A conflict among geniuses: challenges to the classical paradigm in Sweden, 1828–1832

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ABSTRACT
This article examines challenges to the classical paradigm of education in Sweden that followed in the wake of state-initiated attempts at school reform in the first decades of the nineteenth century. When the internal disputes of the so-called ‘Genius Committee’ resulted in a failure to overcome the increasing divide between reformers, a prolific opportunity to argue the value of practical subjects and natural science arose. This article demonstrates that this conflict over knowledge was characterised by a humanistic consensus that rested on the idea of formal education as well as on the shared commitment to a moral education. As a result, challengers attempted to attribute the same value that gave classical study its supremacy over their rival subjects. The article argues that this aspect of the European educational debates is an overlooked key to understanding the continued relevance of classical education throughout the nineteenth century.

Introduction

In December of 1828 it became clear that the intense dispute over the future of Swedish education had reached a critical impasse. At the heart of the conflict were contesting claims over the value of knowledge: the benefits of classical-humanistic study on the one hand, and the need for practical subject matter on the other. Upon publishing its official report, the failure to bridge this gap by the committee for educational reform, publicly nicknamed ‘the Genius Committee’, was made abundantly clear, manifesting a seemingly unsolvable rift among the nation’s educators and scholars that had been growing during the preceding decades. The compromised report, endorsed by only a small and fragile majority of the committee’s members, can be seen as the first formal challenge to the prominent position of classical studies in the Swedish curriculum of higher learning. Meanwhile a vocal minority within the committee forcefully combated the changes advocated in the report and emphasised the societal and individual value of ancient languages and literature. The resulting stalemate and the subsequent effort by

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1For the Swedish educational reforms and the surrounding debates, see eg Olof Wennäs, Striden om latinväldet: idéer och intressen i svensk skolpolitik under 1800-talet (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1966); Lars H. Nilehn, Nyhumanism och medborgarförstan: åsikter om läroverkets mälsättning 1820–1880 (Lund: Gleerup, 1975); Lars Petterson, Frihet, jämlikhet, egendom och Bentham: utvecklingslinjer i svensk folkundervisning mellan feudalism och kapitalism, 1809–1860, (Uppsala: Historiska institutionen, 1992); Thomas Neidenmark, Pedagogiska imperativ och sociala nätverk i svensk medborgarbildning 1812–1828 (Stockholm: Institutionen för pedagogik och didaktik, 2011).

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the state to overcome it ended up presenting a prolific opportunity to further confront the value of classical education in the public sphere. As the issue now ostensibly balanced on a knife’s edge, advocates for reform, arguing the value of practical knowledge and natural science, made vigorous attempts to uproot the dominance of the humanistic study of classical languages and texts from the core of the curriculum more than 70 years before it finally yielded its hegemonic position. In the present article, I will show that, in their efforts, these challengers first had to negotiate the issues of mental training and moral upbringing that in the pedagogic climate of the early nineteenth century gave classical study its supremacy. I will seek to demonstrate how the agents of reform attempted to attribute similar value to their competing subject matter and how, despite their opposition to the classical-humanistic paradigm, they thus in fact reaffirmed the broad consensus that permeated the pedagogical debate, not only in Sweden but in Scandinavia and Europe as well. Finally, I will argue that a key component to this consensus – and an insurmountable obstacle for any challenge to the classical dominance at the time – was a shared belief in the overarching importance of moral education, a factor that I suggest also deserves comparable reconsideration in the disputes over education of the nineteenth century outside the Swedish context.

Classical and modern viewpoints

The Swedish controversies were part of an international pattern. In several European countries, the classical model of school education was challenged during the nineteenth century. While the European educational debates have drawn considerable scholarly attention, Jürgen Leonhardt has noted that ‘classicism as an educational movement in Europe’ remains largely understudied. Leonhardt’s conclusion seems particularly apt in regard to Swedish scholarship and the developments that it has attempted to analyse. As I have previously discussed elsewhere, the lion’s share of Swedish scholarship on educational debates, particularly those accounts written in the 1960s and 1970s, adopted a class perspective on this conflict. A primary reason for this one-sided approach, as suggested by Bas van Bommel in a recent study of classical humanism in Germany, can be found in the tendency among scholars ‘to look upon classical education from the perspective of modernity’. While there can be no doubt that the prolonged battles over the Swedish school system had a political – and ideological – dimension that must be taken into account, I argue that such a historical viewpoint needs supplementing. Despite mounting and relentless criticism, utilitarian demands and social upheaval,

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2While the scholarship on the transformations of classical education is vast, standard works include: M. L. Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain, 1500–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 85–97; Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830–1960* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 83–113; Françoise Waquet, *Latin, or, The Empire of a Sign: from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (London: Verso, 2001), 12–30; Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (London: Verso, 2010); Bas van Bommel, *Classical Humanism and the Challenge of Modernity: Debates on Classical Education in 19th-century Germany* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

3Jürgen Leonhardt, *Latin: Story of a World Language*, trans. Kenneth Kronenberg (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 266, cf. 275.

4Isak Hammar, ‘Klassisk karaktär: Den moraliska samhällsnyttan av klassiska studier, ca 1807–1828’, *Historisk tidskrift* 137, no. 4 (2017): 607–39.

5Bommel, *Classical Humanism*, 12. Cf. Glenn W. Most, ‘Preface’, in *Disciplining Classics = Altertumswissenschaft als Beruf*, ed. Glenn W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2002), viii–ix.
the classical-humanist hold over the European schools was in most cases maintained if not strengthened, something that a simple dichotomy between political ideologies fail to adequately explain. Arguments for more a practically oriented curriculum had been voiced already in the middle of the preceding century but, like subsequent calls for reform during the nineteenth century, had failed to gain adequate support. Moreover, the status of the natural sciences in Swedish higher learning was declining. In Sweden and Denmark, classical education – chiefly in the form of Latin studies – was not significantly reduced until the beginning of the twentieth century, while in Norway the classical grip was loosened a few decades earlier than in the neighbouring Scandinavian states. This persistent relevance of antiquity in light of the societal transformations of the nineteenth century seems at times to have puzzled scholars more focused on change than continuity. Accordingly, classicist-humanistic arguments have been seen as desperate – or even anachronistic – attempts at delaying the inevitable. However, by viewing the dethroning of Latin as a foregone conclusion resulting from the march of progress, the reasons for the continued belief in the value of classical knowledge are obscured and furthermore fail to adequately trace the developments that finally led to its loss of relevance. The result of such a tendency to ‘neglect or underplay, and to disvalue the endurance of old forces and ideas’, Arno J. Mayer has pointed out, is a distorted view of the nineteenth as well as the early twentieth century. The first reason to revisit this well-trodden field of inquiry, then, is to shed this modernity bias in order to more fully appreciate the arguments for classical education. In the present article, I argue that these arguments rested on the twin pillars of mental and moral training.

