To Be Conservative as a Disposition of Education: Familiarity, Freedom and Learning from the Perspective of Michael Oakeshott

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is chiefly to interpret and clarify a traditionally notion of the conservative disposition concealed in liberal education by reviewing three basic concepts—familiarity, freedom and learning—from the perspective of Michael Oakeshott. Method: Firstly, we discover that there are two intractable crises in education on account of the observation of history and current situations. The first relates to the sustainability of the conservative disposition and the second to the invitation of liberal learning. They are organically interconnected in that the realisation of the latter, in a way, relies on a response to the acquisition of the former. Secondly, we define familiarity as a characteristic of the conservative disposition that derives from the enjoyment of “the present” through an examination of complex social conditions. Familiarity is the basis of a conservative disposition that runs through the whole tradition of behaviour, or rather the tradition of morality derives its inheritance as a way of understanding education. Thirdly, we systematically expound that the conservative disposition as an essential component of education activities is supposed not only to provide the basis for educational enterprise but to play a role that involves a relationship between teachers and students. Fourthly, we emphasize the pivotal role of the conservative disposition not only in restraining the hegemony of the pragmatic modes of education but in providing a strong guarantee for realizing the invitation of liberal education by criticizing ‘vocational education’. Results: Finally, we put forward the conservative disposition of freedom as a reflective consciousness that plays an irreplaceable role in supervising and advancing the development of liberal learning by virtue of Oakeshott’s perception of freedom. Conclusion: The discussion of Oakeshott’s concept of the conservative disposition, which deepens the importance and necessity of liberal education, can furtherly make a contribution to the re-establishment for the orientation of educational activities, as well as for the trusting relationship between learners and teachers in modern education.

Keywords: familiarity, the conservative disposition, tradition of behaviour, freedom, ‘vocational education’, liberal learning

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I. Introduction

Two ticklish crises in education have gathered increasing attention in both scholarly and insightful publications throughout the last two decades, although neither is thoroughly addressed. The first relates to the sustainability of the conservative disposition and the second to the invitation of liberal learning. They are interconnected in that the implementation of the latter, in a way, relies on a response as to the adventure of former. The practical experience of this epistemological universe suggests education can either be constructive, that is, supporting a learner with substantive skills to elect his leaders without changing his nature, or reconstructive, that is, mechanically and unreflectively reshaping the learner into a “technical citizen” who may unhesitatingly identify governing as an educational activity. But we must make it clear that “the education it incidentally supplies is not an education in happiness, but an education in ‘tolerance’” (Oakeshott, 1993a: 77). If governing makes a positive contribution to the happiness available to be enjoyed by its subjects, it merely by “relieving its subjects of the pressures, benevolent or self-interested” (Oakeshott, 1993a: 77), which they are apt to exert upon one another’s behaviours. Oakeshott identifies human behaviour as an expression of “reflective consciousness”. This interpretation enables him to distinguish human activity from such nonintelligent processes or mechanical identities as a phenomenon (Devigne, 1994: 120). The identification of human behaviour with reflective consciousness also indicates Oakeshott’s rejection of the faith of deontological rationalists, who claim that education consists in “abstracting from the flow of experience elements that are taken to be independent or ‘independently premeditated’” (Minogue, 2005: 192). Education thus constitutes a form of rationalism, as the impatient disposition to solve problems, in its most rapid and effective form. A rationalist government seeks to turn education into an instrument for achieving its own specific ends, it has no patience to wait while citizens respond to their situation in their own way. Consequently, it moves from education to training, from creativity to the formula (Minogue, 2005: 186). Now this move has been from education to the pursuit of power, understood in a functioning technological sense. Clearly it is a radical movement to raise the general level of culture, not a conservative, unpredictable one. The problem of this rationalist persecution was diagnosed as early as Larry Jay Diamond’s publication of Consolidating Democracy in South Korea.1) A

1) In Consolidating Democracy in South Korea, Diamond diagnoses the potential for civic organizations as stemming from the substantial quantitative changes toward the functional interest associations: “As a recent survey shows, civic organizations working in diverse arenas are considered by ordinary South Korea people as the most trustworthy and influential groups in dealing with important public issues … It was largely the ability of civic organizations to understand changing popular concerns accurately and to formulate them into major policy goals that enabled those civic organizations to gain hegemony … Civic organizations swiftly perceived that ordinary South
discussion as to the tensions and dilemmas of the modern educational enterprise arising from democratic consolidation. It took on an increasingly prominent role in shaping and redefining the place of learning within the context of an utilitarian and technologically optimistic society. Oakeshott adds an explicit emphasis on this place seeking within the notions of a liberal education. The place, as he notes, is not “the vague and fragmentary equipment of the ‘culture philistine’”, but the great intellectual habitats in which “human beings have come to display their various understandings of the world and of themselves” (Oakeshott, 1989a: 21-22). For it suggests that liberal learning may serve as a remedial and supervising bulwark against democracy’s decline (Shapiro, 2003: 22 - 34, 57 - 63).

Facing the fast-changing times, “innovation and development” has been the “central theme” for the understandings of education. The disposition of this theme suggests that education in the service of country’s interest can be substantiante-that is, technologically and purposely reshape society into a government-centered model in which people are encouraged to adopt programmable lifestyles, which could be a totally misunderstood sort of education. For this reason, we vigilantly realize the fact that the conservative nature of education is another essential part that provides a more sustainable perspective. An inherent correlation between the conservative disposition and education is hardly surprising. Various conservative thinkers including Russell Kirk, Milton Friedman, Daniel Bell and Fernando Savater have all, in diverse ways, understood the disposition to be conservative as an indispensable bedrock that preserves something unique and exceptional about human nature. At the heart of this disposition is the need for scepticism in education to counterbalance radicalness in the evolution of a pedagogy, which is why Oakeshott believes there is more to be learnt about the conservative disposition in politics from Montaigne, Pascal, Hobbed and Hume than from Bentham or J. S. Mill (Oakeshott, 1991b: 435). Because both Bentham and Mill, to varying degrees, fall within the constructivist pedagogy (Parry, 1999: 23 - 24).

To Oakeshott, ‘modern rationalism’ is a disease and the purpose of his polemic on the topic is both preventative and disinfective (Sutherland, 2005: 265). In his essay ‘Rationalism in Politics’ Oakeshott believes that western political thought since the seventeenth century has been infected by a disease called ‘modern rationalism’. What is important, however, is that the rationalist disposition has now invaded and has begun to corrupt the genuine educational provisions and institutions of our society (Oakeshott, 1991c: 39). A society which has embraced a rationalist idiom of education will soon reveal itself either being drifting towards an exclusively rationalist form of education. The rationalist has taken an ominous ambition in

Koreans were becoming much more concerned with concrete quality-of-life issues as democratization succeeded and their incomes rapidly grew” (Diamond, 2000: 92). These characteristics of interest-based organizations provide strong foundations upon “which diverse civil association formulate their agendas, exert influences over the state, and cooperate to achieve common goals, often organizing diverse types of social movements” (Diamond, 2000: 91).
education, he naively believes that a training in technical knowledge is the only education worth while, because he is moved by the faith that there is no knowledge, in the proper sense, except technical knowledge (Oakeshott, 1991c: 38). The rationalist believes that technical knowledge has a power of reflecting abstractly about the conducts of education, of considering and contemplating abstract propositions about these conducts. Technical knowledge of this kind will have an economic value; there will be a market for the ‘trained’ mind which has at its disposal the latest devices (Oakeshott, 1991c: 38). Clearly, the knowledge of the rationalist is merely the knowledge reduced to a technique, to be acquired by training in an ideology rather than an education in behaviour. This is the reason rationalism is often impatient and imbalanced—it ruptures the fluidity of action by mechanically. Now we need to find a disposition that is playful in the manifold activities of education, it seems to me, exactly the disposition which characterizes the ideal of a liberally educated person that appears in all that Oakeshott wrote in defence of liberal learning.

Michael Oakeshott, who has written extensively educational woes and the voices of liberal learning, may offer a third way to assess the connection between the conservative disposition and education, which breaks the hegemony of this stifling ideological climate. If the conservative disposition is understood as a reflective “solvent” adding in liberal learning, then the contradictions of technique-oriented radical rationalist education are exposed. Of course, Oakeshott is not an advocate of rationalist education given its so-called sagacity to see the university as a “centre of consciousness” and expect it to provide “a coordinating and unifying conception of life” to save democracy and the souls of students (Leavis, 1962: 30; Bloom, 1987: 164-165). Yet he would decidedly shy away from any sort of purpose-oriented rationalist education,  

2) Personally, Oakeshott sets himself against the forms of rationalist education because he displays an insensitivity to the detection of the complexity of the social problem in modern education. Nevertheless, there is one utterance where he precisely captures the circumstances of modern education that makes it extremely difficult for students to respond to the invitation of liberal learning. This utterance emerges at the end of “A Place of Learning”, Oakeshott writes, “The world in which many children now grow up is crowded, not necessary with occupants and not at all with memorable experience, but with happenings; it is a ceaseless flow of seductive trivialities which invoke neither reflection nor choice but instant participation. A child quickly becomes aware that he cannot too soon plunge into this flow or immerse himself in it too quickly; to pause is to be swept with the chilling fear of never having lived at all. There is little chance that his perceptions, his emotions, his admirations and his ready indignations might become learned responses or be even innocent fancies of his own; they come to him prefabricated, generalized and uniform. He lurches from one modish conformity to the next … seeking to lose himself in a solidarity composed of exact replicas of himself. From an early age children now believe themselves to be well-informed about the world, but they know it only at second in the pictures for them; it invites neither careful attention nor understanding … This world has but one language, soon learned: the language of appetite … It is a language composed of meaningless cliches. It allows only the expression of ‘points of view’ and the ceaseless
which may indeed promote representative democracy but at the cost of “the exercise of the individual’s will” (Williams, 2007: 24).3)

