginalised *learned ignorance*, and which transformed Cusanus' central tenet of the unknowability of infinity into 'an obstacle to overcome', may have so dominated scholarship generally, as to render it practically blind to the *learned ignorance* dimension in Pope's work (Santos, 2009, p. 114).

According to J.M. Cameron, Pope's epistolary *Essay on Man* 'is perhaps the most interesting example in English of a philosophical poem' (Cameron, 1968, p. 353; and cf. Hughes, 1968, pp. 370–373). However, Cameron questions its philosophical merit, drawing attention to the inconsistency of its assertion in Epistle I, of the human incapability to know 'the complex harmonies of the cosmos', while contradicting this in the 'remaining three Epistles' which offer 'a variety of arguments designed to show precisely *how* [all is] arranged … with a view to the good of the individual and the whole'. Though Cameron argues that Pope is relying upon 'the Heraclitean thesis … that order springs from a tension of opposing forces', in endeavouring to *resolve* this *tension* Cameron misses the poem's incorporation of *learned ignorance*, which crucially situates *knowing* within a universal condition of incomprehensibility, an understanding of which counters humankind's *pride* by inflecting all the epistemic certainties that Pope articulates in showing (to restate Cameron) '*how* [all is] arranged'—with *humility* (p. 357).

Cameron fixes upon Pope's figuration of 'this scene of Man; | A mighty maze! but not without a plan' (Pope, 1965, *Essay on Man*, I.ls 5–6), as 'governing our response to the poem as a whole' (p. 363). However, he interprets Pope's 'maze' to argue, of humankind's seeming failure to comprehend the 'plan', that 'this failure is not a radical one … it denotes merely a failure on our part to observe, and to reason correctly' (p. 364). Thus, Cameron cannot see that the poem's pervasive reliance on the ultimate mysteriousness/unknowability of the universe, and its numerous condemnations of pride (as the root of erroneous knowledge), condition the poem with *learned ignorance*. Instead, Cameron subverts Pope's 'professions of modesty' as something we should not 'take too seriously', and boldly declares that 'our contemplation of the maze … presents us with a teasing problem, certainly: but we are the men to solve it' (ibid.).

Practically exemplifying Santos' claim that, operating within 'the paradigm of western modernity', which had transformed the infinite to 'finite proportions', Cameron treats Pope's assertion of humanity's incapacity to know 'the complex harmonies of the cosmos', as (in Santos' words): 'an obstacle to overcome' (Santos, 2009, p. 114). Cameron's interpretation is thus skewed towards a scientistic/ positivist reading that rejects the possibility of exploring the poem's reliance upon the Heraclitean, paradoxical unity of opposites, through which 'All partial Evil, [is] universal Good', and humankind exists within a contradictory/paradoxical condition of being the 'Sole judge of Truth, in endless Error hurl'd: | The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!' (Pope, *Essay on Man*, II.ls.16–18).[4] But Pope's *Essay on Man* positions the human condition within a universe of knowledge as inescapably fallible, bounded by ignorance of the whole and hence also of the poem's universal propositions that *appear* to articulate absolute truths (even when these are so provocatively contentious), such as 'Whatever IS, is RIGHT' (I.l.294).

Pope's similarly philosophical *Essay on Criticism*, according to Arthur Fenner 'is not the string of commonplaces' that readers seem to have transformed it into (Fenner, 1968, p. 238). I agree, but what I have to say about one of the most misquoted lines from this poem—'*A little Learning* is a dang'rous Thing'—will soon reveal just how wholehearted this agreement is, since yet again the *notion* of *learned ignorance*, which most powerfully ensures that it is *not* articulating a trivial idea, has been entirely overlooked.

As Stephen Jay Gould claims, '*A little Learning* is a dang'rous Thing' is often misquoted by mistakenly substituting 'knowledge' in place of '*Learning*'. He claims that this has to do with people not knowing or paying enough attention to the line's most proximate context. But while Gould's interpretation insightfully results in him claiming that 'like Pope, I do distinguish learning, or visceral understanding by long effort and experience, from mere knowledge, which can be mechanically copied from a book'—this only touches on the arduous and experiential nature of *learning* intimated by Pope; Gould says nothing about how Pope's much misquoted line in fact intimates an altogether more complex understanding of knowledge and learning *fundamentally* opposed to the scientificisation of knowledge (Gould, 1997, pp. 24–25).

