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# Thomas Davis's Education Policies: Theory and Practice

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Thesis presented in fulfillment of the regulations
governing the award of PhD.

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## Contents

**Chapter 1: In what way was Thomas Davis an educationalist? ....4**
Introduction ....4
1.1 Definition of an educationalist....8
1.2 Davis's Nationalist Philosophy....12
1.3 Contemporary perspectives on shortcomings in Irish education……19
1.4 Davis's national education....266
1.5 Davis's policy to educate wise and influential citizens ....30
1.6 Davis's policy to educate moral leaders ....37
Conclusion....40
**Chapter Two: University Education ....42**
Introduction ....42
2.1 Utilitarian Education or Liberal Education....43
2.1.1 A comparison of the university ideologies of Davis and Newman ....46
2.2 The Queens Colleges Bill, 1845 ....54
2.2.1 Background to the Queens Colleges Bill ....54
2.3 The Catholic Church and University Education....56
2.4 The debate on the Education Bill in the Repeal Association....60
2.5 Davis's interpretation of 'The Bishops Memorial'....65
2.6 Reaction to the Protestant status of Trinity College Dublin ....68
2.7 Reaction to Government plans to appoint Professors....72
2.8 The Queen's Colleges Bill: a source of division ....73
Conclusion....75
**Chapter 3: Davis's University Curriculum ....77**
Introduction ....77
3.1 Davis's experience of Trinity College Dublin....77
3.2 Davis's University Curriculum....80
3.2.1 Oratory ....80
3.2.2 Moral Philosophy ....90
3.2.2.2 Political Philosophy....93
3.2.3 English Philological Studies....101
Conclusion....10606
**Chapter Four: Teaching Methods and the Learning Environment....110**
Introduction ....110

4.1 Learning methodology....110
4.1.1 Learning in the Home....115
4.2 Trinity College Dublin – Non-residential degrees....122
4.3 System of Instruction - Tutorial and Lecture system....125
4.4 Teaching methodology....129
4.4.1 Lyceum Teaching....132
4.5 Repeal Reading Rooms....139
Conclusion....143
**Chapter Five: Providing a National Education: History....146**
Introduction....146
5.1 Anti-National Education....146
5.2 Why study history? Davis's response....151
5.3 Historiography....156
5.4 Davis's interpretation of Irish history....163
5.4.1 The Irish Parliament of James II, 1689....164
5.4.2 Dispelling the myths about the Irish rebellion of 1641....169
5.4.3 Historical Monuments of Ireland....172
5.4.4 A Ballad History of Ireland....177
Conclusion....188
**Chapter Six: Providing a national education: Irish Culture....191**
Introduction....191
6.1 Cultural Nationalism and Education....191
6.2 Davis's Cultural Education....195
6.2.1 National Art....195
6.2.2 Irish Literature....201
6.2.3 The Library of Ireland....207
6.2.4 The Irish Language....213
Conclusion....221

**Conclusion....223**
**Bibliography....234**

# Chapter One: In what way was Thomas Davis an educationalist?

## Introduction

In 1814, Thomas Davis (1814-1845) was born into a Protestant, middle class family in Mallow, Co Cork. His father, James Davis, a surgeon in the Royal Artillery, was of Welsh origin and his mother Mary Atkins was a descendant of the English Normans. Following the death of his father, Davis's family moved to Dublin where he attended Mr Mungans, a multi-denominational school; and at the age of 16 he attended Trinity College Dublin (TCD) where he attained a B.A. in 1836. He was called to the Irish Bar in 1838 though he never practiced as a barrister. Davis came to public attention in 1837 when he published a pamphlet on *The Reform of the Lords; by A Graduate of Dublin University*; in it he argued that members of the Lords should not inherit their rank they should be elected by the people (Davis, 1837, p33). Nonetheless, it was in his *Presidential Address to the Historical Society* in 1840 that he revealed his political colours – that he was a confirmed nationalist; he urged his audience to engage in patriotic action and to serve their country. His public profile was enhanced by introducing the idea of nationality to the *Citizen*, 1839-41 and to the *Morning Register* in 1841; but it was in *The Nation*, a newspaper he founded in 1842 with Charles Gavan Duffy (1816-1903), and John Blake Dillon (1816-1866), that he developed his idea of nationality and his brand of inclusive nationalism: all Irishmen regardless of race or creed should display tolerance and unite to regenerate their country. In his opinion the Irish nation was a spiritual, cultural entity and each week he defined it through his writing on Irish culture, history, literature, poetry and the national language. He wanted the nation to gain legitimacy through political independence; and he encouraged the people to take ownership of their political future by supporting Daniel O'Connell's repeal movement. It was his ability to explain the idea of nationality and to generate support for it, combined with his enthusiasm, work ethic, moral courage, intelligence and personal charisma which resulted in his informal status as leader of Young Ireland. His untimely death at the age of 31 from scarlatina cut short a promising career as a political journalist and a politician. Davis influenced future nationalists