Given the difficulty of orientating Oakeshott’s philosophy of education within the structures of Korean democratic constitution and its companion pedagogic associations, the puzzle naturally emerges as to what kind of education Oakeshott would applaud for the defence of the conservative disposition within an exhilarating world of ideas and images. In other words, how does his theory of liberal education, his philosophy of conservatism and his beliefs on learning link together? This article seeks to answer this question by reinterpreting Oakeshott’s insight of the feeling of familiarity, his conservative notion of freedom and his invitation of liberal learning. One of the most essential characteristics of Oakeshott’s skeptical conservatism, by claiming that the conservative disposition must begin with familiarity, Oakeshott disaggregates its meaning by using the example of friendship (it depends on the loyalties and attachments that proceed from familiarity). Familiarity is most fundamentally about emotion and intellectual processes, more so than it is about the current conditions of human circumstance that may be the expressions of these processes. In this sense, it accepts “the multiplicity of activity and diversity of opinion that currently constitutes our condition” (Franco, 1990: 150). And Oakeshott understands the office of education to be, not to change this condition into something else, but simply to rule over it as a referee rules over a game (Franco, 1990: 151). Moreover, familiarity is the interpretive response to a given set of circumstances; the interpretation is only possible through the “freedom” that has to be paid for in responsibility (Oakeshott, 1989a: 4-5). Nevertheless, what is being learned is not the freedom itself, but the thoughts and emotions of a human being that make the expression of freedom possible. According to Oakeshott, only by being grounded in tradition, in a conservative characteristic-based background of meaning by which the individual can come to know himself, can the individual realise freedom. Since individuals are individuals “not in terms of their adherence to, or their profession of a particular moral doctrine but simply on account of their disposition to make choices for themselves” (Worthington, 2005: 45). Hence, freedom is not restricted by the conservative disposition that forms from enjoying traditional rustic cultures; rather, the conservative disposition provides the language of intellectual innovation through repetition of slogans which are embraced as prophetic utterances. Their ears are filled with the label of invitations to instant and unspecified reactions and their utterance reproduces only what they have heard said. Such discourse as there is resembles the barking of a dog at the echo of its own yelp (Oakeshott, 1989b: 33).

3) Here, Kevin Williams’s summary of Oakeshott’s arguments on the exercise of the individual’s will also becomes clear: “the exercise of the will is therefore a feature of the reflective/consciousness and freedom required to learn engage in any practice. In this way human beings are enabled to achieve their own versions of autonomy and his achievement is an important part of the purpose of education that emerges in Oakeshott’s writings” (Williams, 2007: 25).
which freedom is realised(Sullivan, 2007: 66). From Oakeshott’s own emphasis on enjoying the ‘present’ to acquire the conservative disposition, it follows that a learning process in education cannot merely be restricted to becoming aware of education through its practical past(that is, a past that corresponds to a present world of practical experience) but must be directly constructed according to demands arising in the present world of practical life(Nardin, 2001: 95). Since learning is a paradigmatic microcosm of the university as ‘civil voice’; its liberal curriculum is designed to enable the self-realisation of the student, just as the state, by its own refusal to endorse a social ideal, provides the citizen with the conservative disposition to pursue his own aims with minimal frustration. Learning, in other words, by definition, is a undertaking which takes part among equals, and it is conducted in a mutually conservative and non-utilitarian manner(Coats & Cheung, 2012: 63). The next section, part two, reveals Oakeshott’s perception of the role of familiarity by reviewing the characteristics of the conservative disposition. Familiarity is the foundation of the conservative disposition, it is the vital junction between education and the disposition to be conservative. Part three illuminates how Oakeshott’s understanding of the conservative disposition not only provides the basis for educational activities, but, perhaps more importantly, is the most appropriate trade-off in some circumstances. Part four connects Oakeshott’s conception of a conservative disposition to his purpose of moral philosophy as well as addresses the essence of ‘vocational education’ as it impedes the realisation of a viable liberal learning. Part five, perhaps ambitiously, affirms the ‘reflective’ modes of consciousness as foundational by drawing a outline for the conservative disposition within a liberal arts education based on Oakeshott’s description of freedom as experiential. In a certain sense, according to Oakeshott’s logical-critical examination of the conservative disposition, we can more clearly trail and discover the insights of his educational philosophy. Part six concludes.

II. Familiarity as a Characteristic of
the Conservative Disposition in Educational Enterprise

To be conservative, in the first instance, is not to be presumed that we must maintain the status quo and scrupulously abide by traditions. And further, it cannot be simply understood as a creed or a faith to which humans attempt to give a moralistic interpretation. According to Oakeshott, it might be recognized as a temperament or a disposition of human circumstances. As he writes in the beginning of his famous essay, ‘On Being Conservative’, “My theme is not a creed or a doctrine, but a disposition”(Oakeshott, 1991b: 407). The conservative disposition derives from a situation in which humans
desire to savor life in a familiar world, or the disposition to be conservative is inclined to respect and enjoy what is available. Thus it is logically believed that this disposition should acknowledge and inherit the stuff of the past, but that does not indicate that humans must treat the things of the lost past as the objects of worship. What is existent and available (that is, the present) is treasured not on account of its associations with a distant past that makes life worth living, but on account of familiarity. John S. McClelland’s evaluation of Oakeshott’s conservatism suggests that the conservative disposition imperceptibly integrates human’s affections and projects into a familiar world. This world is not a guarantee of having happiness and safety all the time, but a feeling of familiarity. In his work, A History of Western Political Thought, McClelland defines this disposition as follows:

The conservative disposition arises from the perfectly ordinary human desire to live in a familiar world, while at the same time the mind tells us that the world in which we live changes. A familiar world is no guarantee of human happiness, but it is a world in which ordinary men can form their projects with a reasonable chance of their being accomplished. A familiar world is capable of engaging our affections even if it is incapable of inspiring love. It is not necessarily always safe, but its dangers are well enough known for them to be avoided with everyday prudence. The feeling of familiarity works at every level and in every aspect of human living, so it can easily attach itself to a set of political arrangements (McClelland, 1996: 780).

In his estimation, we are experiencing the influence of Hegel’s perspectives on Oakeshott’s conservatism. The conservative disposition deals with new situations by fitting it into a life of the state which it already has, only in the state does man have a rational existence (Hegel, 1975: 94; Hegel, 1991: 20). As an idealist in the wake of Hegel, Oakeshott takes a fairly neutral view on what mind is all about: “Mind is neither passive in the face of the world nor does it create an arbitrary world outside the self”. His idealist view of mind “as endlessly trying to make the world outside itself coherent can easily be restated as mind’s continuous effort to hang onto familiarity in a changing world” (McClelland, 1996: 768, 782). On this point, Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophical stance on “our concept of meaning something” is rather...

4) There is a sphere where Oakeshott argues an education (that is, a moral practice) may be a set of conditions to be subscribed to in all or any of an agents’ actions or utterances, which has no extrinsic purpose and is not related to procuring any substantive satisfaction or to the pursuit or achievement of any substantive purpose. Since civil association is not an enterprise association that is made of individuals joined together in terms of “the pursuit of some common purpose, some substantive condition of things to be jointly produced, or some common interest to be continuously satisfied” (Oakeshott, 1975: 114), and since “an agent may be ‘just’ or ‘civil’ in all or any of his actions, civil relationship is to be identified as association in terms of moral considerations” (Oakeshott, 1975: 122).
similar to that of McClelland. In his work, *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein avers that “It (philosophy) leaves everything as it is” ... Philosophy just puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. Since everything lies open to view, there is nothing to explain” (Wittgenstein, 2001: 55). In other words, Wittgenstein’s philosophy is not merely to be averse from change; it is also a form of accommodating ourselves to existences, and experience lurking deep within all men.

Since the conservative disposition stems from the enjoyment of “the present” that possesses familiarity, Oakeshott separates “the present” which has absolute diversity into three sorts of situations to illustrate its correlations with the conservative disposition from an empiricist perspective. The first is the present that is, not the one that should have been generally satisfied: it offers “little or nothing to be used or enjoyed” (Oakeshott, 1991b: 408). In the face of this inclination, we appear to have no reason to come to terms conservatively with our familiar existences. But from another perspective, the present at this time is not absolutely empty for us, at least we might have a choice to enjoy “being alive”-rather than nothing at all. What we need is the “being alive” of familiarity. Our habit, however, is to understand “the unfamiliar in terms of what is already familiar to us”; we resolve mysteries by “approximating them to what we understand” (Oakeshott, 2004a: 269). If we are not familiar with “being alive”, we are bound to lose the meaning of taking pride in where you live, most likely “death or disease will rob us of our harvest, and we shall have lived in vain” (Oakeshott, 1993b: 32). This situation is rare, it does occur in some extreme environments, but at this time we cannot live without the conservative disposition. The second is the present that is drastically fluctuant and unsettled. In the face of this unsettledness, we attempt to seek a firmer foothold through a dependence on and an exploration of the past (Oakeshott, 1991b: 408). At this time the conservative disposition emerges out of the reflective inquiry that acknowledges an inheritance form the past. Hence, we need to take the familiarity to overcome our anxiety and restlessness caused by any current social change. The third is the present that is comparatively satisfactory. In this sense, perhaps we can enjoy a multitude of resources, including informations, cooperations, opportunities, etc. And meanwhile we inevitably face the fear of losing them, since the more we enjoy these resources, the more we have to lose. The conservative disposition behaves exceptionally strong, especially if we feel the possibility of loss has become increasingly higher. Since we at that point cannot be indifferent to the potential for loss. Indeed, an explicit perspective on the ‘definition’ of this conservative disposition is provided by Oakeshott’s critique of rationalism. When listing its general characteristics for familiarity, he writes,

To be conservative, then, is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the distant, the sufficient to the unbounded, the convenient to the perfect, present
laughter to utopian bliss. Familiar relationships and loyalties will be preferred to the allure of more profitable attachments; to acquire and to enlarge will be less important than to keep, to cultivate and to enjoy; the grief of loss will be more acute than the excitement of novelty or promise. It is to be equal to one’s own means, to be content with the want of greater perfection which belongs alike to oneself and one’s circumstances—the conservative disposition provokes neither of these conditions: the inclination to enjoy what is present and available is the opposite of ignorance and apathy and it breeds attachment and affection (Oakeshott, 1991b: 408-409).