A second, and related, reason why these nineteenth-century challenges to the classical-humanistic paradigm warrant attention is that scholars have predominantly depicted educational controversies as a struggle between modern reform and classical conservatism, thus treating these ‘sides’ as oppositional forces related to historical progress. Even when

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6See also Manfred Fuhrmann, Latein und Europa: geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts in Deutschland von Karl dem Grossen bis Wilhelm II. (Cologne: DuMont, 2001), 155; Waquet, Latin, 27; Frank M. Turner, ‘Victorian Classics: Sustaining the Study of the Ancient World’, in The Organisation of Knowledge in Victorian Britain, ed. Michael J. Daunton (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 159; Michael Stephen Silk, Ingo Gildenhard and Rosemary J. Barrow, eds., The Classical Tradition: Art, Literature, Thought (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 39.

7Karin Johannisson, ‘Naturvetenskap på reträtt: En diskussion om naturvetenskapens status under svenskt 1700-tal’, Lychnos 1979/1980 (1981): 109–54.

8Few studies on the educational controversies in the Nordic countries are accessible to international audiences. One exception is Claus Møller Jørgensen, ‘Humboldt in Copenhagen: Discipline Formation in the Humanities at the University of Copenhagen in the Nineteenth Century’, in The Making of the Humanities, Vol. 3: The Modern Humanities, ed. Rens Bod, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 377–95. For previous scholarship in Denmark, see eg Vagn Skovgaard-Petersen, Dannelsel og demokrati: fra latin- til almenskole: lov om højere almenskoler 24. april 1903 (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 1976); Claus Møller Jørgensen, Humanistisk videnskab og dannelsel i Danmark i det 19. århundrede: reform, nationalisering, professionalisering (Århus: Center for Kulturforskning, Aarhus University, 2000); Harry Haue, Almendannelse som ledestjerne: en undersøgelse af almendannelsens funktion i dansk gymnasieundervisning 1775–2000 (Odense: University of Southern Denmark, 2003). For Norway, see eg Helge Dahl, Klassisisme og realisme: den høgre skolen i Norge 1809–1869 (Oslo: Univ.-forl., 1976); Anton Fredrik Andresen, Oppløsningsider, nyhumanisme og nasjonalisme i Norge i de første årene etter 1814: nytt lys på vår første skoledebatt (Oslo: Norges forskningsråd, 1994). Swedish scholarship has in large part been focused on ideological schisms, which I discuss in Hammar, ‘Klassisk karaktär’. See also note 27.

9Cf. Stray, Classics Transformed, 1.

10Bommel, Classical Humanism, 13, 112.

11David N. Livingstone has in a similar vein argued that historical accounts of science have often been ‘touched with a progressivist brush’. See David N. Livingstone, ‘Science, Site and Speech: Scientific Knowledge and the Spaces of Rhetoric’, History of the Human Sciences 20, no. 2 (2007): 72.

12Mayer, Persistence, 4.
scholars have acknowledged that the negotiations were at times complex, and revolving around several pedagogical issues and viewpoints, a conceived bipolarity between modern and classical remains. Moreover, because the Swedish school system at the time was to a large extent focused on the education of clergymen, expected to embody political conservatism, this polarity, arguably, has been reinforced. However, the traditional dichotomy between ‘classicists’ and ‘realists’ is in need of revision, not only in Scandinavia but in other European countries as well. Instead, as rightly emphasised by van Bommel, ‘humanistic ideals and values were shared much more widely than is commonly assumed.’

Furthermore, as I will show, clergymen could in turn publicly argue for reform of the classical curriculum. In examining these developments with renewed interest, then, we can adequately nuance this simplified and obscuring polarity.

I suggest that a fruitful way to approach these questions of conflict and consensus in order to avoid both the modernistic and the bipolar bias is through perspectives developed within the burgeoning field of history of knowledge. Recently, scholars have shown increased interest in how knowledge circulates and transforms outside of scientific institutions. Central to these endeavours has been to place knowledge in its historical context, focusing on questions like those offered by Philipp Sarasin: how, when and (possibly) why a certain form of knowledge appears or disappears and to what effect. A promising line of inquiry would be to add the question of why certain knowledge, seemingly at odds with its historical milieu, remains valid and hegemonic in the face of opposition. Therefore, I propose that the task of tracing the historical context and impact of knowledge needs to include an interest in the discursive struggle over the value of knowledge in order to gain an understanding of how the status of either dominant or rival knowledge is shaped by public conflict and how this status in turn changes over time.

With this in mind, my interest is also directed towards what Irmline Veit-Brause has previously called ‘the historical and logical origin of the split between or bifurcation of the natural and human sciences’. As I will show, the empirical study of the challenges to the classical paradigm also reveals consensus. Rather than bipolar opposites, classicists and reformers shared basic assumptions on the value of knowledge. In recent years, several

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13 Cf. Bommel, Classical Humanism, 113.
14 Bommel, Classical Humanism, 62. For this point, see also Bas van Bommel, ‘Between “Bildung” und “Wissenschaft”: the 19th-century German Ideal of Scientific Education’, European History Online (EGO), published December 14, 2015, http://www.ieg-ego.eu/bommelb-2015-enURN:urn:nbn:de:0159-2015120917 (accessed June 7, 2018).
15 It is important to note that, in Sweden, the common way of earning a steady income as an academic at the time was through a parallel career in the church. As a result, one can also expect to find a wide range of ideological viewpoints within the clergy.
16 See Philipp Sarasin, ‘Was ist Wissensgeschichte?’, Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der Deutschen Literatur 36, no. 1 (2011): 159–72; Philipp Sarasin and Andreas Klücher, ‘Editorial’, in Nach Feierabend: Zürcher Jahrbuch für Wissensgeschichte 7 (Zürich: Zentrum Geschichte des Wissens, 2011: 7–11); Peter Burke, What is the History of Knowledge? (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016); Simone Lässig, ‘The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda’, Bulletin of the German Historical Institute Bulletin 59 (Fall 2016): 32; Lorraine Daston, ‘The History of Science and the History of Knowledge’, KNOW: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge 1, no. 1 (2017): 134–42; David Larsson Heidenblad, ‘Mapping a New History of the Ecological Turn: The Circulation of Environmental Knowledge in Sweden 1967’, Environment and History 24, no. 2 (2018): 265–84. See also now, Johan Östling et al., eds., The Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2018).
17 James A. Secord, Knowledge in Transit. Isis 95, no. 4 (2004): 654–72; Andreas W. Daum, ‘Varieties of Popular Science and the Transformations of Public Knowledge: Some Historical Reflections’, Isis 100, no. 2 (2009): 319–32.
18 Sarasin, Was ist Wissensgeschichte?, 165.
19 Irmline Veit-Brause, ‘Scientists and the Cultural Politics of Academic Disciplines in late 19th-century Germany: Emil Du Bois-Reymond and the Controversy over the role of the Cultural Sciences’, History of the Human Sciences 14, no. 4 (2001): 31–56.
scholars, tracing the influence of C. P. Snow’s term ‘The Two Cultures’, have emphasised the need to historicise the humanities in order to shed new light on the supposed division between the human and the natural sciences.  