Ironically, Pope's aphoristic style probably encourages readers and non-readers to (mis)quote certain lines as wise dogmas/maxims entirely antithetical to the poem's embodiment of *learned ignorance*. '*A little Learning* is a dang'rous Thing' *is* vulnerable to being misquoted and markedly misinterpreted to mean: since the acquisition of a little *quantity of knowledge* is dangerous, one *must* acquire *more*. But such inferences are undermined by reading the line in relation to its context:

> A *little Learning* is a dang'rous Thing;
>
> Drink deep, or taste not the *Pierian* Spring:
>
> There *shallow Draughts* intoxicate the Brain,
>
> And drinking *largely* sobers us again.
>
> (*Essay on Criticism*, ls 215–218).

Pope's reference to the Ancient Greek '*Pierian* Spring'—symbolising the source and inspiration of knowledge about the arts and sciences—plays upon ambiguous meanings of '*shallow*' and '*largely*', suggesting the shallowness of consuming a small *quantity* of something unquantifiable from the Muses' *'Pierian* Spring'. But, if sundering '*A little Learning* is a dang'rous Thing' from the spiritual/infinite '*Pierian* Spring' source of knowledge, contributes to misunderstanding what this much-(mis)quoted line means, it gets worse: once so unyoked apart by violence/indifference from what is being suggested even in the line about the *'Pierian* Spring' that completes the couplet, '*A little Learning* is a dang'rous Thing' becomes dangerously severed from the principal notion of *learned ignorance* which the couplet *introduces*.

For, the lines that follow the above quotation shift from the '*Pierian* Spring', to a different metaphor of *learning as a journey*. The '*fearless Youth'* boldly embarks on the ascent of a mountainous region, ignorant of what is ahead, and in time is surprised to discover 'New, distant Scenes of *endless* Science rise!' (l.224). Eventually, the traveller is bewildered or uncertain in discovering the endlessness of science/knowledge, as he discovers that '*Alps on Alps* arise!' (l.232). However, though this *learning journey* metaphor intimates a notion of *learned ignorance*, several other parts of the poem buttress this reading.

For example, the initial concentration on the *blindness* or partial-sightedness of the critic's misreading and misjudgement (ls.1–200) locates '*Pride'* as the principal cause of 'Man's erring Judgment' (l.202), counselling the reader/critic: 'Trust not your self; but your Defects to know, | Make use of ev'ry *Friend*—and ev'ry *Foe'* (ls.213–214). Thus, the poem is insisting that true learning involves becoming conscious of one's 'Defects' *and* being open to both corroborating and conflicting knowledges (from friend and foe alike), and that *learning* commences with, fosters, and ends in the very opposite of Pride: Humility. The poem is strongly suggesting that the sobering effects of learning as a journey that commences in initial intoxication—being 'Fir'd at first Sight, with what the *Muse* imparts' (l.219)—culminates in the

learner's consciousness of the *endlessness* of knowledge and learning; in the incomprehensible infinitude of our ignorance and sobriety of a newly discovered humility.

Returning to Pope's later *Essay on Man*: this poem emphasises the great limitation/weakness of our faculties to know, the 'Presumptuous'/ prideful nature of attempts to discover the secret of humankind's blindness concerning this, and the infinitude of our ignorance by comparison with God's knowledge and divine plan (e.g., see: I.ls.17–42): ''Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.' (I.l.60). In the *Essay on Man's* highly abstract '*general Map* of MAN' (p. 502), God's unknowably immortal plan, contradistinguished from humankind's mortal state, is offered as an unquestionable, and even comforting, guarantor of goodness, design, and order in everything humanity's limited condition tends to classify and experience as painful, random, discordant, evil and which pride mistakenly rails against, only to be checked by the poem's repeated, and contentious, maxim concerning existence: 'Whatever IS, is RIGHT' (I.l.294; and see, I.ls.286–294; IV.l.145 and 394).

Pope recalls the Delphic oracle's injunction, 'know thyself', as part of an insistence that we should not interrogate God's ways but should instead concentrate all of our science on mankind: 'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; |The proper study of Mankind is Man.' (II.ls.1–2). It is patently obvious that this 'proper study of Mankind' involves learning a great deal of moral knowledge about the human condition, but in doing so, the domain of what we may know is constricted. As the poem's final line declares: '… all our Knowledge is, OURSELVES TO KNOW' (IV.l.398). The poem is therefore not denying that we have capacities to know, but is insisting on the great extent of human ignorance, our ultimate incapacity to know God's plan, and—through the ways in which all of these components amount to emphasising the notion of *learned ignorance*—that human wisdom consists in knowing 'how little can be known' (IV.l.261). In short, *learned ignorance* is figuratively introduced in the *Essay on Criticism*, and thoroughly *pervades* Pope's more mature *Essay on Man*.