It will be seen that a familiar world for the conservative disposition is not necessarily the optimal or the most ideal one. But some of the deficiencies and risks in this world are well known to us and generally can be avoided by exerting the reflective function of “philosophical experience”. Since this experience as Oakeshott understands it is “experience which is critical throughout and unencumbered with extraneous purposes which introduce partiality and abstraction into experience” (Oakeshott, 1933: 347). The enjoyment is rarely, in this sense, inappropriate, except to those who are ignorant of the resources of their world and the “opportunities for change”. And above all, we can see that Oakeshott strives to make an adequate interpretation of the conservative disposition from the perspective of “enjoyment”. And furthermore, a disposition to be conservative is more clearly represented in its attitude towards change and innovation; it leaves us with no initiative and enthusiasm on how to renewal and replace the old ways. No matter the change or the innovation, the conservative regards it as “a deprivation, a loss of something familiar, regrettable even when necessary” (Himmelfarb, 1973: 411). But in the face of ineluctable change, we can only adapt to this fluctuant process optimally with the aid of a feeling of familiarity of the present. It cannot be denied that the change consequentially means you have something to lose. And a man who possesses a conservative disposition inevitably regrets about what he has lost, even if he finds a better way to fill a vacancy on “something he actually enjoyed and had learned how to enjoy” (Oakeshott, 1991b: 409) left by the losses. Consequently, the man of conversative disposition prefers to accept some small and limited changes, rather than “large and indefinite changes” or “the destruction of what seems to have no ground of dissolution within itself”, which proceeds at a slow rather than a rapid pace (Oakeshott, 1991b: 410, 412). Hence, he appears to have a propensity to praise highly every appearance of continuity.

And for the theme of “innovation and development” which education consistently pursues, what is the reaction of a man who generally possesses the conservative temperament to that? In the first place, a person of this temperament will not himself be an impatient innovator. Conversely, he is inclined to the use and enjoyment of educational resources as they are: what is most important in his temperament is the desire to enjoy the world and its inheritance as he find it, and this means cherishing the traditions
received from the past (Camble, 2012: 163). From his point of view, every general education improvement (that is, a certain sort of substantive satisfaction) indispensably involves change, the disruption entailed is more likely to facilitate the loss of familiarity. Further, he is aware that not all change is, in fact, is improvement. The result of an educational innovation is, in short, a trade-off, and Oakeshott provides his own disquisition on the essence of innovation in the following way:

In innovating is always an equivocal enterprise, in which gain and loss (even excluding the loss of familiarity) are so closely interwoven that it is exceedingly difficult to forecast the final up-shot: there is no such thing as an unqualified improvement. For, innovating is an activity which generates not only the ‘improvement’ sought, but a new and complex situation of which this is only one of the components …

Thus, whenever there is innovation there is the certainty that the change will be greater than was intended, that there will be loss as well as gain and that the loss and the gain will not be equally distributed among the people affected; there is the change that the benefits derived will be greater than those which were designed; and there is the risk that they will be off-set by changes for the worst (Oakeshott, 1991b: 411).

From all this the person of conservative temperament draws some appropriate conclusions. First, any sort of education that can only be engaged in with a conservative disposition, an education outsiders the sphere of ‘enterprise association’ (Oakeshott, 1975: 114), an education where a conservative disposition is uniquely appropriate because what is sought is present enjoyment and not a ‘business of survival’ (Williams, 2007: 27). Oakeshott uses the example of the teacher-pupil relationship. Any educational relationship can be said to be “categorically unique and distinguishable from all others” (Williams, 2007: 136). And the relationship between teacher and pupil depends on “the loyalties and attachments that proceed from familiarity, which would be destroyed if the economic calculus of the market were applied to them” (Camble, 2012: 164). What Oakeshott wishes to stress is that there exists, in principle, a personal educational relationship whose terms are peculiar to the friendship of teacher and pupil. Education is, in his words, a “human engagement of a certain kind” or “transaction upon which a recognizably human life depends for its continuance” (Oakeshott, 1989b: 63).

5) Oakeshott sums up his argument by noting that the disposition to be conservative in governing is rooted in the belief that “it is the observation of our current manner of living combined with the belief (which from our point of view need be regarded as no more than an hypothesis) that governing is a specific and limited activity, namely the provision and custody of general rules of conduct, which are understood, not as plans for imposing substantive activities, but as instruments enabling people to pursue the activities of their own choice with the minimum frustration, and therefore something which it is appropriate to be conservative about” (Oakeshott, 1991b: 424).
Secondly, there is another sphere, of course, where Oakeshott believes the conservative disposition is not only reflective but absolutely practical if the character of an educational activity is to be preserved. There are many education enterprises, he envisions, in which a conservative disposition has a role to play, some in which it should be a ‘senior partner’ and some in which it should be a ‘master’ (Gamble, 2012: 165). Nevertheless, he concedes that it would be impracticable and infructuous to attempt to use this disposition as a substantive tool to impose conservatism across the whole of modern educational systems. He would like to protect this conservative disposition as possible, but endorses that it is not and cannot become dominant.

Thirdly, Oakeshott argues strongly against the interpretation of conservatism as implying ‘a particular set of beliefs’ (Gamble, 2012: 165). The conservative disposition, for him, is "not necessarily connected with any particular beliefs about the universe, about the world in general or about human conduct in general" (Oakeshott, 1991b: 423). It indirectly reflects certain beliefs about the activity of "contemplating" or "delighting", not about some deep moral or truths of the human condition: it "arranges his images like a girl bunching flowers, considering only how they will appear together". Or again, it does not provoke either moral approval or disapproval, "it only provoke 'intransitive delight'" (Oakeshott, 1991c: 509, 516-517; Franco, 2004: 130).6) Oakeshott agrees that it is a coherent and intelligible virtue in education, he regards it as a proper disincenitive to a disposition in education, whose central purpose should be preserve the diversity and creativity of human activities.

And lastly, a person of conservative disposition in education Oakeshott describes should favour non-purposive association because this tolerates "the current condition of human circumstances and does not attempt to impose a pattern upon it" (Gamble, 2012: 166). On this understanding of education, the disposition to be conservative in respect of teaching and learning seeks not to ignite passion and give desire new objects to feed upon, but to lower expectations and inject moderation into an educational debate, "to restrain, to deflate, to pacify and to reconcile" (Oakeshott, 1991b: 432). This is a very distinctive conservative attitude to the relationship between a teacher and his pupil. This is, Oakeshott

6) Oakeshott interprets his anti-Rationalism attitude as appropriately conservative: "Thus, governing is recognized as a specific and limited activity: not the management of an enterprise, but the rule of those engaged in a great diversity of self-chosen enterprises; and with activities only in respect of their propensity to collide with one another … Government then, as the conservative in this matter understands it, does not begin with a vision of another, different and better world, but with the observation of self-government practised even by men of passion in the conduct of their enterprises … the intimations of government are to be found in ritual, not religion or philosophy; in the enjoyment of orderly and peaceful behaviour, not in the search for truth or perfection" (Oakeshott, 1991d: 189; Oakeshott, 1991b: 428). Oakeshott’s conservative suspicion on tradition as the basis of the state exposes his strong repugnance to advocate social ideals.
explains, because the teacher-pupil relationship is a relationship between an adult and a child, and he contrasts children who are in an educational transaction with adults on the basis that adults need not “consider themselves under any obligation to justify their preference for making their own choices” and need not acquire the “superior wisdom” or “authority” of those of anyone else in managing their own lives (Oakeshott, 1991b: 427). In short, as a political intellectual, Michael Oakeshott figures out a unique way to highlight the connection between education and the conservative disposition from the perspective of an instrumental familiarity. Familiarity is the foundation of the conservative disposition, it runs through the whole tradition of behaviour. Since tradition is a learned social construct, it follows that the conservative disposition itself, or rather the morality derives its inheritance as a way of understanding education.

III. The Conservative Disposition as an “Inescapable Component” within Educational Activities

Throughout the history of the last five centuries of the entire educational enterprise, we have undoubtedly witnessed that humans have neglected the due-disposition to be conservative within education for excessively pursuing change and innovation; we have seen that educators tend to be more enamored of the glamour of the unknown relative to the intimacy of the familiar. Moreover, most of us are particularly prone to assume such a faith from our own substantive experiential aspirations: all educational enterprises are, in a certain way, changing our way of life towards a more perfect direction; the result of all educational activities or the activity itself is surely an improvement, or at least a reasonable cost for the satisfaction of some pressing requirements. These enterprises and all the other activities, however, may be hindered by the conviction that “there is no inheritance of human understandings and beliefs into which to initiate a newcomer” (Oakeshott, 1989b: 83). In this sense, proponents of rationalist education assert that “the world is material to be made use of, it is something to impose our own purposes and designs upon, it is something to be conquered and exploited” (Oakeshott, 2004b: 322). In this time of drastic change, the pace of educational innovation exhorts men not to get much more attached to what happens to familiarity. Nevertheless, we must also recognize that “when our familiar world changes too quickly we begin to feel like strangers in our own country, at home nowhere” (McClelland, 1996: 782). Hence, the “observation” for learners is understood to be an ability to imagine something that might replace the present. Meanwhile, the “contact” is recognized as a practical means of substantiality to change their own statuses and situations. Consequently, the desire for change, of course, becomes extraordinarily obvious and intense in their inner being. In this case, the conservative disposition, cloaked in education, is seemingly limited, and should be removed as an obstacle that worsens the progressive habits of mind. But Oakeshott points out
that a disposition to be conservative is not merely a necessary ingredient in educational activities but a most appropriate trade-off in some circumstances. He evokes its irreplaceable position of being in the following way:

‘… indeed there are few activities which do not, at some point or other, make a call upon it. Whenever stability is more profitable than improvement, whenever certainty is more valuable than speculation, whenever familiarity is more desirable than perfection, whenever agreed error is superior to controversial truth, whenever the disease is more sufferable than the cure, whenever the satisfaction of expectations is more important than the ‘justice’ of the expectations themselves, whenever a rule of some sort is better than the risk of having no rule at all, a disposition to be conservative will be more appropriate than any other’ (Oakeshott, 1991b: 418).