with his vision for Ireland–political nationalists, cultural nationalists and republicans looked back to Davis for inspiration to legitimize their efforts. His contemporary John Mitchel (1815-1875) described him as the "very heart and soul" of the independence movement; John O' Leary (1830-1907), Fenian activist, underwent a process analogous to religious conversion upon reading Davis's nationalist writings– O'Leary's purpose as an Irishman became clear. His fate was linked to that of his country; and Padraig Pearse (1879-1916) felt that Davis was "the greatest and noblest influence on Irish history since Tone" (Moody, 1945, pp58-59).

This thesis examines Davis's education policies because this aspect of his thinking has been neglected. While his biographers acknowledge that Davis used education to deliver his political agenda they did not perceive him as an educationalist. Gavan Duffy's *A Short Life of Thomas Davis* provides an intriguing survey of Davis's career and focuses primarily on his contribution to Irish nationalism as a journalist and politician. Duffy also acknowledged his role as a teacher of nationality. In his final assessment of Davis, Duffy stated that "the work for which he was fittest was to be a teacher, and he is still one of the most persuasive and beloved teachers of his race; but beyond the pregnant thoughts he uttered, and the noble strains he sang, the life he led was the greatest lesson he has bequeathed to them" (Duffy, 1896, p250). In his book *A Soul Came into Ireland: Thomas Davis 1814-1845*, Molony suggested that education was the means by which Davis would achieve independence and "the flowering of the nation"; he also acknowledged Davis's perception that education included all that made a good citizen (Molony, 1995, preface). Mulvey's *Thomas Davis and Ireland: A Biographical study* explores the vision Davis had for his country's future and examines the political issues which have most relevance to Davis's life and ideas. She acknowledges that education was one of Davis's deepest concerns and especially the whole subject of how young people are educated (Mulvey, 2003, p234). The fact that his biographers did not engage in an in-depth analysis of Davis's education ideas is understandable given that their main concern was to reveal Davis the journalist, politician, nationalist and patriot. Other recent academic studies on Davis explore different aspects of his political thinking,

methods or legacy. Alvey's article *Thomas Davis: The Conservation of a Tradition* (1996) examined the relevance of Davis's principle of nationality to contemporary Irish society. In *"A Nation Once Again? The Dislocations and Displacements of Irish National Memory"* (2005) Mays explores Davis's "spiritual nationalism" and he examines how Davis used language to create a unified national identity. Parker's *"Ourselves Alone": History, Nationalism, and The Nation, 1842-45* (2011) explores how he used poetry to articulate his ideas on nationalism, identity and history. Rodgers's recent thesis *Thomas Davis: Nationalism and the legacy of Protestant Identity Formation* (2012) examines how Davis used history to create an inclusive nationalism. Nevertheless, no academic study on his education ideas exists. This thesis aims to fill this void and to prove that he was an educationalist. It aims to prove that his education theories were not only relevant in his time but are also relevant today, especially his ideas on educating moral citizens and righteous leaders.

It is well known that Davis influenced subsequent political leaders. Arthur Griffith (1872-1922) claimed that Davis was a guiding influence throughout his political life. He published a selection of Davis's writings entitled *Thomas Davis: Thinker and Teacher*, with the intention of reintroducing Davis's thinking to a new generation. It gives a clear indication that Griffith was an admirer of Davis's ideas and his ability as a teacher. Griffith claimed that Davis interpreted Irish nationalism and taught the people "how their forces should be marshalled and directed in its behalf"; he praised Davis for focusing the enthusiasm of youth and the intellect of the people on serving Ireland and he had no doubt that Davis had inspired future generations to resist national subjection and to make every effort for national liberty (Griffith, 1922, xiii). Griffith was also inspired by Davis for during the Treaty debates, Griffith declared:

> I have never departed in my life one inch from the principles of Thomas Davis, and in signing this treaty and bringing it here and asking Ireland to ratify it I am following Thomas Davis still (Colum, 1959, p318).

These principles included "peace with England, alliance with England, confederation with England, an Ireland developing her own life, carving out her own existence and rebuilding the Gaelic civilisation broken down at the battle of Kinsale". He believed that the Treaty provided the opportunity to translate Davis's ideas into practical politics.