The presence of *learned ignorance* in Pope's work suggests that this epistemic principle of humility may also lurk in other literary works produced in response to the scientificisation of knowledge and deepening immersion within the constraints of Lockean, mechanistic conceptions of the mind. But, if I am right in claiming that this has hitherto been undetected in Pope's work and has been (*pace* Santos) marginalised/ ignored/ lost, so has its substantive educational import. This adds a new dimension to what some Pope scholars have distinctly recognised. Michael Srigley argues that Pope was going 'against the tide of his times' which were increasingly falling under the scientificising influence of Sir Isaac Newton (Srigley, 1994, p. 153; also see, Young, 2007, pp. 128–129). And, in discussing Pope's relationships with the cultural politics and religious context of his times, Brian Young argues that: 'Pope was very profoundly a poet of opposition, and the depths of that opposition are only gradually becoming apparent' (Young, 2007, p. 121).

The convergence of Pope's aphoristic style, the reader's response to this, of interpreting deceptively simple apothegmatic lines as commonplaces/misquotations, the apparent lack of positive evidence of Pope's direct reference to Cusanus, and the admittedly amorphous yet powerful influence upon readers of the hegemony of a scientificised episteme, provides a prima facie explanation of how the *learned ignorance* dimension of his poetry has been overlooked. Yet, through detecting and further exploring this, we may begin to re-understand and re-value Pope's poetry as voicing a depth and breadth of opposition, the fundamentally counterhegemonic nature of which only begins to become fully evident by realising the extent to which *learned ignorance* pervades his work. However, some such realisation is only possible through understanding *learned ignorance*, and this is difficult, not least of all because this epistemic principle of humility runs *fundamentally* counter to the ethos within which we exist, namely, a Western epistemological hegemony that is powerfully antipathetic not only to humility but also to a key component within *learned ignorance*: the unknowability of infinitude.

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S ADVOCACY OF *LEARNED IGNORANCE*

In 'Philosophy of the Unconditioned' (1829), Hamilton retrieves *learned ignorance*, without mentioning Cusanus (Hamilton, 2001, 1, p. 38). Some 24 years later, in an Appendix on *learned ignorance*, he declares that Cusanus'

'doctrine coincides with what I consider to be the true precept of a "Learned Ignorance"' (Hamilton, 2001, 2, p. 639). He also details an array of 'Philosophical Testimonies', that collectively imply the transcultural, trans-temporal, religious and, to a more limited extent, literary presence of *learned ignorance*, through quoting: the pre-Socratic, Democritus; Socrates; Aristotle; Gregory of Nazianzus (c.325–389); Shakespeare; Francis Bacon; 'The Arabian Sage'; 'A Rabbi'; Pascal; Joseph Justus Scaliger; and many others—29 in all, including 'Cardinal de Cusa' (Cusanus) (Hamilton, 2001, 2, pp. 634–649).

Hamilton argues: 'There are two sorts of *Ignorance*: we philosophise to escape ignorance, and the consummation of our philosophy is ignorance; …and the pursuit of knowledge is but a course between two ignorances' (Hamilton, 2001, 2, p. 634). He figuratively highlights the miniscule domain of human knowledge, as contradistinguished from the vastness of our ignorance: 'our dream of knowledge is a little light, rounded with a darkness' (ibid.). And, the particularly important, moral dimension, implicit in 'Philosophy of the Unconditioned', is made explicit: 'the recognition of human ignorance, is not only the one highest, but the one true, knowledge; and its first-fruit … is—*humility*' (ibid.). His Biblical references also suggest that a *learned ignorance* is the polar opposite of a knowledge which makes people puffed up with their superiority or pride. Shortly after this he implies that the life journey of learning one's ignorance begins with doubt yet ends in a different doubting, echoing Pope's suggestion that embarking on the arduous task of learning is to discover '*Alps on Alps* arise!', leading us into bewilderment at the immensity/ infinitude of our ignorance (pp. 634–635).

In 'Philosophy of the Unconditioned', Hamilton describes the attempt 'to comprehend the Infinite' as a 'powerful tendency of the most vigorous minds to transcend the sphere of our faculties' and claims that such overreaching 'makes a "learned ignorance" the most difficult acquirement' (Hamilton, 2001, 1, p. 38). The chief *obstacle* to acquiring a *learned ignorance*—becoming conscious of our ignorance of infinity/infinite ignorance—is this 'powerful tendency' to strive to overcome our *inability* to know infinitude. But, he is also, *implicitly*/elliptically, referring to those whom he opposes, namely: Lockean 18th-century French materialist philosophers under the domination of Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715–1780) (pp. 2–3); the German Rationalism of especially, Kant, Schelling, Fichte (pp. 12–23); the principal subject of his critique, Victor Cousin (1792–1867) (pp. 23–37); and (I would argue), many other 'vigorous minds' not specifically mentioned. One of Santos' claims about the West's epistemicidal scientificisation of knowledge (mentioned earlier) helps to contextualise what Hamilton is opposing: Western modernity's *zealous* endeavour to reduce infinity 'to finite proportions' to *overcome* it (Santos, 2009, p. 114).