To me, Oakeshott’s arguments for conservatism here—which we will find fully animated by himself—can be addressed by drawing a marked contrast between ‘instrumental’ and ‘non-instrumental’ (or between ‘closed’ and ‘open’) specifics of educational activity or learning. The distinction between ‘instrumental’ and ‘non-instrumental’ activities tends to break down when applied to concrete situations, since both theoretical and practical activities can be pursued “for their own sakes” or they can be infected by the pull of all-pervasive motives such as ambition, envy, and greed (Peters, 1978: 6). Let us consider the characteristics of a non-instrumental activity in education first. And the first thing to point out is that what a non-instrumental activity is seeking is the present enjoyment rather than the benefits, rewards or other substantive achievements it brings for pursuing the utilitarian things that goes beyond the activity itself. Apparently this is a sort of non-utilitarian activity concerned with acquiring knowledge from the practical aspects of living (Williams, 2007: 32). For instance, fishing might be recognized as an activity that aims to catch fish for the activity itself instead of for benefits. For the individual learner, we can say that existence itself is one such activity. In a sense, the consequence of existence will inevitably move towards extinction, so the ultimate benefit which the activity brings will serve no purpose whatsoever. In other words, the original meaning of existence, for the individual learner, is the life-processes of “being alive”, rather than its result-death. We should keep in mind, of course, that organismal death seems to be the end of its life-processes rather than the end of its existence (Persson, 2002: 29). When it comes to human relationships, some of them are not established as the interest-based platforms with the people who will seek to maximize their personal gains. In terms of the teaching-learning relationship, Oakeshott is not concerned with the learner in general, but rather with the learner as pupil, the learner as counterpart to the teacher (Tripp, 1992: 4). The trust between a teacher and his pupil generates from the interaction and
learning that takes place between them, and it is known to be maintained by sharing their familiar characters with each other. The disposition of this trust is to arouse pupils’ curiosity and potential, rather than taking the attitude that pupils will not want to learn if teachers do not persuade or compel them to. Since Oakeshott firmly believes that “education is a deliberate initiation of pupils into their cultural heritage” (Tripp, 1992: 6). Thus when he describes the pupil as participator in the educational transaction he is not thinking of a partnership of equals in the manner of business partners. Rather he is thinking of a partnership that involves a shared recognition of a difference in knowledge and expertise (Oakeshott, 1989c: 44-46). In other words, the pupil is partner in the sense of being the subject of the teacher’s activity but he is in the process of being initiated into a non-substantive partnership in which they come to share and enjoy knowledge (Williams, 1996: 17). And further, the partnership between a teacher and his pupil is closely involved with the appreciation they have of each other, and the condition for this appreciation is that they must accept graciously rather than changing the animated characters that breed passion and desire within themselves. From this perspective, the ideal relationship between educators and learners is, precisely, a relation of mutual trust, and not a relation that is filled with lust and desire for utilitarian learning; the disposition it involves is to do what is conservative rather than what is “progressive”. Ultimately, a conservative stance on this relationship “has less to do with a particular substantive belief and more with preventing imposition of this belief as a social ideal” (Engel, 2007: 330).7 Overall, if we posit that what we are really looking for is not the result that comes with the end of an educational activity, but the enjoyment that stems from the familiarity of an intellectual practice in social life, then a disposition to be conservative will be more appropriate and indispensable than any other thing.

It is time now to turn to the interpretation of narrowly instrumental educational activities that grows out of Oakeshott’s critiques of rationalism. Briefly speaking, this sort of activity is mechanically performed for a result that can be predicted, or for a designated purpose that will never expire. From a certain perspective, an instrumental educational activity may be implemented through two layers of objects: curriculum-projects-adopted-for-activity and learning-tools-applied-in-projects. In this sense, the activity of learning may, of course, be recognized as a limited tool(or means): not the pursuit of a result, but the understanding of intellectual adventures in human self-understanding (Oakeshott, 1989a: 15).8 How, then,

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7) Oakeshott writes, “By Learning I mean an activity possible only to an intelligence capable of choice and self-direction in relation to his own impulses and to the world around him:······[I] do not mean that the attention of a learner is focused always upon understanding and being able to explain, or that nothing can be learned which is not understand; nor do I mean that human beings are uniquely predestined learners whatever their human circumstances. I mean only that an activity which may include understanding and being able to explain within its range is different” (Oakeshott, 1989c: 35-36).

8) In his interpretation of the tie between intellectual and moral virtue, John Peterson elaborates that their
are we to construe the distinction between the project undertaken and the means employed in respect of familiarity? According to Oakeshott, they are interdependent in nature:

In general, it may be said that our disposition in respect of tools is appropriately more conservative than our attitude towards projects; or, in other words, tools are less subject to innovation than projects because, except on rare occasions, tools are not designed to fit a particular project and then thrown aside, they are designed to fit a whole class of projects. And this is intelligible because most tools call for skill in use and skill is inseparable from practice and familiarity: a skilled man, whether he is a sailor, a cook or an accountant, is a man familiar with a certain stock of tools ··· if it is a large project, we put it in charge of a man who has the requisite knowledge, and we expect him to engage subordinates who know their own business and are skilled in the use of certain stocks of tools ··· it is clear enough that no job would ever get done, no piece of business could ever be transacted if, on the occasion, our disposition in respect of our tools were not, generally speaking, conservative ··· when a particularly tricky job is to be done, the workman will often prefer to use a tool that he is thoroughly familiar with rather than another he has in his bag, of new design, but which he has not yet mastered the use of(Oakeshott, 1991b: 419-421).

From what I have already said about the familiarity as a characteristic of the disposition to be conservative, it is clear that familiarity is the essence of the use of educational tools. And when a potential educational “tool” is ringed with an unfamiliar disposition, it will not be a tool, but an unwanted nuisance. Hence, so long as one man who keeps using a tool is authentically educative and enlightened in nature, he is inclined to be conservative(Williams, 1983: 39). Nonetheless, if the teacher-pupil relationship, which looks for specific vital learning targets, is established, each side shows solicitude for whether the other side possesses the ability to reach these targets or not. Indeed if the target that both sides pursue cannot be achieved, the relationship between them, of course, is automatically washed-up and may even be invalid some day. Since teacher and pupil constitute a shared symbiosis in which they are related to each other in a specific formal relationship with distinct and exclusive conditions(Oakeshott, 1975: 59; Oakeshott, 1983: 120). On the contrary, if this target can be achieved, the familiarity as a condition of reaching it will become more indispensable: it is not easy to obtain the learning outcomes they both seek in a constantly changing relationship. Indeed, it is Oakeshott more than anyone else who has given

commitment to an integrated relationship is associated with cognitive constraints: “Through prudence, intellectual and moral virtue condition each other, but in different ways. Intellectual virtue is prior to moral virtue to the extent that prudence causally conditions moral virtue; moral virtue is prior to intellectual virtue to the extent that it logically conditions prudence”(Peterson, 1997: 450). To the extent that one conditions the other one in a proper way, then the intellectual virtue of prudence will appear or come out from somewhere.
expression to the work-based value of a propensity to be conservative and familiarity-dependence by conceiving of education as a routine:

Routines, no doubt, are susceptible of improvement; but the more familiar they become, the more useful they are. Not to have a conservative disposition in respect of a routine is obvious folly. Of course, exceptional occasions occur which may call for a dispensation; but an inclination to be conservative rather than reformist about a routine is unquestionably appropriate (Oakeshott, 1991b: 421).

In the argument that ensues, it becomes clear that the formulation of teaching procedures (e. g. rules, programmes and assessment systems) seems to be an inevitable choice for firmly improving learning efficiency in instrumental teaching. Since the common disposition of these arrangements is that they are traditional and familiar. Or, take the example of classroom teaching. An ideal-successful lesson or lecture can hardly be presented without scrupulously preparing teaching contents and gathering feedbacks after class. Or more evocatively in Oakeshott’s own words,

They establish and satisfy certain expectations, they allow to be said in a convenient order whatever is relevant, they prevent extraneous collisions and they conserve human energy … They are typical tools … They are the product of reflection and choice … but if our disposition in respect of them were not, generally speaking, conservative, if we were disposed to argue about them and change them on every occasion, they would rapidly lose their value (Oakeshott, 1991b: 421).

From Oakeshott’s own emphasis on the chief virtue of these arrangements, it follows that an instrumental reasonable procedure in education cannot merely be confined to becoming aware of education through its logical argumentation but must require faithfully participating in the actual practice of education. Nevertheless, Oakeshott is averse to draw this inference because educational practice as he understands it is a sort of traditional enterprise with restraints. The disposition of this enterprise, which is at the root of a conservative philosophy, is that education should not be practised by youth. Since, by definition, youth “are not conservative, and for freedom to be sustained” (Engel, 2007: 344), moreover, according to Oakeshott, youth are impatient of restraint; youth pursue the allure of violent emotions irresistible (Oakeshott, 1991b: 436). Consequently, we can resolutely conclude that youth is hardly encouraged to confuse education with training for a profession, with learning the tricks of a trade, with preparation for future particular service in society or with the acquisition of a kind of moral and intellectual outfit to see him through life (Oakeshott, 1989d: 113). Whenever an aggressive greed of this sort makes its appearance, education slips away through the backdoor with noiseless steps. Hence,
education cannot be separated from the disposition to be conservative; this is a sceptical reflection on the diagnosis of rationalist education. In Oakeshott’s words, “few of our activities which do not on all occasions call into partnership a disposition to be conservative and on some occasions recognize it as the senior parter; and there are some activities where it is properly master”(Oakeshott, 1991b: 422).