Recent historical efforts, operating under the heading history of humanities, have shown the prevailing view of two different, perhaps incompatible cultures of knowledge to be an oversimplification, obscuring the dialectical processes between nineteenth-century disciplines.  

However, the complex relationship between the humanities and the practical and natural sciences deserves re-evaluation not only from the perspective of discipline formation and scholarly research, but also on the closely related level of education. As a case in point, the battle to uproot the dominance of classical study in Sweden was in large part fought in reference to the elementary school while the value of classical knowledge at the universities were more or less a non-issue. In fact, this focus on the earlier, and thus regarding the student more impressionable, stages of higher learning makes perfect sense in light of the emphasis put on mental and moral training.

The contest over the value of classical, practical and natural knowledge was central to these persistent controversies and demonstrate the hurdles that new forms of knowledge had to overcome in order to gain relevance. Thus, precisely the fact that there was a lack of agreement makes this a fruitful entry point for historical inquiry. Such public scientific controversy between ‘actors of knowledge’ (‘Akteure des Wissens’) can then, I argue, be seen as part of forging the public standing or status of both the human and the natural sciences, neither of which should be viewed as inherent or fixed. We tend to forget that the humanistic paradigm reigned supreme during at least the first half of the nineteenth century and that the process whereby the natural sciences gained its modern position was a ‘two-way reciprocal process’.

Third, and finally, there is a conspicuous absence in much of the historical analysis on the educational debates regarding the role played by morality. This too, I would suggest, can be attributed to a modernity bias. Regarding the Swedish educational

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20 See Rens Bod, ‘Introduction: Historiography of the Humanities’, in The Making of the Humanities, Vol. 1: Early Modern Europe, ed. Rens Bod, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 9–11; Rens Bod and Julia Kursell, ‘Introduction: The Humanities and the Sciences’, Isis 106, no. 2 (2015): 228; Jeroen Bouterse and Bart Karstens, ‘A Diversity of Divisions: Tracing the History of the Demarcation between the Sciences and the Humanities’, Isis 106, no. 2 (2015): 341; Rens Bod, Julia Kursell, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn, ‘A New Field: History of Humanities’, History of Humanities 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–8. See also the report of the conference The Two Cultures ‘_Avant la lettre_: How the Sciences and the Humanities grew apart’ München, Germany (2016).

21 Lorraine Daston, ‘Objectivity and Impartiality: Epistemic Virtues in the Humanities’, in The Making of the Humanities, Vol. 3: The Modern Humanities, ed. Rens Bod, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014): 27; Floris Solleveld, ‘How to Make a Revolution: Revolutionary Rhetoric in the European Humanities around 1800’, History of Humanities 1, no. 2 (2016): 277–301; Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, ‘Culture and Nature in the Prism of Knowledge’, History of Humanities 1, no. 1 (2016): 155–81.

22 Veit-Brause, ‘Scientists and the Cultural Politics’, 33; Herman Paul, ‘The Heroic Study of Records: The Contested Persona of the Archival Historian’, History of the Human Sciences 26, no. 4 (2013): 69; Daston, ‘Objectivity and Impartiality’, 28, 31.

23 Sarasin, _Was ist Wissensgeschichte?_, 169.

24 Cf. Julian Hamann, ‘_Bildung_’ in German Human Sciences: The Discursive Transformation of a Concept’, History of the Human Sciences 25, no. 5 (2011): 57. For the general role of publications in the Swedish public sphere at this time, see Henrik Edgren, _Publizitet för medborgarsamvet: det nationellt svenska i Stockholmsstädning_ 1810–1831 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2005).

25 Veit-Brause, ‘Scientists and the Cultural Politics’, 33; cf. Rheinberger, ‘Culture and Nature’, 158.

26 The importance of moral education during the eighteenth century is demonstrated by Stefan Rimm, _Välskaps- och mannsförtóng: Retorikutbildningen i svenska skolor og gymnasiar_ 1724–1807 (Uppsala: Örebro University, 2011). See also Johansson, ‘Naturvetenskap på reträtt’, 129–30. For further discussion on moral education, see also Bo Lindberg, _Humanism och vetenskap: Den klassiska filologien i Sverige från 1800-talets början till andra världskriget_ (Grillby: Lärdomshistoriska samf., 1987): 104–9.
controversies, I have recently argued that Swedish scholars, even while acknowledging the occurrence of moral arguments, have tended to eschew this component in favour of other interpretations, chief among which has been national class struggle. Frank M. Turner has drawn attention to a similar pattern for the educational history of Victorian England. To be sure, class distinction, as for instance argued by Mayer, was an important factor in regard to classical education. As I will show, however, moral upbringing and formation of character occupied a central position in these knowledge disputes and needs to be re-evaluated. As pointed out by Christopher Stray, ‘Moral virtue, social status, and classical exempla were mutually embedded and mutually reinforcing.’ Yet, the significance of morality to the continued relevance of the classical paradigm remains understudied.

The Swedish, and Scandinavian, educational controversies remain largely unknown to international scholars. In order to remedy this, the period of 1828–1832 provides a particularly apt example of the complex negotiations that took place in the Swedish public sphere and of the underlying factors that characterised the division between ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ at this early stage in the diverging trajectories of both the humanities and its challengers. Before the so-called Revision of 1832 reaffirmed the value of classical education, the vacuum produced by the criticised report signalled the prospect of tipping the scales in favour of modern initiatives as the educational gulf was underscored in a way arguably not seen again until the last decades of the nineteenth century. The first few years following the failed report were characterised by inactivity as a result of the gridlock, enhanced by the fact that no action was taken by the state. The stalemate remained in place until a state-initiated revision was launched. In a Decree of February of 1832 by the King in Council (Kungl. Maj:t), those concerned with the issue of educational reform were advised to comment on the report of ‘the Genius Committee’. Educators heeding the call had to argue the value of either new or old forms of knowledge on the public stage. While this was not the first or the last time the issue would surface in the public sphere, the fact that a formal recommendation from a Royal committee on education officially declared for reform of the classical model was nevertheless significant. Thus, the circumstances provide us with a favourable context for further study.