Since 'Philosophy of the Unconditioned' refers to a fairly comprehensive range of 18th- to early 19th-century philosophical discourse, involved in often radically contrary ways of attempting to 'comprehend the Infinite', Hamilton is running against formerly and emergingly dominant theories of the mind and epistemological positions in France, Germany and Britain. Though not immediately evident, his stance against such a phalanx of Western thought is therefore inescapably counterhegemonic. Integral to this counterhegemonic status of what I call Hamilton's *learned ignorance standpoint*, akin to Cusanus, Hamilton emphasises the *unknowability of infinitude* (Hamilton, 2001, 1, p. 38).

The incognisability of infinitude is inherent within Hamilton's law of the conditioned, which I shall not attempt to explain in detail here, except to note that it fundamentally relies upon the equal inconceivability of the infinite and the absolute, their mutual contradiction, the logical necessity that *either* the infinite *or* the absolute obtains, the unknowability of which of these valences does in fact exist and is explained by Hamilton in ways that suggest an unacknowledged reliance upon Cusanus (pp. 13–15, 29–30). For example, as Cusanus argues 'there is no gradation from infinite to finite', Hamilton argues that: 'we cannot positively … construe to the mind … an infinite whole, for this could only be done by the infinite synthesis in thought of finite wholes, which would itself require an infinite time for its accomplishment' (Cusanus, 11; and also see pp. 14–16; Hamilton, 2001, 1, p. 13). Elsewhere, Hamilton expresses this as 'the disproportion … between the infinite and the finite' (Hamilton, 2001, 2, p. 634). Santos similarly interprets Cusanus' fundamental reliance on this disproportion as follows: 'Since it is finite, our thought cannot think the infinite—there is no ratio between the finite and the infinite—but it is limited even in its thinking of finitude, in its thinking of the world' (Santos, 2009, p. 114).

According to Hamilton's law, all we conceptualise is *conditional*: 'thought is only of the Conditioned', and hence, 'all that we know either of subject or object, either of mind or matter, is only a knowledge in each of the particular, of the

plural, of the different, of the modified, of the phenomenal' (Hamilton, 2001, 1, p. 14). For Hamilton, our thinking and thus knowing, *conditions* its intentional object: '*To think* is *to condition;* and conditional limitation is the fundamental law of the possibility of thought' (p. 14). However, this Conditioned domain is, as it were, bounded by our ignorance—by the incognisability—of the absolute and the infinite. Hence, he describes the inherently plural nature of what we *can* cognise as 'the mean between two extremes' (p. 15). Here, I want to re-describe Hamilton's 'the Conditioned' as our epistemological *pluriverse*, because it utterly eschews knowledge of absolutes and infinites (as the unknowable constraints upon our capacities to know) and yet at once expands our knowledge to seemingly countlesss differentials. Picking up from the point made by Santos above, the pluriverse of the Conditioned is *limited* by what bounds it: our ignorance of the 'two extremes' of the absolute and the infinite.

Knowledge is thus only possible within a condition of ignorance concerning the absolute/infinite 'sphere of limitation, within and through which exclusively the possibility of thought is realised' (p. 14). Becoming conscious that knowing's very possibility is dependent upon being conducted *within and through an unknowable sphere of limitation*, suggests that everything we *know* is in flux, perpetually open to modification, relative, provisional, contingent upon/conditioned by this limitation; all we acquire as *knowledge*, is thus plural, inherently open to the infinitude of our ignorance within which it exists. To borrow from Santos, this ignorance may also be reinterpreted as an ignorance of the infinite plurality of knowledges within which our learning is conducted.

While Hamilton was writing 'Philosophy of the Unconditioned' in 1829 and began lecturing in logic and metaphysics at the University of Edinburgh in 1836, he was unquestionably aware of the rising hegemony of the scientificisation of knowledge. For example, he fought a highly public battle in a series of Letters against the increasingly popular pseudo-science of phrenology (pp. 1–69). But he must also have been acutely aware of the SDUK's vigorous promotion of the wider *useful knowledge* movement, towards which his *learned ignorance* standpoint is entirely antithetical. This becomes evident when he outlines his educational principles in his first lecture, an alternative version of which, explicitly refers to *learned ignorance* (Hamilton, 2001, 3, p. 34; and see p. 19n.).