IV. The Role of the Conservative Disposition as an Intervention for ‘Vocational’ Education

Oakeshott devotes several dissuasive pages of “On Being Conservative” to evoking this practical wisdom (that is, the connection between intellectual and moral virtue) to cultivate the familiarity inherent in sensible education—the intellectual virtue of prudence—finding it notably expressed in a flurry of studies on access to moral naturalism, and that is what Aquinas takes from Aristotle(Peterson, 1997: 450). In other words, prudence is a virtue that is necessary for the conservative disposition within educational activities. One thing we reveal from looking at the history of western educational thought in recent centuries is that the rationalist inspiration has now invaded and has begun to corrupt the genuine educational provisions: a training in technical knowledge is the only education worth while(Oakeshott, 1991c: 38-39). It is, of course, unrealistic that education should completely reject the infiltration of so potent and provocative an intellectual ethos as that of the rationalist temperament. And what is worse, a society which has assimilated a rationalist habitus of agitation will soon discover itself either being misguided or drifting towards a pragmatically style or pattern of education, or rather the rationalist education(e. g. ‘vocational’ education and ‘technical’ education). Ridiculously this sort of educational project asserts that human power may “project, appropriate or develop all manner of changes which suggest themselves as changes for the better”(Oakeshott, 1996: 25). Here “better” means an improved way of engaging in some evaluation-based teaching activities or of integrating the structure of knowledge in which

9) As used to discriminate between vocational and university education, the language/literature distinction is much clearer than in others. As Oakeshott points out that “in a ‘vocational’ education what is learnt is not a ‘living’ language with a view to being able to speak it and say new things in it, but a ‘dead’ language; and it is learnt merely for the purpose of reading a ‘literature’ or a ‘text’ in order to acquire the information it contains. The skills acquired is the skills of using the information, not of speaking the ‘language’”(Oakeshott, 1991d: 192-193). Unfortunately, he fails to expand on this distinction, as indeed Oakeshott himself acknowledges that, there normally exist what he calls ‘technical literature’(Oakeshott, 1991d: 203) by which he means “texts containing practical theories or guidance for aspiring practitioners”(Williams, 2007: 87-88).
each individual takes ownership of his or her learning. The fundamental motivation for making an "improvement" of this kind is not because we know in detail what is at the end, but because we have excluded any other road and are content with the certainty that perfection lies wherever it leads—a single, comprehensive condition of human circumstances (Oakeshott, 1996: 26). This condition may be unimaginative and not easily established, but we can at least describe its broad outline: it is the goal of any educational enterprise, and there is no alternative but to engage in it. For this style of education, rights as an add-on tool will be entirely inappropriate, and their place should be taken by "a single, comprehensive Right—the right to participate in the improvement which leads to perfection" (Oakeshott, 1996: 29). The role of this Right is unreservedly to control citizens’ learning activities and urge them to focus on pursuing a perfect utopian society.

In pursuit of that society, education is recognized as a uninhibited activity in which government agencies can integrate citizens’ thoughts into their actions by taking advantage of actual political power. Here a university is directly seen as a project for the actualization of ideological goals: it is the most safe and effective form of organization for practitioners (that is, the Rationalist) who devote themselves to constructing the so-called "ideal society". A university, like any other organization, has a place in the society to which it belongs, but that place is not the function of helping it to achieve the real task of its being, but of indulging in the project of substituting "socialization" for education. As for this utilitarian notion of a university, Oakeshott sums up his trenchant point of view at the end of "The Idea of a University":

A university needs to beware of the patronage of this world, or it will find that it has sold its birthright for a mess of potage; it will find that instead of studying and teaching the languages and literatures of the world it has become a school for training interpreters, that instead of pursuing science it is engaged in training electrical engineers or industrial chemists, that instead of studying history it is studying and teaching history for some ulterior purpose, that instead of educating men and women it is training them exactly to fill some niche in society … A university will have ceased to exist when its learning has degenerated into what is now called research, when its teaching has become mere instruction and occupies the whole of an undergraduate’s time, and when those who came to be taught come, not in search of their intellectual fortune but with a vitality so unroused or so exhausted that they wish only to be provided with a serviceable moral and intellectual outfit; when they come with no understanding of the manners of conversation but desire only a qualification for earning a living or a certificate to let them in on the exploitation of the world (Oakeshott, 1989a: 116-117).

Clearly Oakeshott excoriates all sorts of projects that involve transforming education into an adjunct of
modern technical society. Since education in these projects is understood not as “an initiation into a historic cultural inheritance, but as integration into current society, an apprenticeship to commercial and industrial life”(Franco, 2004: 122-123). For this idea belongs to a world of utility, whose meaning lies outside itself in some trivial results or outcomes—and this is not the world to which a university in the true sense belongs. Hence, the pursuit of learning must be redefined as the central business of a university if the “deep-seated disabilities” form which it now suffers are to be abandoned(Oakeshott, 1989e: 122). The pursuit of learning, like any other intellectual activity, is inevitably conservative: a university should not move step with the world, at the same speed and partaking in every eccentricity of the world’s fashion. A university is not like “a dinghy which can be jiggled about to catch every transient breath of wind”(Oakeshott; 1989e: 130; Oakeshott, 1989d: 116). Oakeshott’s purpose here, of course, is not to indisputably argue in favour of this conservative disposition but to adopt a cautious attitude towards change and innovation. Moreover, he insists that, even given our current propensity to change and innovation, a conservative disposition in relation to education and its general rules of conduct makes a great deal of sense. Since “a conservative stance has less to do with a particular substantive belief and more with preventing imposition of this belief as a social ideal”(Engel, 2007: 330). Instead, if we restrict the functions of this conservative disposition and abandon ourselves to the enthusiasm that attends an audacious and innovative undertaking of “the didactic training in the current ideologies”(Oakeshott, 1989e: 142), the performance of all non-substantive components(like the expressions ‘contingency’, ‘complexity’, ‘uncertainty’ ‘inconsistency’, ‘ambiguity’, etc.) in an activity will disappear. ‘Vocational’ education, in this sense, is that in which relevant commercial skills are acquired; and within this type of education “a civilization has the naive appearance of the things known and the skills practised which are entailed in a current manner of living”(Oakeshott, 1991d: 191). In this sort of education the skills may be complicated and may have a considerable intellectual content, or it may be practicable and easily learned. Oakeshott frankly declares this understanding: “But it is, essentially, a highly specialized education, and not only on account of its concentration upon a single skill”(Oakeshott, 1991d: 191). When discussing the characteristics of a ‘vocational’ education, he writes:

The design of a ‘vocational’ education is to be concerned with current practice and always with what is believed to be known … the significant principle of specialization in this sort of education derives not only from the fact that most learners are concerned to acquire only one skill, but from its being concerned to impart to the learner what may be called the current achievement of a civilization in respect of a skill or practice needed in the contemporary world … in this sort of education what is learned is not how to use those products of scientific thought which contribute to our current manner of learning …
vocational’ education is learning on of the skills of current life. Generally speaking only those skills which are currently practised are taught ‘‘a vocational’ education is education to fit a man to fill a specific place in a current manner of living, or to satisfy a current demand ‘‘it is not utterly far-fetched to attempt to determine the number of persons who are needed to be trained in any particular skill if a current manner of living is to be sustained’(Oakeshott, 1991d: 192-193).

By linking ‘vocational’ education to one of the skills of current life, the individual is no longer able to come to any kind of self-actualization; the interaction between the individual and his social context, tradition or instinct is irresistibly interrupted by forcing him into ”a pre-determined and supposed socially-relevant identity”(Engel, 2007: 338). In this scenario, ‘vocational’ education becomes the means of the dystopic state of an ‘enterprise association’. And the question revolves how liberal education should serve as the effective means of the state as a ‘civil association’.

To clarify his paradigm of liberal education, Oakeshott begins with the distinction between ‘vocational’ and university education. The aim, in ‘vocational’ education, is to resort to our learning in ”a transaction within the world of practical experience”; in that ”what is learned must be useable we can speak of it as instrumental learning”(Williams, 2007: 86). On the contrary, the learning involved in university education has no substantive or extrinsic purpose; what is learned is to seek for ”the sake of the interest which it offers on its own account, with no purpose other than that of contributing to further learning”(Williams, 2007: 86). In elaborating his account of the respective nature of university education, Oakeshott makes use of his well-known understanding perspective on this sort of learning: it is not concerned with “the degree of understanding necessary to practice a skill”, and it is expressly focused upon “an enterprise of understanding and explaining”(Oakeshott, 2004c: 368). For example, a ‘science’ in a

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10) The importance of university education lies in what is called its ‘reinvestment value’(Oakeshott, 1991d: 195) in the pursuit of ‘the world of meanings and understandings’(Oakeshott, 1989b: 67). Since a human being is ”the inhabitant of a world composed, not of ‘things’, but of meanings; that is, of occurrences in some manner recognized, identified, understood and responded to in terms of this understanding”(Oakeshott, 1989b: 65). Consequently, what Oakeshott believes is that the transaction between a teacher and his pupil cannot be said to involve any extrinsic “end” or “purpose”: for the conversation, in this transaction, it is the inheritance of human understanding; this is the mirror before which the learner enacts his own ”version of a human life, emancipated from the modishness of merely current opinions and released from having to seek an exiguous identity in a fugitive fancy, a duffle-coat, a CND badge or an ”ideology”(Oakeshott, 1989b: 72). Of course, all of this goes to confirm that education is not ”learning to do this or that more proficiently; it is acquiring in some measure an understanding of a human condition in which the ”fact of life” is continuously illuminated by a ”quality of life”. It is learning how to be at once an autonomous and a civilized subscriber to a human life”(Oakeshott, 1989b: 72-73).
university, for Oakeshott, is “an intellectual pursuit, an explanatory manner of thinking and speaking, being explored” (Oakeshott, 2004c: 369). In ‘The Character of a University Education’ he eloquently expresses his conviction regarding the essence of university education:

Doctrines, ideas, facts and theories which are invested elsewhere to yield practical profits—in a university are recognised as temporary achievements, valued solely for their explanatory value, in an enterprise of understanding which is, in principle, both endless and autonomous (Oakeshott, 2004c: 369).