27 For examples of an ideological and/or class perspective on the Swedish educational controversies, see Gunnar Richardson, Kulturkamp och klasskamp: ideologiska och sociala motsättningar i svensk skoloch kulturpolitik under 1880-talet (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 1963); Wennås, Striden om latinväldet; Thor Nordin, Nya elementarskolan i Stockholm: ett försök att förverkliga frihetens och jämlikhetens idéer. 1. Skolans tillkomst och det första organisationsskedet (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1978); Petterson, Frihet, jämlikhet; Christina Florin and Ulla Johansson, ‘Där de härliga lagrarna gro–: kultur, klass och kön i det svenska lärarverket 1850–1914 (Stockholm: Tiden, 1993).
28 Turner, ‘Victorian Classics’, 163.
29 Mayer, Persistence, 253–54; cf. Stray, Classics Transformed, 11.
30 See also Anthony Grafton, Polyhistor into Philolog: Notes on the Transformation of German Classical Scholarship, 1780–1850, in History of Universities, iii, ed. Charles Schmitt (Amersham: Avebury, 1983: 159–192); Waquet, Latin, 37; Hamann, ‘Bildung’, 50.
31 Stray, Classics Transformed, 17.
32 Scholarship on education in nineteenth-century Sweden is vast and further includes: Edvard Rodhe, Kyrka och skola i Sverige under 1800-talet: en kyrkohistorisk undersökning (Lund, 1908); Sven Askeberg, Pedagogisk reformverksamhet: ett bidrag till den svenska skolpolitikens historia 1810–1825 (Uppsala: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 1976); Torgny T. Segerstedt, Den akademiska friheten 1809–1832 (Uppsala, 1976); Sigurd Åstrand, Reallinjens uppkomst och utveckling fram till 1878. (Uppsala: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 1976). Now see also in particular, Esbjörn Larsson, ‘Classes in Themselves and for Themselves: The Practice of Monitory Education for Different Social Classes in Sweden, 1820–1843’, History of Education 45, no. 5 (2016): 511–29.
opportunity to evaluate the contest of attributing value to competing forms of knowledge when the stakes were particularly high.\textsuperscript{33}

The classical-humanistic paradigm in Sweden and Europe

The committee’s failure to reach a consensus spelled the culmination of public conflict over the educational system that had characterised the first three decades of the nineteenth century. In 1807 a reform was introduced, supplanting the previous school ordinance from 1724. The reform put Latin front and centre of the curriculum, but was almost immediately subject to revision. In the wake of the reform of the Swedish government established in 1809, critique was levelled at a school system that provided training only for the clergy and civil servants. Despite the calls to heed the needs of the bourgeoisie, however, the result of the revision was the School Ordinance of 1820, traditionally characterised as a neohumanistic programme. Although the Swedish debates were complicated, conflating various ideological and educational viewpoints and agendas, the continued focus on the study of Latin and the belief in the value of classical study was the main reason the controversies continued and further revisions were perpetually demanded.

The term neohumanism was coined by Friedrich Paulsen to designate the new approach to classical study characterised by for instance Friedrich August Wolf and Wilhelm von Humboldt. In its ideal form, neohumanism meant that the aim of classical study should no longer be to imitate the classics, but through them to procure a harmonious development of the self, or \textit{Selbstbildung}.\textsuperscript{34} Recently, the impact of this ideal on German education has been called into question by Bas van Bommel. van Bommel argues that there was a distinct continuity from the ‘classical humanism’ of the Renaissance in the practice of teaching the classics at the German \textit{Gymnasium} and indeed that the very term ‘neohumanism’ is inappropriate to describe the classical school education.\textsuperscript{35} There are reasons to suspect that van Bommel’s claim holds validity outside Germany as well. For one thing, the moral argument for the continued emphasis on classical languages and ancient literature was, even in its nineteenth-century form, anything but new. Renaissance humanists, after all, professed antiquity to be full of moral exempla. But in the face of opposition, the value of classical education for the shaping of moral character in young men seems nonetheless to have reverberated with new validity. In Sweden, the neohumanistic ideal was subdued in the educational context as well, partly because of the close link between school and church, manifested in the fact that many classicists were also priests.\textsuperscript{36} Moreover, Latin was never made to relinquish its primacy to Greek, which in the scholarly tradition has always been a trademark of neohumanism.

\textsuperscript{33}The main focus of the empirical study is made up of the official list of publications formally received in response to the call by the King in Council as declared in the Revision of 1832.

\textsuperscript{34}See Friedrich Paulsen, \textit{Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts auf den Deutschen Schulen und Universitäten vom Ausgang des Mittelalters bis zur Gegenwart: mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den klassischen Unterricht} (Leipzig: Verlag von Veit & Comp, 1921). The impact of neohumanism in Sweden has been demonstrated by Lindberg, \textit{Humanism och vetenskap}. For the Swedish concept of \textit{bildning} and its relation to the German \textit{Bildung}, see Sven-Eric Liedman, ‘In Search of Isis: General Education in Germany and Sweden’ in \textit{The European and American University since 1800}, ed. Sheldon Rothblatt and Björn Wittrock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 74–106.

\textsuperscript{35}Bommel, \textit{Classical Humanism}, 57.

\textsuperscript{36}See Bo Lindberg, ‘Tegnérv och nyhumanismen’, in \textit{Tegnérv och retoriken}, ed. Louise Vinge (Lund: Tegnérsamf., 2003), 76.
Similar debates raged around the same time in Denmark and Norway with analogous characteristics. By the nineteenth century, the practical use of Latin and Greek had diminished. In all three of the Scandinavian public spheres, the pedagogical value of classical languages instead resided in their professed superior ability to train the mind of the pupil. Although this pedagogic logic ultimately rested on the philosophical discussions regarding the faculties of the human mind, debated at length during the previous century by Christian Wolf, Johan Nicolai Tetens and Immanuel Kant among others, explicit references to such theoretical discussions were few if not non-existent.37 Instead, the theory of ‘formal education’ (formale Bildung) outlined by German classicist and educational reformer Friedrich Gedike towards the end of the eighteenth century took on fundamental importance and found considerable traction also outside Germany.38 To educators in all three of the Scandinavian countries, it was a crucial point of departure when defending the classical-humanistic paradigm that the separate faculties – including wit, ingenuity, memory, imagination and taste – could in fact be adequately trained and that this was the task of publicly funded schools.39 As pointed out by Jürgen Leonhardt, this represented a radical paradigm shift in ideas about education yet one that meant Latin not only retained its dominance over the curriculum, but even experienced an upsurge.40 It also meant that practical value was transmuted into formal value and that knowledge essentially became secondary to the process of obtaining it. As noted by van Bommel, Gedike’s idea thereby ‘combated critics of classical humanism with their own weapon’.41 More importantly for present concerns, I argue that the idea of mental training was married with the time-honoured idea of moral upbringing through classical texts.42

‘The Genius Committee’, so called due to the prominence of its members, had begun its deliberations in 1825.43 The internal discord of the committee members soon became a matter of public record. When finally delivering their report the result was, as one member, Carl Adolph Agardh, professor of botany and practical economy at Lund University, put it, ‘the opinion of no one’ and the pyrrhic victory of the majority left the public combatants at a cease-fire. Moreover, the carefully phrased and restrained report was endorsed by only a small majority of the committee’s members, referred to as the ‘Plurality’. Despite its impeded authority, the Plurality made the radical proposal to introduce a modern programme alongside the existing classical one, the idea being that these parallel programmes would coexist within each school. The break with the