These principles are consonant with the processual *learned ignorance* understanding of knowledge, as they involve advocating the student's 'Self-activity', 'exertion', spontaneity and auto-didacticism: 'Strictly speaking, every one must educate himself' (p. 15). He argues both in 'Philosophy of Perception' (1830), and in his first lecture, that the *pursuit* of truth is vastly superior to its acquisition (Hamilton, 2001, 1, pp. 40–41; 3, p. 10; and cf. R. Smith, 2016, pp. 278–279). In 'Philosophy of Perception' (1830), he claims that metaphysical speculation provides: 'the *best gymnastic of the mind* … conducive to the highest education of our noblest powers'; 'By no other intellectual application … is the soul thus reflected on itself, and … its best capacities so variously and intensely evolved.' (Hamilton, 2001, 1, p. 41). This is in keeping with some of Pope's famous injunctions in the *Essay on Man*, such as 'The proper study of Mankind is Man' (which Hamilton quotes in Hamilton, 2001, 3, p. 24). In support of his emphases on the great superiority of searching for truth over its discovery, in his lectures Hamilton's vast erudition kicks in with apt quotations, from Seneca, Pascal, Pope, Plato, Aristotle, Malebranche, Lessing, Von Müller, and Jean Paul Richter. From Hamilton's quotations alone, it is abundantly clear that it was not only Gottfried Lessing (1729–1781) who advocated *'Search after Truth'* over its discovery (pp. 10–13).

He also provides arguments against the instrumentalisation of education, for example when he discusses the prevalent sense of 'useful', as mistakenly premised upon *failing to regard persons as ends in themselves*, implying that humankind must be destined 'to act the lowly part of a dextrous *instrument*' (p. 5, emphasis added). As he goes on to argue: 'the term *useful* [has been] appropriated exclusively to those acquirements which have a value only to man considered in his relative, lower, and accidental character of an instrument' (p. 7). And, for Hamilton, 'education has been systematically distorted' by the prevalence of the fallacious opinion that the only useful and only valuable education is one that concentrates upon instrumentalising the student to function in some form of paid employment (p. 9).

These critical remarks about useful knowledge were being articulated by Hamilton in opposition to what he identifies in 'Philosophy of Perception' as a modern form of barbarism: 'Ancient Greece and modern Europe prove, indeed, that "the march of intellect" is no inseparable concomitant of "the march of science";—that the cultivation of the individual is not to be rashly confounded with the progress of the species' (Hamilton, 2001, 1, pp. 40–41). Hamilton is

therefore arguing against the scientificisation of knowledge, not only by advocating *learned ignorance*, but also by identifying the conflation of material with intellectual progress as both fundamentally erroneous and integral to the 19th-century European shift towards emphasising the physical sciences as greatly superior to intellectual development. However, there is at least one other related conflation that Hamilton does not appear to address, directly.

The *useful knowledge* movement's apparently worthy drive towards extending education to the masses to produce a workforce better suited to the onset of industrialism, depended upon a long-standing identification of 'ignorance' with poverty and immoral conduct.[5] In 1839, Brougham described ignorance as 'the origin of all the worst ills that prey upon our social system' (Brougham, 1839, p. 9). Though Hamilton does not directly tackle such an identification of ignorance with poverty, the position of *learned ignorance* he extolls, most certainly does not regard ignorance, *orthopedically*, as (in Brougham's words) a disease that can and must be 'eradicated' or 'cured' (p. 9). Rather, for Hamilton, consciousness of the infinitude/vastness of our ignorance is *the condition within which all learning ought to occur*.

CONCLUSION

The extent to which non-recognition of *learned ignorance*, in literary-critical treatments of Pope's philosophically and theologically informed poetry, results from the hegemony of science's conditioning influences, suggests that this blindness is more extensive, precluding similar discoveries within other works of literature. The counterhegemonic implications of *learned ignorance* that such texts may variously mediate—once disclosed through identifying their *learned ignorance* content—could in time provide the literary roots of an anti-instrumentalist dissentient culture stretching far beyond what I have argued concerning Pope. Something similar may have occurred with Hamilton's epistemological retrieval of this epistemic principle of humility, as I intend to examine in two subsequent papers on: firstly, connections between Hamilton and his friend, Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881); and, secondly, how *learned ignorance* enables substantial reinterpretation of a novel dedicated to Carlyle and once described as 'one of the most remarkable educational books ever written': Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), which notably rails against powerful 19th-century tendencies to 'force the people to be a people of fact, and of nothing but fact' (Hughes, 1901, p. 153; and see, Birchenough, 1914, p. 66; Dickens, 1854/2006, p. 120).