Therefore, we can say, that university education as liberal education is not acquiring "a stock of ready-made ideas, images, sentiments, beliefs and so forth; it is learning to look, to listen, to think, to feel, to imagine, to believe, to understand, to choose and to wish. It is a postulant to a human condition learning to recognize himself as a human being in the only way in which this is possible; namely, by seeing himself in the mirror of an inheritance of human understandings and activities and thus himself” (Oakeshott, 1989b: 67). In a university the aim of liberal education, according to Oakeshott, is not determined by “the amount of concrete information it provides”. Although its aim is to yield clarity, it is even more meaningful that “it help to cultivate an attitude and an aptitude for the pursuit of clarity in the future” (Candreva, 2005: 20). Moreover, the purpose of liberal education is to become a participant in the conversation between itself and society, and thus, as a participant, to come to know oneself. Liberal learning in a university, for Oakeshott, is means to self-realisation. It is the means to becoming conservative; it is the means to freedom. Liberal learning is the foundation of conservatism.

V. A Conservative Disposition of Freedom as the Foundation of Learning within Liberal Education

Given that liberal learning is both the basis and the expression of freedom, which itself is the foundation of the conservative disposition.—A role for an explicitly university education within the liberal arts appears dubious if not wholly unnecessary. Indeed, Oakeshott strongly deprecates a variant of project-based learning as taking a proper place of study at the university and within a liberal arts

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11) Oakeshott claims that an enterprise association is a compulsory organization, established to achieve a specific goal—a church, a business, a trade union, an environmental organization, an army. Enterprise association contains rules, but its rules are instrumental to the achievement of a purpose or set of purposes. Members of an enterprise association are related in terms of the common purpose, rather than in terms of the conditions of a practice (Oakeshott, 1975: 119).
Since the university as he understands it is a paradigmatic microcosm of the state as civil association governed by “non-instrumental rules”, or moral association “devoid of an extrinsic purpose” (Tregenza, 2004: 6); its liberal curriculum is meticulously arranged to facilitate the self-realisation of the learner, just as the state, by its own refusal to applaud an instrumental law (which aims to realize this purpose), provides its citizens with the freedom to pursue their own aspirations with minimal frustration. A liberal learning, according to Oakeshott, by definition, provides the learner with the “self-chosen actions and utterances” (Oakeshott, 1989a: 25) of behaving as a free citizen. The difficulty of this sort of learning within the university lies, for Oakeshott, in his unique distinction between a language and a literature. The language of education is “the language of desire and aversion, of preference and choice, of approval and disapproval, of praise and blame, of persuasion, injunction, accusation, and threat … It is the language of every-day, practical life” (Oakeshott, 1991d: 206). If an educational activity is essentially involved in the pursuit of a substantive goal, then it has no place in a liberal education. Since education studies assume a specific purpose and thus their practice does not conform to the conservative disposition of freedom that liberal learning strives to achieve. Education studies of this kind necessarily require a diverse variety of literatures. On Oakeshott's own account, of course, they are vocational in nature.

So education as the practice of transformation cannot be separated from its own conservative traditional contexts. Education is a part of the inherited cultural tradition, and thus, it must be recognized as a part of the process of self-realisation. However, it is to be studied, in this sense, as an historical rather than an empirical process directed toward “an idea of past, an idea of an event and of some significant relationship to be established between events, and an idea of change” (Oakeshott, 1983: 7). Here to study education as a purely historical enterprise seems inevitably limited, and such an assumption fails to acknowledge Oakeshott's emphasis on the conservative nature of freedom as an importantly essential component of learning. The nature of education studies, conventionally, is conservative. Indeed, the conservative disposition regardlessly can be separated from education; this is the mistake of the Rationalist. Since, in Oakeshott’s words, “to understand an activity is to know it as a concrete whole; it is to recognize the activity as having the source of its movement within itself. An understanding which leaves the activity in debt to something outside itself is, for that reason, an inadequate understanding” (Oakeshott, 1991a: 46).

Oakeshott is not against the idea of the Rationalist—indeed he rejects rationalism on the basis that it does not accord with individuality or human freedom (Franco, 2004: 102). And further, the problem comes when the rationalist activity—which is for all intents and purposes an instrumental organization—becomes an enterprise association. 12 What occurs then is that certain particular purposes—which are by nature non-alternative or contingent—become compulsory (Tregenza, 2004: 9). We are forced to act up to these
To Be Conservative as a Disposition of Education: Familiarity, Freedom and Learning from the Perspective of Michael Oakeshott

substantive purposes that we could have rejected. In Oakeshott’s words, “to make enterprise association compulsory would be to deprive an agent of that ‘freedom’ or ‘autonomy’ which is the condition of agency” (Oakeshott, 1975: 181). Because a compulsory enterprise association turns agents into by denying them the opportunity to choose between contingent ends; it makes their relationship dependent on knowledge or beliefs they could have rejected (Tregenza, 2003: 86). This is why Oakeshott claims there are some contradictions in the identification that an enterprise association can be both a compulsory organization (e.g. a state) and free: “enterprise association is necessarily constituted by the continuous choice of each associate to be related to others in terms of a common purpose, a choice from which he must be able to extricate himself” (Oakeshott, 1975: 119).

Since agency is inherently free (it is not purpose-independent), educational enterprise as an expression of human intelligence, even when closely it conforms to the limits of authority, cannot dispense entirely with freedom. This possibility seems to be based on the idea of specified in the first essay of On Human Conduct that agents are free because all human conduct is in nature. Since there are no non-optional ends in the process of facilitating learning, any education agent that insists that “certain purposes or conditions must be necessarily approved as rational, beneficial, or morally describe cannot, therefore, be based on this understanding of the self as an agent” (Mapel, 1990: 401). Oakeshott is by no means hostile the idea of enterprise association. Indeed he would point out that the existence of a variety of such association is vital to the existence of a pluralistic society. Thus it is only in a civil association that agents (who have become cives) are related to one another in terms of authority. Their freedom is protected because “authority in no way diminishes the capacity for choosing contingent ends, the hallmark of free agency” (Tregenza, 2003: 85). The nature of this sort of association becomes clear if we think of the virtue of our acknowledgement of the authority by clarifying the link between belief and conduct which constitutes moral agency:

There is, then, nothing in civil association to threaten the link between belief and conduct which

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12) Here, Oakeshott ironically indicates the predicament which an answer to this kind of program might take by claiming that “Intelligent reflection about education must be reflection about the appropriateness of a current educational engagement to the needs of a current society; and educational reform is detecting what are the ‘function’ which together constitute a current society and devising a ‘system of education’ which will produce most economically the most adequate performers of these functions. When these projectors settle upon ‘economic development’, ‘the fight for economic survival’ or ‘keeping up in the economic race’ as the engagement to be provided for, and represent themselves as the designers of an apprenticeship to adult life in which every child learns to identify as a member of a development corporation, they have no difficulty in appearing as benign reformers, doing no more than releasing the educational engagement from antiquated ‘social’ considerations and bringing it up to date” (Oakeshott, 1989b: 102-103).
constitutes ‘free’ agency, and in acknowledging civil authority gives have given no hostages to a future in which, their approvals and choices no longer being what they are, they can remain free only in an act of dissociation. Civil freedom is not tied to a choice to be and to remain associated in terms of a common purpose: it is neither more and less than the absence of such a purpose or choice. Its theological analogue is the freedom enjoyed when God is understood to be a ‘law-giver’ and the believer is not only necessarily left to subscribe to his obligations as best he may but can do so only in self-chosen actions, in contrast to a divine Will to which he must submit himself and his conduct or join the party of the devil, or to a divine Purpose to which his conduct willy-nilly contributes (Oakeshott, 1975: 158).

Engaging in education demands acknowledgment of the authority of strategic programs in force, and consequently, acceptance of the procedures whereby programs are enacted, repealed and amended. Oakeshott stresses that the existence of an educational program is primarily for the protection and tentative countermeasure of a “social investment’ related (often imperfectly) to ‘the needs of a society in respect of instruction’”(Oakeshott, 1989b: 102). Educational activity, in fact, is concerned with considering the expression of freedom (that is, the self-realisation) through a conversational interaction with the components of a civilization in which a keen learner is situated. Education makes this civilization known:

Education I will take to be the process of learning, in circumstances of direction and restraint, of how to recognize and make something of ourselves. Unavoidably, it is a two-fold process in which we enjoy initiation into what for want of a better word I will call ‘civilization’, and in doing so discover our own talents and aptitudes in relation to that civilization and begin to cultivate and use them … if, then, we recognize education as an initiation into a civilization, we may regard it as beginning to learn our way about a material, emotional, moral and intellectual inheritance, as a learning to recognize the varieties of human utterance and to participate in the conversation they compose. And if we consider education as a process in which we discover and begin to cultivate ourselves, we may regard it as learning to recognize ourselves in the mirror of this civilization(Oakeshott, 1991d: 187-188).