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37 See for instance Nilehn, Nyhumanism, 34. For the philosophical discussions regarding the faculties of the soul, see Antonino Falduto, The Faculties of the Human Mind and the Case of Moral Feeling in Kant’s Philosophy (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2014); and Dominik Perler, The Faculties: A History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).
38 In for instance Friedrich Gedike, Gesammelte Schulschriften (Berlin, 1789). For the influence of Gedike, see Bommel, Classical Humanism, 123–5. Note that van Bommel has proposed that Gedike’s contribution was not a new ideal, but simply a new way of defending classical education.
39 Isak Hammar, ‘Conflict, Consensus and Circulation: The Public Debates on Education in Sweden, c.1800–1830’, in Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge, ed. Johan Östling et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2018), 144–59.
40 Leonhardt, Latin, 263.
41 Bommel, Classical Humanism, 125.
42 See also Denise Phillips, Acolytes of Nature: Defining Natural Science in Germany 1770–1850 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 233.
43 For ‘the Genius Committee’ (Snillekommittén), see Neidenmark, Pedagogisk initiativ, which includes abstracts in English. See also Hanna Östholm, ‘Snillekommittén och teknologin: 1820-talets diskussion om universitet och tillämpningsskolor’, Med hammare och fackla: Sancte Örjens gilles årsbok 38 (2004): 205–50.
The school code of 1820 was unmistakable and despite the best efforts of the Plurality to construe this as anything but a challenge to the classical paradigm, this was exactly how it was perceived. The Minority, led by Samuel Grubbe, professor of ethics and politics at Uppsala University, vehemently opposed the official stance in the report’s appendices. His ‘reservation’, signed by seven of the committee members, highlighted the divergent views on knowledge. In large part, as I will demonstrate, the schism within the committee can be traced back to the pedagogical logic provided by Gedike.

According to this commonly shared logic, knowledge of Latin was not the ultimate goal of its study, but rather the harmonious development of the mind that came from meticulous study of languages. As pointed out by Julian Hamann, the aim was ‘to learn the general rules of thought, not certain contents of positive knowledge’. Despite voices to the contrary, the ‘dead’ languages were in fact seen as the best instruments in such an enterprise. Both Latin and Greek were regarded as fixed and furthermore carried within them what classicists frequently referred to as the noble spirit of antiquity. The former captured the heroic virtue of the Roman, while the latter encapsulated the thoughtful, freedom-loving Greek. Latin, it was publicly argued, furthermore had the most logical grammar on top of being the foundation of most modern languages. The chain of reasoning seems to have been that since Romans were a logical people, their language was a logical language and, consequently, that studying Latin cultivated logical thinking. Proposing the study of modern languages because of their practical usefulness effectively challenged this logic. Consequently, Grubbe and the Minority could not abide a parallel programme within a single school.

Additionally, the vast majority of educators professed to agree on the goal of state-controlled education. The aim was to produce not only competent, but moral citizens. Here too, classical education had the prerogative. Not only did the meticulous study of Latin and Greek foster hardworking, diligent and therefore also moral students, but an enduring ‘practical use’ of the dead languages was that they opened up the classical world as the pupil gained access to the ancient authors. This in turn had a moral value as they could learn first-hand of the noble, patriotic and manly deeds and virtues of the ‘old ones’, thereby moulding their character after ancient ideals. In the end, it was in the moral and mental training that the continued focus on classical education found its raison d’être. Subsequently, challenges to the dominance of classical studies had to offer a solution to the question of both moral upbringing and the training of the faculties of the mind, to which classical education was thought to provide the best answer.

The failed report of 1828

The disagreement within the committee proved an analogy for the dispute among educators in general. Not only did the proposal of competing programmes become symbolic for the schism in pedagogic theory, but the report published by the committee

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44 Hamann, ‘Bildung’, 54.
45 Leonhardt, Latin, 272.
46 Stray, Classics Transformed, 12; Manuel Baumbach, ‘Lehrer oder Gelehrter? Der Schulmann in der deutschen Altertumswissenschaft des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts’, in Disciplining Classics = Altertumswissenschaft als Beruf, ed. Glenn W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2002), 119.
47 Cf. Hamann, ‘Bildung’, 50.
also contained arguments for the value of classical, practical and natural knowledge. In certain regards these were oppositional, while in others they also betrayed consensus as to the value of knowledge.

Even though it contained a formal challenge to the supremacy of classical-humanistic study, the disagreement within the committee resulted in a vague and ambiguous report. The closest the Plurality came to any form of statement was that the educational system hitherto had not been suited to ‘the needs of everyone’, with an all too narrow focus on dead languages, in themselves ‘less useful in real life’. In general terms, it professed that the demands of the age could no longer be met by the old system. Therefore, it was argued, a modern programme had to be introduced to the same scientific level as the classical programme. Not only was the report elusive as to the value of new knowledge, there was in the report no formal denial of the value of classical knowledge. Moreover, the report underscored that there existed within the committee no disagreement about the goal of education: the harmonious development of the intellectual faculties of individuals, which of course, in the end, also meant the fostering of good citizens. But the meticulous study of living, foreign languages – German, French and English – could, the report posited, very well fill the role of Latin and Greek in this regard.

If the Plurality were being diplomatic and cautious, the Minority were more adamant about the dangers of undermining the classical foundation of education. Contemptuous of mere learning and pejoratively scorning ‘useful knowledge’, Samuel Grubbe persisted that if practical knowledge were to have any value in the curriculum, it too needed to be treated as an instrument of intellectual development and not according to its utility in various professions. To be sure, this was an Achilles’ heel for the reformers, since it was, as observed by Leonhardt, ‘the very nonutility of classical education’ that ultimately confirmed its educational value.

The idea that practical knowledge could supplant the value of ancient languages and literature as instruments that formed a disciplined mind thus met with great resistance. Several of the other members of the Minority attached their own arguments next to Grubbe’s formal repudiation, confirming the value of classical knowledge and the dangers of altering the curriculum. One of the most renowned members of the committee, Erik Gustaf Geijer, professor of history at Uppsala University, instead chose to publish his reasons for wanting the educational system to remain untouched the following year. It was, Geijer claimed, naive to believe that practical, modern or civic knowledge could be equally as learned as classical studies. The latter not only gave the individual the freedom to dedicate himself to anything, thus proving more instrumental than any modern programme, it provided the state with the kind of knowledge it needed. Similar arguments were published by Pehr Gustaf Boivie, principal at the

48 Betänkande af comitén till öfverseende af rikets allmänna undervisningsverk (Stockholm, 1829), 7.
49 Betänkande, 2, 24–6.
50 Betänkande, 35, 37.
51 Samuel Grubbe, ‘Reservation’, in Betänkande af comitén till öfverseende af rikets allmänna undervisningsverk (Stockholm, 1829), xiii.
52 Leonhardt, Latin, 267.
53 It should be noted that some of the reservations attached were focused on other pedagogic issues and have therefore not been included in the study.
54 Erik Gustaf Geijer, Några anmärkningar om uppostran och undervisning, med afseende på de yrkade förändringarna i allmänna läroverket (Stockholm, 1829), 38–9, 46. Cf. Hamann, ‘Bildung’, 52.
Cathedral School of Uppsala in 1833 at the appeal of the King in Council. The charge of the educational system was not merely to teach, but to guide young men to autonomy and virtue. Ultimately therefore, classical study was simply more useful in life. In view of this, sustaining the paradigm made perfect sense.