This blindness to such a *learned ignorance* literature of *fundamental* dissent concerning the scientificisation of knowledge and instrumentalisation of education, silences cultural modes of opposition and thereby reinforces the *current* hegemony as increasingly the *right* and only way to educate people. However, complicit with and virtually integral to managerialist and governmental structures and systems, blindness to the epistemic principle of humility of *learned ignorance* also obstructs the likelihood of teachers and pupils/students participating in substantively transformative educational *experiences* of *learned ignorance* through studying literary *and* other subjects (cf. R. Smith, 2016, p. 281).

Bleakly deadlocked though many current educational systems may seem, the teacher's/teacher educator's judicious introduction of a drop from the ocean of *learned ignorance* can initiate valuable co-partner explorations of virtually any given topic. The teacher's expressions of a genuinely humble and courageous admission of ignorance or doubt, coupled with a correlative openness to the pupils'/students' propaedeutically informed or culturally and experientially conditioned knowledge, opinions, insights or disinterest, can encourage free-formed explorative dialogues through which both teacher and student/pupil may enjoy the mutually enriching experience of learning *together*. This comes close to Paulo Freire's (1921–1997) emphases on the importance of 'love, humility and faith', essential to the 'horizontal relationship' of an educational dialogue that results in the trust between teacher and student that is of such great importance to Freire's description of the pedagogy of the oppressed: 'a pedagogy which must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity' (Freire, 2017, p. 64; p. 22).

Developing an understanding of *learned ignorance* beckons towards *becoming* learnedly ignorant, and thereby much more knowledgeable yet epistemically humble, a key requirement of the whole Freirean approach. But *learned ignorance* also enriches Freire, through how this epistemic principle enables and thrives upon adventurous philosophical

examinations of *assumptions* and different knowledges at play (once recognised) within virtually any given learning situation. Re-assessing the teacher's own assumptions and those of the pupils/students involves substantively recognising both the existence and educational value of a classroom or seminar group's inherent cultural diversity *and* re-understanding the subject matter. For example, philosophical critique, literary criticism, critically examining our history, in constant relation with being conscious that our ignorance is vast in comparison with what we do know, constitute potentially co-operative components of learning processes at the heart of what Santos is suggesting concerning a major reconfiguration of Western approaches to education within an ecology of knowledges. Therein, we may evolve a deep, local and global interculturality, much better suited to the teacher's and pupil's/student's urgent need for maximising participatory, purposive, immersive, meaningful, and playful learning dialogues concerning the numerous and often seemingly overwhelming challenges of late modernity.

This is highly problematic. Tempered by the modesty that a *learned ignorance* induces, and courageously trusting ourselves and our pupils/students, such learning situations are virtually bound to guide the class away (at least for a time) from pre-determined learning goals, towards considering normative judgments about what, in both a given subject and the knowledges of the pupils/students, are most relevant/important. This can be disruptive as the class digresses from its shorter-term learning outcomes or embarks on questioning even the most widely agreed or normalised judgments about what needs to be learned. However, *learned ignorance* renders *provisional* all such judgments *and* any new axiological or other agreements that may be formed among a given class/seminar group. For example, the teacher and pupil's/student's dialogic learning may result in a general agreement that biodiversity depletion is the greatest threat to the human species and requires urgent *action*. But, even if some such conclusion arises out of a unanimous agreement, conditioned by *learned ignorance*, its status remains provisional while nevertheless providing a starting point for further learning. Inscribed by the modesty and openness to intercultural diversities of opinion, imbued by *learned ignorance*—which enabled the agreed conclusion in the first place—its provisional status would remain intact.

In other words, what I am sketching here, are some of the key elements that can enable any given group's educational experience to encourage spontaneity, a strong sense of learning as a highly inclusive, inherently and enrichingly diverse, purposive, processual, non-finalised, vitalising activity that is consistently open to discovering more fruitful/relevant interpretations and ways of knowing and questioning what the curriculum offers, excludes and ought to encompass. The degree to which such a reconfigured classroom/seminar group would be antithetical to the current status quo in many Western countries will be obvious.