Thus, an educational engagement, according to Oakeshott, is both “a discipline and a release”; it is the “moral and intellectual adventure which constitutes a specifically human life”(Oakeshott, 1989b: 103-104). Critical to this understanding of education is that it has nothing to do with skill acquisition. Conversely

13) Oakeshott is quite confident that there is virtually no limits to this kind of transaction, he argues that the transaction between the generations cannot be said to have any extrinsic “effect” or “purpose”: “for the teacher it is part of his engagement of being human; for the learner it is the engagement of becoming human”(Oakeshott, 1989b: 72).
To Be Conservative as a Disposition of Education: Familiarity, Freedom and Learning from the Perspective of Michael Oakeshott

“enjoying the benefits of learning entails the development of understanding and sympathy as a feature rather than as an effect or result” (Williams, 2007: 40), of the pursuit of a pluralistic conversation. Education is not something which comes as a by-product of engaging in activities, but something to be enjoyed rather than compelled in order eventually to pursue a moral practice in which we find intrinsic value. As Oakeshott puts it in one of his most poetic formulations:

Education, I have contended, is the transaction between the generations in which newcomers to the scene are initiated into the world which they are to inhabit. This is a world of understandings, imaginings, meanings, moral and religious beliefs, relationships, practices—states of mind in which the human condition is to be discerned as recognitions of and responses to the ordeal of consciousness. These states of mind can be entered into only by learning to do so. To be initiated into this world is learning to become human; and to move within it freely is being human, which is a ‘historic’, not a “natural” condition (Oakeshott, 1989b: 103).

To me, there is an inherent freedom in a moral transaction that is not there in an instrumental interaction or a compulsory organization, namely, “a degree of stability and mutual trust” (Williams, 2007: 208). This is because moral transactions do not prescribe substantive actions and they therefore leave learners free to pursue their aims. According to advocates of this view, as Oakeshott represents it, human transaction is the foundation of education, and the engagement to educate is a transaction between generations in which a prepared newcomer may enjoy what they can acquire only in a procedure of learning—“a historic inheritance of human understandings and imaginings” (Oakeshott, 1989b: 74). The idea “A Conservative Disposition of Freedom” is that of a non-purposive sphere where a prepared newcomer may encounter this inheritance unqualified by the partialities, the neglects, the abridgments and the corruptions it suffers in current use:

... for all this there should be substituted an arena of childish self-indulgence from which all that might contain impulse and inclination and turn them into deliberate and knowledgeable choice has been purposely removed: a place where a child may be as rude as his impulses prompt and as busy or as idle

14) Chief among these traditions is the diffusion of liberal values. The idea that these sorts of values should be dispersed throughout the non-purposive association has roots in both liberal and conservative thought. In the educational sphere, it means that education becomes “an activity which is inherently conservative, maintaining intact and handing on the rules which make the chaotic, turbocharged, expanding and constantly changing civil societies of modernity possible” (Gamble, 2012: 166). On the contrary, if education tries to embrace innovation and regard it as an honour, then it only succeeds by destroying the diversity of civil activities.
as his inclinations suggest. There is to be no curriculum of study, no orderly progression in learning. Impulse is to be let loose upon an undifferentiated confusion called, alternatively, “the seamless robe of learning” or “life in all its manifestations” (Oakeshott, 1989b: 74).

Clearly impulses of this kind, in essence, a non-conservative disposition which is against liberal discipline and human nature. They will have “no encouragement to flower into imagination, or impulsive expression to acquire the intellectual virtue of grace, let alone exactness” (Oakeshott, 1989b: 75). What in my opinion essentially qualifies Oakeshott’s ideas of freedom as conservative is the most incomprehensible aspect, which will be treated in more detail. Oakeshott’s idea of freedom is conservative first of all because of the meaning as well as the importance of an educational activity for the realization of freedom. Inherent in the definition of an educational activity as more properly a ‘civil association’ rather than an ‘enterprise association’ is the anti-Enlightenment thread that runs throughout Oakeshott’s educational writings. The civil association as a moral organization exists to ensure that conservative procedures are implemented for the legitimate practice of education; it does not exist to pursue particular ends. To understand education as any single centrally defined end more than the most general arrangements that bring together an intelligible community of learners, according to Oakeshott, is fundamentally to misunderstand education, and such a misunderstanding portends the negation of freedom. The conservative nature of freedom in education he thinks should favour non-purposive association because this “accepts the current condition of human circumstances and does not attempt to impose a pattern upon it” (Gamble, 2012: 166). On this understanding of education, for Oakeshott the office of government in modern times emerges “as a necessary condition of freedom, not just as an unavoidable instrument for the satisfaction of private wants, but also as a qualified mode of association or of public life” (Henkel, 2010: 78). And here, in my opinion, we reach the core of his understandings of education. While the conservative disposition of Oakeshott’s education again is obviously in accord with traditional liberalism, it is at the same more than a liberal disposition because of its view of the origins or ‘sources’ of traditional educational authority. The task of a conservative disposition of freedom is to define the traditions of behaviour that can make educational freedom possible.15) Nevertheless, there is a profound pessimism in Oakeshott about education, because the

15) Indeed Oakeshott wants a conservative disposition that understands and respects the state as a non-purposive association and which will therefore operate cautiously and sceptically. The conservative disposition of this kind treats education as a process in which learners participate in equal conditions; it is a critical, reflective and emancipatory approach, overtly modest and committed with the transformation of social circumstances. Oakeshott detects, therefore, no paradox for a learner to be conservative in education but adventurous and enterprising in most of his other civil activities. Moreover, he insists that the more adventurous and enterprising a civil society, the more necessary it is for it to be conservative in education. If human circumstances were troubled, if learners
To Be Conservative as a Disposition of Education: Familiarity, Freedom and Learning from the Perspective of Michael Oakeshott

The virus of Rationalism is so vigorous and contagious.

The task of education, therefore, is to be sceptical about the passions of its educates, and by being sceptical to encourage them to moderate their desires on it. Oakeshott makes it clear that education is more than a sort of activity for the relevant participants, because the sceptical attitude it enjoins means eschewing radicalness, perfectionism and “the encounter of dreams” (Oakeshott, 1991b: 436), and instead understanding education as concerned with abstinence and trade-off, acknowledging mistakes, accepting restraints, controlling desires, “feeling the balance of things in our hands” (Oakeshott, 1991b: 436), acknowledging many poetic characters of human conduct that “remains ambiguous, paradoxical, and (like conversation) plural” (Grant, 2005: 305). While Oakeshott not only accept but also advocate and defend this sort of sceptical attitude, he remains abhorrent to the tendency to “reduce the variety of forms of common life, of association, into a two-sided relation between the institutionalized organs of ‘state’ or ‘government’ and the amorphous collective of ‘individuals’” (Henkel, 2010: 81). He remains abhorrent because of his estreem for freedom. He believes in rules of freedom that promote liberal outcomes, in the sense of allowing individuals to be as cautious as they choose in the way they live their lives, but this requires a conservative rather than a radical disposition about human nature in general.

The conservative disposition in education might be recognized as a sort of precautionary principle; it is “a creature of its occasions of application rather than the kind of overarch-ing moral conception that the technical philosophy of justice purports to be” (Turner, 2010: 210). If the notions of this disposition is habitually deployed to characterize the psychological peculiarities of individuals and collectives, it is also routinely present in considerations of a more traditionally moral nature (Feaver, 2010: 223). Oakeshott’s enthusiasm for this kind of nature that emerges from the traditional world, and the particular understanding of education and the state which supports and advances it, make him an unique conservative. He detects that the world of traditions is “a set of circumstances to be enjoyed, and what is

were self-opinionated and disdainful, then Oakeshott recognizes a conservative disposition in education might not be appropriate, although he personally advocates that a conservative disposition would be indispensable for any feasible set of circumstances.

16) To use Oakeshott’s term, Stephen Turner believes, for example, that the precautionary principle is a disposition: “It is canonized in many legal and treaty context, and held to mean either that in the face of any sort of uncertainty about risks of bad consequences (for example, for the environment, but not limited to this sphere) of innovations, we should prevent their implementation until the uncertainties can be resolved. In some forms this becomes a legal demand that the ‘burden of proof’ in the resolution of uncertainties is the responsibility of the innovator. In its more extreme forms, the standard for asserting that there are uncertainties is itself not susceptible of definition in terms of ‘scientific evidence’ to the effect that there is a possible risk. To accept the standard of scientific evidence of possible risk is already, on this view, insufficiently precautionary pro-active in the face of possible risk” (Turner, 2010: 204-205).
chiefly enjoyable is precisely the freedom to choose between a bewildering variety of beliefs, values and activities, to invent and reinvent oneself, to gain personal autonomy and moral responsibility" (Gamble, 2012: 170).

I have used the expression “the conservative disposition of freedom” here and elsewhere as a summary expression for relating and showing the contingency and coherence of many of Oakeshott’s educational ideas. Although this disposition is most apparent in the poetic or artistic traditions of behaviour, it is still implied to some degree in all settled forms of human conduct, even in moments of human utterance, the form of utterance which might seem the least ‘conservative’. This is true of all practical expression, but even more so in moments of “learning to read or to listen”. I will close this essay with some lines of Oakeshott indicating the conservative-like disposition of “learning to read or to listen”, forms of utterance concerned with freedom and fairness, and hence still nominally conservative for Oakeshott. In a profuse and complicated civilization such as our own, the

Inheritance of human understandings, modes of thinking, feeling and imagination is to be encountered, for the most part, in books or in human utterances. But learning to read or to listen is a slow and exacting engagement, having little or nothing to do with acquiring information. It is learning to follow, to understand and to rethink deliberate expressions of rational consciousness; it is learning to recognize fine shades of meaning without overbalancing into the lunacy of “decoding”; it is allowing another’s thoughts to reenact themselves in one’s own mind; it is learning in acts of constantly surprised attention to submit to, to understand and to respond to what becomes a part of our understanding of ourselves; and one may learn to read only by reading with care, and only from writings which stand well off from our immediate concerns: it is almost impossible to learn to read from contemporary writhing (Oakeshott, 1989a: 69-70).