The moral virtue of the classical paradigm

In the public sphere, the need to protect the position of classical education was also argued on the basis of its moral value. In his formal repudiation, Samuel Grubbe not only stressed the superiority of the classical languages in developing the mind, but also called attention to the influence that classical studies had on the noble spirit and manly character of the disciple. Classicists such as Archbishop Carl von Rosenstein and politician Hans Järta, both members of the committee, persisted that Roman literature exerted a positive influence on the young pupil and that men of state who had studied Latin and Greek revealed in their actions a more mature and steady mind, as well as a nobler and gentler disposition than those with modern education. The characteristics of the kind of moral education that classical study could provide varied. Several of the Minority members repeated the metaphor that Latin studies were a much needed ‘physical education of the mind’, one that hardened the child for life’s adversities. Thus, a classical education was framed repeatedly at the time as a safeguard for the feebleness and slothfulness of the age; an age that required children to be toughened not spoiled. Just like Grubbe, many classicists also held that their subjects instilled a manly gravity in the pupil, and thus served as protection against contemporary threats such as self-interest and extravagance. In sum, and as I have argued elsewhere, the morality that classical proponents believed to be strengthened as a result of the classical paradigm and which they negotiated in the public sphere was the development of a manly, patriotic, stalwart but also self-sufficient and dutiful personal character that served as a defence against what was believed to be problematic tendencies of the age.

The public battle over education was not fought on equal terms. Classicists had the considerable advantage of tradition and the benefit of having the reigning pedagogic theory firmly on their side. In this, the moral value of classical study proved yet another hurdle for reformers to overcome.

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55 Pehr Gustaf Boivie, Enskildt betänkande till 1832 års skolrevision (Uppsala, 1833), 7.
56 Grubbe, ‘Reservation’, vii.
57 Geijer, Några anmärkningar, 1–2.
58 Carl von Rosenstein, ‘Anförande till Protocotlet’ in Betänkande af comitén till öfverseende af rikets allmänna undervisningsverk (Stockholm, 1829), xlvi; Hans Järta, Om Sveriges läröverk: Stycken ur en afbruten skrift (Uppsala, 1832), 102.
59 Rosenstein, ‘Anförande’, xlvi; Carl Fredrik af Wingård, ‘Reservation emot Lärdoms- och Apologist-Skolors sammanslänande’, in Betänkande af comitén till öfverseende af rikets allmänna undervisningsverk (Stockholm, 1829), 102.
60 Hammar, ‘Klassisk karakter’, 638.
The practical knowledge challenge

To add to the considerable obstacles for would-be reformers, classical education was a recognised category of knowledge, whereas the definition of practical education was more fluid. In a sense, ‘practical’ was largely defined in opposition to ‘classical’ and therefore also seemed to mean simply ‘modern’ or ‘reformed’. This semantic ambiguity also provided opportunity for critical voices. Civic knowledge was for instance pejoratively defined by Hans Järta as such knowledge as was deemed to be immediately useful to citizens who seek profit. Similar condemnation was voiced by Boivie who felt that materialism permeated the committee’s report, and even went as far as saying that ‘self-utility’ had become a public deity.\(^61\) Like Grubbe and Järta he disqualified ‘immediately useful knowledge’ but also directly posited that the committee’s love for practical knowledge had clouded its view on the purpose of language studies.\(^62\) While such suspicions were in a way confirmed by the reform-minded Pehr Gustaf Cederschiöld, who in 1832 argued for the inclusion of knowledge that was of particular value to the ‘commercial’ classes, such barefaced arguments were rarely voiced in the public sphere. The materialistic reasons for reforming the curriculum were ostensibly a risky road to take. Because modern languages were, despite whatever formal value they were awarded by supporters, valuable for practical purposes, Grubbe, Järta and their allies could easily condemn modern theories of education as too narrowly focused on the material gain of learning languages, and refute reformers’ claims that they too sought the best means to develop the mind. Indeed, this kind of suspicion towards the materiality of subjects was common to European classicists.\(^63\)

To be sure, reformers themselves claimed to be appalled by such accusations of being too materialistic. Nevertheless they were having difficulty manoeuvring around this critical allegation. In particular Anders Fryxell, an educator who had gained some notoriety in the 1820s for his challenge to the dominance of ancient languages, complained in 1832 of reformers being unjustly blamed for trying to obliterate the classical tradition in favour of economic gain and materialistic principles.\(^64\) Instead he maintained that it was only a question of balancing the classical and the modern, not eradicating the former to benefit the latter. However, such suspicions cast a shadow on his argument that modern languages were more suitable for the young mind. By turning the curriculum on its head – modern languages first and dead languages second – his proposal unmistakably clashed with the pedagogical logic of reading Latin early in order to train the mind and soul, a method that many believed prepared the pupil for any and all other subjects, including modern languages.

The carefulness and caution of the committee’s official report was endemic. Attacking the position of classical education was a precarious venture. Despite his aim to dislodge the classical hold on the curriculum, Fryxell for instance took care to emphasise his veneration for antiquity. Yet, not everyone was fearful of appearing overly critical of classical knowledge. The above-mentioned Cederschiöld professed astonishment over the fact that every pupil should be forced to throw away 10 of the

\(^{61}\)Boivie, Enskilt betänkande, 15.
\(^{62}\)Boivie, Enskilt betänkande, 9.
\(^{63}\)Bommel, Classical Humanism, 36; Phillips, Acolytes, 229.
\(^{64}\)Anders Fryxell, Försök att närmare bestämma frågorna om undervisningsverkens reform (Stockholm, 1832), 29.
best years of their life to study a language without even the smallest value. The time wasted on dead languages – which could only result in incomplete knowledge of them anyway – should be used to pursue ‘real sciences’ instead.65 He was backed up by Carl Abraham Bergman, a vicar from the south of Sweden who also pointed out that not only was knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew of little or no use in life, but distracted from more vital subjects.66 Nevertheless, most advocates of any modern reform felt that they had to emphasise their esteem for the value of a classical study, and underscore that they were not uprooting, but mindfully improving the curriculum. More importantly, they all, even Cederschiöld and Bergman, professed to be in total agreement regarding the overarching theory of formal education. Most of them were also adamant that the goal of education was moral upbringing, even though not always taking care to stipulate exactly what this did or did not entail. This, again, also meant that the debate did not revolve around the university, but the elementary school. The need for scientists and civil servants to obtain a classical education was clearly beyond reproach at this juncture.67