Hamilton's counterhegemonic *learned ignorance standpoint*, combined with his correlative educational principles that aim to encourage his students towards self-activity, exertion, spontaneity and auto-didacticism, is also directly antithetical to the *useful knowledge* movement's now exceedingly long history of conceptualising learning as an exclusively scientificised business that must serve over-instrumentalised tests to measure *possession/ mastery* of a *transmitted knowledge*. Hamilton acknowledges that while the 'communication of knowledge' *is* important, it is 'not the highest, aim of academical instruction' (Hamilton, 2001, 3, p. 18). And he ends his first lecture with several interrelated ideas about the role of passion, 'love of abstract knowledge', application, emulation, cheerfulness, and how, *without* these elements, learning becomes 'reduced to an inanimate and dreary effort', which he opposes through encouraging a dialogical, *learned ignorance* approach and his commitment 'to rouse' his students 'to the free and vigorous exercise of [… their] faculties … not by teaching Logic and Philosophy, but by teaching to reason and philosophise' (ibid.).

ENDNOTES

[1] Materials consulted concerning the 19th-century educational context, include Brougham (1825/1971), Kelly (1962/1992), Martineau (1869), Mill, (1828/1992), New (1961), Percival (1978), Schoyen (1958), Silver (2000), F. Smith (1931), H. Smith (1974), Stow (1840/1850).

[2] A slightly modified version of Santos (2009) is reprinted in Santos (2014).

[3] The destruction of Hamilton's philosophical reputation is generally attributed to John Stuart Mill's, *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy* (1865), in which he specifically attacks Hamilton for being insufficiently grounded in the physical sciences (Mill, 1865/1979, p. 495).

[4] Compare, Nuttall (1984, pp. 54–56) on Pope's 'fluid antithesis of pride and humility' and also Srigley (1994, pp. 24–30).

[5] In 1821, the progressive English Baptist minister and essayist, John Foster (1770–1843) had argued *against* the ruling classes' prevalent moral view, that 'ignorance in the lower orders is beheld the cause of their vice, irreligion, and consequent misery' (Foster, 1821, p. viii; and see p. 214).

REFERENCES

Barnard, J. (Ed.) (1973) *Alexander Pope: the critical heritage*. London: Routledge.

Biesta, G.J.J. (2010) *Good education in an age of measurement: ethics, politics, democracy*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Birchenough, C. (1914) *History of elementary education in England and Wales from 1800 to the present day*. London: Clive.

Brougham, H. (1971) *Practical observations upon the education of the people addressed to the working classes and their employers*. Manchester: Morten. first published 1825.

Brougham, L. (1839) *Letter on national education to The Duke of Bedford*. Edinburgh: Black.

Cameron, J.M. (1968) Doctrinal to an age: notes towards a revaluation of Pope's *Essay on Man*. In: Mack, M. (Ed.) *Essential articles for the study of Alexander Pope*. Hamden, CT: Archon, pp. 353–369.

Casarella, P. (2018) Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464). In: *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at https://www.iep.utm.edu/nicholas/#H3 [Accessed 31 December 2018].

Clarke, M. (2018) Non-modern education, or, education without qualities: an essay on Robert Musil's essayism. *The Journal of Educational Alternatives*, 7(2), 75-87.

Collini, S. (2012) *What Are universities for?* London: Penguin.

Cusanus, N. (2007) *Of learned ignorance* (trans. Fr. Germain Heron, with an introduction by D.J.B. Hawkins) (Oregon, Wipf & Stock). Originally published in 1440.

Dickens, C. (2006) *Hard times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Originally published in 1854.

Fenner, A. (1968) The unity of Pope's *essay on criticism*. In: Mack, M. (Ed.) *Essential articles for the study of Alexander Pope*. Hamden, CT: Archon, pp. 227–241.

Foster, J. (1821) *An essay on the evils of popular ignorance and a discourse on the communication of Christianity to the people of Hindoostan*, 2nd edition. London: Holdsworth.

Freire, P. (2017) *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Trans. M.B. Ramos). London: Penguin. Originally published in 1970.

Gould, S.J. (1997) Drink deep or taste not the Pierian Spring. *Natural History Magazine*, 106, 8. Available at http://naturalhistorymag.com/ (accessed 11 June 2020).

Hamilton, S.W. (2001) *Works of William Hamilton* (edited and introduced by S. Tropea). 7 vols. Chippenham: Thoemmes.

Hove, P.H. (1996) The face of wonder. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 28(4), 437–462.

Hughes, J.L. (1901) *Dickens as an educator*. London: Arnold.

Hughes, R.E. (1968) Pope's *Essay on Man*: the rhetorical structure of epistle I. In: Mack, M. (Ed.) *Essential articles for the study of Alexander Pope*. Hamden, CT: Archon, pp. 370–374.