VI. Conclusion

Oakeshott understands the conservative disposition both as laying the foundation for and as being the headspring and motivity of liberal learning, which is itself the precautionary principle of his transcendental ideational education world. The disposition to be conservative at the university level is defined both by its explicit refusal to be directed toward a substantive purpose and its sceptical denial of rationalism, just as the educational institution as ‘civil association’ is defined by its commitment to a particular moral principle of what constitutes a desirable form of human life over an instrumental position for achieving its own specific ends as well as to the conservative nature of any activity. In the context of education,
commitment to the conservative value of a pursuit, like commitment to a moral position, means adopting a reflective stance to communicate to learners something of the intrinsic interest of the familiar. This means that an educational activity must matter to them and have some roots in their own personal lives. Indeed it is the teacher’s vision and mission, as P. S. Wilson puts it, “to teach them the interest of it” (Wilson, 1974: 57).

Liberal learning at a university must ultimately be grounded in values which, although rational and defensible, are irreducible (Williams, 2007: 43). Like the advocate of a point of view on, for example, the morality of the conservative disposition. The learning characteristic of the disposition to be conservative, which is to be used in maintaining a ‘current manner of living’ (Oakeshott, 1991d: 192), derives its value from “a conception of a form of life in which the supremely rational activities of human beings, namely, science, history, art, and philosophy are given a special place” (Williams, 2007: 43). I believe, however, that Oakeshott’s educational prescriptions should include more than these subjects. In particular, he is insufficiently alert to the conservative value of practical subjects and to the emotion and cognition of the balanced interaction between beings and their actual situation. He did, however, at the end of ‘On Being a Conservative’, distinguish between the individual’s taste for adventure and the propensity for his living circumstances, which may stem from “extending to the practice of government forms of conduct common in the individual world” (Minogue, 2005: 193).

The disposition to be conservative in liberal learning is not only the means by which the individual comes to acquire a sustained sense of well-being and internal peace by learning about his tradition and thus recognizing himself in that tradition, but also serves as a particular set of beliefs for the kinds of engagements and conversations that seek “present enjoyment and not a profit” (Oakeshott, 1991b: 415) in an Oakeshottian world of minimal freedom. In this sense, the conservative disposition is a sort of liberal disposition. The proof is that Oakeshott seems overly enthusiastic about the kind of neutral quality of the conservative disposition that, he argues, necessarily turns to freedom. And indeed, despite Oakeshott’s claim otherwise, the disposition to be conservative is not hands-off; it has its own fundamental objectives. Most obviously, it aims to prevent the subservience of wants and ‘managerial’ conditions to ideology (Isaacs, 2006: 146). Thus, the conservative disposition of freedom still retains an extraordinary currency, and this reveals a flaw that Oakeshott’s liberal learning is necessarily divorced from the needs of society.

Does the kind of the conservative disposition that Oakeshott advocates still have a place in Korean education system? With some significant reservations the answer is yes. There is such an astonishingly high level of national interest in education in South Korea that means a lot of children and teenagers feel pressured at a very young age. Children as young as primary school age are under stress when it comes to their education as they all have an understanding that they need to get into a good university in order

- 337 -
to get a good job. According to a recent survey, South Korean children are the least happy in the developed world, and the reason behind this could be the pressures of the education system they are subjected to. It seems as though the vast majority of students regardless of age have the same goal: to get into a good university. It is as though South Korean children are programmed, instead of taught. A lot of children attend hagwons not because public schooling is insufficient, but because there is an immense pressure to be the best and to achieve the most. Thus, we need to relieve the pressure by taking advantage of the conservative disposition. In this conclusion several strands will be drawn together in an enlightening assessment.

Firstly, Oakeshott’s concept of the conservative disposition, for learners, connotates the existence of two components—freedom and reflective consciousness—these act cooperatively to affect the performances of human conduct. In describing reflective consciousness, we observe that learners understand themselves as practitioners with certain desires or aspirations, together with certain capacities to satisfy, or to fail to satisfy, these aspirations. It is the ‘instinctive disposition’ of all learners to understand the world, or more precisely their situations, as favourable or unfavourable with reference to these desires (Oakeshott, 1975: 36-37). This character of reflective consciousness finds its way into a situation where the cognition that learners have of themselves and of their circumstance is limited. When they misunderstand, learners make judgments, interpretations, decisions, or appraisals of themselves or their circumstance and so a misunderstanding is an expression of distinctively human conduct (Williams, 2007: 20). Since reflective consciousness involves understanding the expression of acting diversely if this expression is brought to a learner’s mind. This is why expression presupposes freedom because an action performed with expression is one to which there is, in general, an “alternative need” (Winch, 1980: 65). The freedom here is the emotional and spiritual quality of a learner, it does not imply anything of a learner’s “power of self-direction, self-determination, or autonomy” (Williams, 2007: 23). In other words, the freedom is not merely the exercise of a learner’s will: it is the conscientious, intelligent engagement of all human expressions.

Secondly, what Oakeshott insists to stress is that there exists, in principle, a formal educational relationship whose terms are peculiar to the interaction between teacher and pupil. And what is learned in this interaction is, in his words, the “languages of self-disclosure and self-enactment” (Oakeshott, 1975: 59). He highlights the personally conservative nature of the teacher and pupil relationship. The character of this transaction, for Oakeshott, is not a partnership of equals in the manner of business partners, but a partnership like that between a doctor and a patient, or between a lawyer and her client (Oakeshott, 1989c: 45). This means that the disposition of a good transaction is to promote equality and mutual respect and understanding among all groups and individuals, in the sense that the disposition of this kind
involves a shared recognition of a conversation in knowledge and expertise. The essential merit about this sort of shared recognition is that both teacher and pupil have "a similar effect in making familiarity, proximity and day-to-day custom into sources of a shared attachment" (Scruton, 2014: 36). In this recognition we find two groups of people, pupils and teachers, corporately engaged in learning and teaching. Here, through interaction in this literal sense, they contribute their own voices to the unvarnished conversation of mankind, that is, the conservative conversation that is composed of different aspects of human inheritance (Oakeshott, 1989b: 65-69). Each group devotes all its resources to learning and to the pursuit of knowledge, in particular, teachers provide the experience and wisdom of their learning to their pupils through their publications. A good teacher, for pupils, does not "waste the opportunity but springs into action to give an instant lesson... instead of the planned lesson" (Sutcliffe, 2002: 156).

Finally, Oakeshott does not believe that the conservative disposition is the only factor which can influence education. In a university the conservative disposition provides a full educational experience, not only through its traditions of behaviour and familiarity of practical activities, but also through its opportunity it offers to be a part of civil association. For this reason, Oakeshott understands the conservative nature of a university as a inconspicuous, vulnerable disposition. The primary concern of this disposition is not to train professional successors to a university in the world of benefits. Rather it is to offer familiarity with the way of understanding character of a society or mode of thought. While at university, the conservative disposition offers an opportunity to detach students from "the common pursuit of individual's felicity" to suspend judgment on the circumstance around them through the impediment of what Oakeshott called "a 'constant and lasting' release" (Oakeshott, 2000: 41). Moreover, it reminds students to not simply to acknowledge "the benefit of their education" but rather to supervise "the institutions of sovereign power" by utilizing their own social rights (Hobbes, 1957: 223). Accordingly the university of the conservative disposition, requires that a student who learns a technical skills acquires with it with a cautious and reflective sense of its epistemological, moral and historical context.
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To Be Conservative as a Disposition of Education: Familiarity, Freedom and Learning from the Perspective of Michael Oakeshott


국문초록

오우크쇼트 교육론에서 보수적 성향:
익숙함, 자유, 학습을 중심으로

문 덕1・권 정 선2・김 회용3
1,2,3부산대학교 교육학과

연구목적: 이 글은 마이클 오우크쇼트의 관점으로 교육에서의 익숙함, 자유 그리고 학습의 세 가지 개념을 탐구해 봉으로써 전통적 의미로서 자유교육에 내재되어 있는 하나의 보수적 성향에 대한 개념을 재정립하는데 목적으로 했었다. 연구방법: 이를 위해, 먼저 역사와 현재 상황에 대한 고찰을 통해 교육 속에서 발견되는 두 가지의 심각한 위기와 익숙함을 발견하였다. 이는 보수적 성향의 지속가능성이 자유교육에의 도입에 관한 것으로, 후자의 실현은 전자의 습득에 대한 조치에 의존한다는 점에서 상호 연결되어 있다. 다음으로, 인류의 삶의 조건에 대한 탐구를 통해 보수적 성향의 특징인 익숙함은 "현재의" 향유에서 비롯된 것임을 밝혔다. 익숙함은 모든 인간의 행위전통을 훼손하는 보수적 성향의 바탕이며, 오히려 도덕적 전통은 교육을 아우르는 방법으로서 유산을 만들어낸다. 그리고 교육 활동의 필수적인 구성 요소로서 보수적 성향은 교육 기회의 길을 제공할 뿐만 아니라 교사와 학생들 간의 관계를 포함하는 역할을 한다고 설명하였다. 연구결과: 궁극적으로 자유교육의 무능력화를 감지하게 보정하는 '실용 교육'을 비판함으로써 실용주의 교육의 해제모니터 도는 보수적 성향의 중요성을 강조하였다. 오우크쇼트의 자유관을 바탕으로 살펴보면, 반성의식으로서 자유로운 보수적 성향이 교양 과목 개발을 감독하고 발전시키는 데 따르며 기능을 할 수 있다고 판단되기도 한다. 결론: 현대교육에서 자유교육의 중요성과 필요성에 신중히 다지고, 오우크쇼트의 보수적 성향에 대한 논의는 현대 현실뿐만 아니라 그의 교육 철학에 대한 통찰력을 분명하게 발견하도록 하고 유용한 시사점을 제시할 수 있을 것이다.

주요어 : 익숙함, 보수적 성향, 형위 전통, 자유, 실용교육, 자유교육