Attempts to solve the issue of how to offer an alternative to the time-honoured moral and mental training of classical study took different forms in the debate. One argument was simply that modern languages could fill the role of Latin or Greek. Another pointed to religion. Principal Johan Strömersten resolutely expressed that the purpose of education was a moral upbringing first and procurement of knowledge second. The public value of proper education was according to him ‘virtue and wisdom’.68 He thus agreed with the advocates of classical education that diligence and meticulousness were crucial to the moral strength of men. Yet he did not see studies in dead languages or ancient literature as the proper means to ensure this development in the pupil. Instead this role had to be filled by Christianity. In fact, Strömersten considered it ‘unnatural’ to begin language studies with Latin and thus instead advocated a modern language programme.69

The claim that the classics were the safest way to moral education could also be directly confronted. In his well-circulated pamphlet of 1823, Fryxell had specifically questioned the assumption that the literature of Ancient Rome was indeed suitable for the moral upbringing of young boys, an idea that was almost generic among Swedish classicists. As a case in point, the famous poet and professor of oriental languages, Esaias Tegnér, repeatedly argued in public that while it was true that Latin and Greek trained the mind of the young boy ‘like a steel bath’, the ultimate goal of learning the ancient languages was that it opened up the world of ancient literature.70 Fryxell was, to say the least, sceptical to the benefits of such a pedagogical approach. Should not Christian literature fill the role of instilling virtue and character? Did in fact not the writings of Horatius and Ovidius contain many immoral ideas and corrupt values?71

65 Pehr Gustaf Cederschiöld, Till Kongl. Majt i underdånighet ingifne anmärkningar vid det betänkande, som comitéen till öfverseende af rikets allmänna undervisningsverk afgifvit d. 20de Dec. 1828 (Stockholm, 1832), 23.
66 Carl Abraham Bergman, Om svenska scholväsendet, eller elementarscholan (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1832), 62.
67 Cf. Bommel, Classical Humanism, 90.
68 Johan Isak Strömersten, Bidrag till lösning af den stora frågan om undervisningsverkens brister och förbättringar (Stockholm, 1829), 31.
69 Strömersten, Bidrag, 11.
70 See eg Esaias Tegnér, Tal vid särskilda tillfällen (Stockholm, 1831), 89.
71 Anders Fryxell, Förslag till enhet och medborgerlighet i de allmänna undervisnings-verken (Stockholm, 1823), 23; Försök, 33.
Such concerns relating to the role of pagan literature in the moral upbringing were not limited to Sweden, as shown by Waquet.\textsuperscript{72} It is important to note that Fryxell indeed stressed the moral goal of education, yet questioned the prerogative of classical literature for this purpose. Instead, Fryxell was adamant that modern languages were vital for science and contained humanistic elements; their value were both practical and formal.\textsuperscript{73}

Classicism and reform could indeed at times appear to be a bipolar conflict. Despite his efforts to emphasise his high esteem for the classical, Fryxell could not conceal his frustrations with what he referred to as the ‘Latin absolutism’ of his day. As a prime example of this tendency he named Anders Otto Lindfors, Professor of Roman eloquence and poetry at Lund University. Quoting Lindfors as having stated that without the classical languages there can be no hope of achieving either a scientific education, elegance of thought or nobleness of action, Fryxell referred to his opinions as repulsive if not laughable.\textsuperscript{74} Despite such polemics, however, the combatants clearly agreed on the desired end result of education as that of a moral upbringing. Although he did not publicly take part in the discussion of the committee’s work, Lindfors published a treatise, in Latin, in that same year that heavily emphasised the moral value of ancient literature.\textsuperscript{75}

### The natural science challenge

Another challenge to the classical paradigm came from voices who wanted to elevate the value of subjects in the natural sciences. For instance, not every member of ‘the Genius Committee’ positioned himself on the axis of classical versus modern languages. The above-mentioned professor of botany and practical economy, Carl Adolph Agardh, instead confronted the classical paradigm on the basis of an elaborate programme that emphasised the importance of heeding the particular strengths and interests of the individual student. Such an approach had both intellectual and moral gains, he argued. In stark contrast to the prevailing pedagogic spirit, Agardh held that the formal value of classical languages was overrated and that a classical education should be reserved for those who needed it: the civil servants. Moreover, dismayed by those who proclaimed his view of ‘bildning’ to be ‘utilitarian’, Agardh reciprocally accused classical education of being potentially pleasure-seeking and self-indulgent.\textsuperscript{76} More importantly, utility or practical usefulness was not the main objective of studying nature according to Agardh. Instead, he argued that through the natural sciences man became man, separated from beast, woman and the uneducated.\textsuperscript{77} Without denying the societal use of classical education for civil servants, the natural sciences should therefore be added to the curriculum where it could fill both moral and intellectual purposes.

While the committee’s report had not advocated any marked increase in subjects such as natural history, it had underscored the mutually beneficial relationship between the natural sciences and industry.\textsuperscript{78} On the other side of the divide, the defenders of classical education,

\textsuperscript{72}Waquet, Latin, 38.
\textsuperscript{73}Fryxell, Försök, 36, 41.
\textsuperscript{74}Fryxell, Försök, 32.
\textsuperscript{75}Anders Otto Lindfors, De studio classicae humanitatis vere aestimando: duo programmata academica (Lund, 1832).
\textsuperscript{76}Carl Adolph Agardh, ‘Slut-Anförande’ in Betänkande af comitén till öfverseende af rikets allmänna undervisningsverk (Stockholm, 1829), 87.
\textsuperscript{77}Agardh, ‘Slut-Anförande’, 88.
\textsuperscript{78}Betänkande, 5.
like Hans Järta, in general did not see the merits of including the natural sciences in the curriculum.\textsuperscript{79} Boivie was particularly sceptical towards the inclusion of physics, chemistry and natural history as he considered them costly and time-consuming. Considering their workload, students could hardly be expected to ‘run around in fields and forests’.\textsuperscript{80} Both agreed that the natural sciences risked taking precious time away from the study of Latin. Moreover, because Latin meant learning logic, proponents could argue that a classical education also offered the best preparation for a future within the natural sciences.\textsuperscript{81}