Kelly, T. (1962/1992) *A history of adult education in Great Britain*, 3rd edition. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Kennedy, D. (2014) Neoteny, dialogic education and an emergent psychoculture: notes on theory and practice. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 48(1), 100–117.

Mahon, Á. (2017) Moral education and literature: on Cora Diamond and Eimear McBride. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 51(1), 102-113.

Martineau, H. (1869) Robert Owen. In: *Biographical Sketches*. London: Macmillan, pp. 307–315.

McGettigan, A. (2013) *The great university gamble: money, markets and the future of higher education*. London: Pluto Press.

Mill, J. (1992). Education. In: *Essays from the supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, collected works of James Mill*. London, Thoemmes, item VII, pp. 1–46. Originally published in 1828.

Mill, J.S. (1979) *An examination of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy* (edited by J.M. Robson, introduction by A. Ryan). London: Routledge. Originally published in 1865.

Miller, A. (2007) Rhetoric, *Paideia* and the old idea of a liberal education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 41(2), 183–206.

New, C.W. (1961) *The life of Henry Brougham to 1830*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Noggle, J. (2001) *The skeptical sublime: aesthetic ideology in Pope and the Tory Satirists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nussbaum, M.C. (2010) *Not for profit: why democracy needs the humanities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nuttall, A.D. (1984) *Pope's 'Essay on Man'*. London: Allan.

Parker, F. (2003) *Scepticism and literature: an Essay on Pope, Hume, Sterne, and Johnson*. Oxford Scholarship Online.

Percival, J. (1978) *The society for the diffusion of useful knowledge, 1826–1848: a handlist of the society's correspondence and papers*, compiled by J. Percival. London: The Library, University College London.

Pope, A. (1950) *An Essay on Man* (Ed. M. Mack). London: Methuen.

Pope, A. (1961) *Pastoral poetry and an essay on criticism* (Eds. E. Audra and A. Williams). London: Methuen.

Pope, A. (1965) *The poems of Alexander Pope* (Ed. J. Butt). Suffolk: Methuen.

Rogers, P. (2004) *The Alexander Pope encyclopedia*. London: Greenwood.

Rogers, P (Ed.) (2007) *The Cambridge companion to Alexander Pope*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Santos, B. de Sousa. (2007) Beyond abyssal thinking: from global lines to ecologies of knowledges. *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 30(1), 45–89.
Santos, B. de Sousa. (2009) A Non-occidental west? Learned ignorance and ecology of knowledge. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(7-8), 103-125.
Santos, B. de Sousa. (2014) Is there a non-occidental West? In: *Epistemologies of the South: justice against epistemicide*. London: Routledge, pp. 99–115.
Schinkel, A. (2017) The educational importance of deep wonder. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 51(2), 538–553.
Schinkel, A., De Ruyter, D.J. & Aviram, A. (2016) Education and life's meaning. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 50(3), 398–418.
Schoyen, A.R. (1958) *The chartist challenge: a portrait of George Julian Harney*, London: Heinemann.
Schwartz, Y. (2013) Ernst Cassirer on Nicholas of Cusa: between conjectural knowledge and religious pluralism. In: Barash, J. A. (Ed.) *The symbolic construction of reality: the legacy of Ernst Cassirer*, Chicago Scholarship Online.
Silver, H. (2000) Aspects of neglect: the strange case of Victorian popular education. In: Lowe, R (Eds.) *History of education: major themes*, vol. 1. London: Routledge, pp. 195–210.
Smith, F. (1931) *A history of English elementary education 1760–1902*. London: University of London Press.
Smith, H. (1974) *The society for the diffusion of useful knowledge, 1826–1846: a bibliographical evaluation*. Halifax: Nova Scotia.
Smith, R. (2016) The virtues of unknowing. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 50(2), 272–284.
Srigley, M. (1994) *The mighty maze: A study of Pope's an Essay on Man*. Stockholm: Uppsala University.
Stow, D. (1840/1850) *The training system, the moral training school and the normal seminary*, 8th edition, enlarged. London: Longman.
Todd, S. (2015) Experiencing change, encountering the unknown: an education in 'negative capability' in light of Buddhism and Levinas. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 49(2), 240–254.
Tubbs, N. (2013) The value of the arts. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 47(3), 441–456.
Wringe, C. (2015) Beyond useful knowledge: developing the subjective self. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 49(1), 32–44.
Young, B. (2007) Pope and ideology. In: Rogers, P. (Ed.) *The Cambridge companion to Alexander Pope*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 118–133.

How to cite this article: Jessop, R. (2021) *Learned ignorance*: Opposing the scientificising hegemony through Santos, Pope and Hamilton. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 55:409–421.
https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12559