Nevertheless, several of the debaters who published their arguments after the King in Council’s request followed Agardh in offering the study of natural science as an alternative to classical humanism. As with other pedagogic issues, Swedish educators could also in this regard find inspiration from Germany where the formal value of such subjects had been advocated by for instance Ernst Gottfried Fischer, professor of physics in Berlin. After reiterating that the state was responsible for the moral education of society, Cederschiöld suggested a programme that included the knowledge of nature, mechanics, geography and mathematics. For each subject he formulated practically oriented justification: knowledge of nature enabled the pupil to ‘make use of everything found in nature’, while mechanics was the basis for invention. Even more bluntly he formulated the value of geography as providing the pupil with the knowledge of where his products would be needed.\textsuperscript{82} Nevertheless, Cederschiöld also stated that his curriculum not only trained the mind but developed moral feeling. Carl Abraham Bergman also pointed towards natural history, under which he included physics, chemistry and botany, as a key to ensuring the moral education of young men and Fryxell suggested that natural history, geography and mathematics should, together with modern languages, form the first elements of a child’s education.\textsuperscript{83} Natural knowledge, geography and geometry were not only vital to the sciences, they were humanistic and thus served the harmonious development of the pupil.\textsuperscript{84}

When the verdict of the committee charged with the revision of the Swedish educational system was published in 1833, an even more pronounced defence of the humanistic value of the natural sciences was listed as part of the material that had been sent in in response to the request by the King in Council. First published a decade earlier as a response to what was to become the School Ordinance of 1820, a pamphlet attributed to professor Carl Trafvenfelt but collectively signed by 21 names argued that natural history was not only enjoyable for the young pupil but a most useful and important undertaking that led to ‘true humanity’.\textsuperscript{85} The pamphlet went on to list the formal, religious and moral benefits of the elevation of natural history, which, it was argued, served to awaken ‘the soul’s attentiveness’, filled the young heart with admiration for ‘the Supreme Being’ but could also be seen as a tool to combat vice at an impressionable age.\textsuperscript{86} Admitting that there existed a technological and practical risk in

\textsuperscript{79} For similar views in German pedagogical debates, see Phillips, Acolytes, 229–36. Cf. Richard Yeo, Defining Science: William Whewell, Natural Knowledge and Public Debate in Early Victorian Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 32–3.
\textsuperscript{80} Boivie, Enskildt betänkande, 15.
\textsuperscript{81} Leonhardt, Latin, 275–76.
\textsuperscript{82} Cederschiöld, Till Kongl. Maj:t, 20.
\textsuperscript{83} Bergman, Om svenska scholväsendet, 10, 23.
\textsuperscript{84} Fryxell, Försök, 36.
\textsuperscript{85} Eric Carl Trafvenfelt, Anmärkningar om natural-historiens lärande vid rikets lägre läroverk (Stockholm, 1818), 1.
\textsuperscript{86} Trafvenfelt, Anmärkningar, 3, 6.
the study of nature, the document maintained that if only viewed correctly, knowledge of nature was in fact ‘classical’, and as such a ‘necessary means to foster humanity’. The pamphlet simultaneously emphasised that there was no better preparation for classical study proper than natural history. Of particular note is the fact that the study of nature was explicitly compared to the study of languages, the paragon of pedagogical training. In the same manner that grammar was the path to the thorough learning of a language, so too, the pamphlet stated, should natural history be considered the grammar of the natural sciences. In sum, arguing for the value of natural science thus meant adhering to the pedagogical values of the early nineteenth century. Mirroring the recognised value of classical study, the natural sciences could foster true humanity, train the mental faculties and provide a moral education.

The classical paradigm reaffirmed: conclusions

In December of 1832, as outlined by the King in Council, a Revision committee gave its verdict on the schism made manifest by the report of ‘the Genius Committee’ in a published document. The Revision report listed every text that had been submitted or otherwise been deemed essential and stated that all the remarks officially sent in had been carefully considered. The Revision committee did not abide by the proposal to include two different forms of language programmes, but instead, with reference to the repudiations made by the Minority, reiterated the superior value of the classical languages towards both scientific and civic ends. With the exception of mathematics, referred to as second only to Latin as an instrument to train the mind, the report was sceptical towards inclusion of new subjects in general. Both Germany and England were offered as examples of successful models that put the educational emphasis on classical languages.

Consequently, the challenge to the classical paradigm failed in the aftermath of the polarising report of ‘the Genius Committee’. The Revision of 1832 simply reaffirmed the previous school ordinance, leaving Latin at the top of the curricular pyramid. Although continuously challenged, it was to remain there for the rest of the century. The debate that resulted from the request of the King in Council has thereby been largely ignored by scholars or simply interpreted as an unsuccessful ripple in the prolonged struggle towards modern reform. But as I have demonstrated, there are reasons to view the time frame 1828–1832 as a period when the educational question hung in the balance. Beginning with questions found in the developing fields of history of knowledge and history of humanities, I have attempted to demonstrate how we can gain new insight by pursuing the contest of attributing value to hegemonic and rival forms of knowledge in the public sphere. I will here present my findings in the form of four concluding remarks.

First, as advocates for the inclusion of practical and natural knowledge in the Swedish curriculum gave their best reasons as to why the classical dominance should be broken, they did not present arguments radically at odds with the prevalent classical-humanistic paradigm. They did not profess to disagree with the prevailing pedagogical view of formal education or the goal of mental training. In their efforts, they failed to

87 Trafvenfelt, Anmärkningar, 24.
88 Trafvenfelt, Anmärkningar, 26.
present a unified front as to how new knowledge could secure this goal. More importantly, in the process these challengers in fact reaffirmed the foundation upon which the classical paradigm was built in the early nineteenth century.

Second, as a result, there were no separate cultures of knowledge or bipolar opposites between modern and traditional views on pedagogy or politics on display in this struggle. The fact, for instance, that an ‘actor of knowledge’ was a member of the clergy – or, conversely, advocated reform – did not automatically mean that they declared for one ‘side’ of the confrontation. Nor were advocates for the natural sciences at odds with the educational tenets that legitimised and empowered classical study or argued for their inclusion in the curriculum on rival terms. Instead, the challengers remained safely within the humanistic paradigm, acknowledging the value of classical knowledge. This suggests that a modernity bias has indeed influenced previous efforts in this field.

Third, whether they championed modern languages or natural history, reformers did so by also attributing moral value to the challenging knowledge. If there was one thing all the players in the field professed to agree upon it was the centrality of morality, however broadly or specifically defined at any given instance. This demonstrates that moral upbringing and character formation as a factor in the public battles of education deserve further attention.

As a fourth and final remark, with a specific interest in not only personal opinions, ideologies or political agendas but in the historical circumstances in which the value of different forms of knowledge are being negotiated in the public sphere, it is possible to emphasise that any challenge to the classical hegemony in the early nineteenth century clearly had to navigate both tradition and contemporary consensus. In the end, this proved too difficult. In the discursive struggle over the value of knowledge between 1828 and 1832 agents for reform could not convince their peers that new knowledge could serve the same moral purpose or offer the same mental development in the student. Tracing this factor over the course of the century promises to provide new insights into how and to what effect the status of different forms of knowledge changed without relying on the eschewed perspective of hindsight.

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