Like Davis, Griffith viewed the creation of a New Ireland to be inextricably linked with providing a national education. Education was necessary to create responsible nationalists and to develop the peoples' sense of self-reliance and self confidence. Griffith echoed Davis when he argued that education would promote tolerance and understanding amongst a divided people; it would also prepare the people for the challenges of political independence. Brian Maye, a biographer of Griffith, expressed how Davis influenced Griffith's views on education in a concise manner:

> He[Griffith] was a disciple of Davis who believed in independence and unity by means of evolutionary self-reliance, brought about by knowledge and education (Maye, 1997, p127).

Eamon De Valera (1882-1975) was another leader who looked to Davis for inspiration. He stated that "if there is any man whom I would like to be in Irish history it is Thomas Davis" (Coogan, 1993, p501). This was a striking display of admiration for the ideas and methods of Davis. However, because of a lack of concrete evidence it is difficult to be authoritative on how Davis influenced De Valera but some connections can be identified. Like Davis, he wanted to see the restoration of the Irish language and the development of a native Irish culture; and he was a student of Davis's use of propaganda–especially that which was evident in the nationalist poetry of Davis. De Valera stated that Davis "appealed to people not through their heads, but through their hearts" (Coogan, 1993, p501). De Valera's perception of how Davis appealed to the people was partial. It implied that Davis did not engage in persuasion by logical argument. This is a narrow view of Davis which conforms to the stereotype of him as a romantic idealist. This thesis holds that Davis

appealed to the emotions through his ballads and to the intellect in much of his prose writings–his *Letters from a Protestant* are a good example of his ability to appeal through logical argument. This thesis aims to examine Davis's nationalist curriculum, to understand his contribution to Irish nationalism and to appreciate why future leaders looked to Davis for ideas to advance their political agenda.

This chapter provides a definition of an educationalist and, in order to place Davis's ideas in context, it examines the theories of the eighteenth century education philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and two education thinkers in the nineteenth century: Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) and John Dewey (1859-1952). It examines the influences which shaped Davis's education theories: his education at Trinity College (TCD), Irish nationalism, and the deficiencies of state education. It also explores his policy to provide a national education and to educate wise and influential citizens.

### 1.1 Definition of an educationalist

Education is the process of development of the mind and body of man so that he/she eagerly pursues the ideal perfection of citizenship (Plato). Educationalists specialize in the theories and methods of teaching (Ahmad, 2008, p176). They explore the aims of education and reflect on how education should prepare man for society, cultivate his individual potential and develop his capacity to reason; they are also concerned with the education process and examine what knowledge should be transmitted and how it should be done.

It is important to situate Davis in the wider context of the history of educational ideas. The nature/nurture debate, which preoccupied philosophers and educationalists in the seventeenth century, explores whether knowledge and morality are inherent or inborn in humans or whether they are acquired through upbringing and experience (Murphy, Mufti, Kassam, 2009, p35). In his work *Emile* (1762) Rousseau claimed that to educate a child it is best to isolate the child from society. The reason Rousseau suggested this was because in his judgement French and Swiss society were corrupt, divided by politics and religion. Though Emile was always

intended for society he must be protected from its "baneful effects" (Parry, 2001, p250); and the most effective way to arm Emile against a corrupting society was to educate him according to nature. Rousseau stated that "the inner growth of our organs and faculties is the education of nature"; and he insisted that "nature provides for the child's growth in her own fashion, and this should never be thwarted" (Rousseau cited in Jimack, 1993, pp6, 58).

Rousseau argued that education in the early years should be negative to preserve "the heart from vice and from the spirit of error". The aim of this type of education was to allow the child to develop naturally before it reaches the age of reason and to protect it from negative external influences including falsehood and vice (Gill, 2010, p199). Rousseau encouraged tutors to allow the child to develop his physical strength and his senses but "keep his mind idle as long as you can" (Rousseau cited in Jimack, 1993, p68). Teachers should never lecture or sermonize; they should assist the child to encounter the world by interaction with natural things (Dhawan, 2005); and this experience of nature facilitates the child to develop its talents, strengths and abilities at its own pace.

Rousseau argued that parents and teachers should observe nature to gain an understanding of a child's character; they must know the "child's individual bent" before deciding on moral training. He stated:

> Oh, wise man, take time to observe nature; watch your scholar well before you say a word to him; first leave the germ of his character free to show itself, do not constrain him in anything, the better to see him as he really is (Rousseau cited in Jimack, 1993, p69)

Nature would best cultivate Emile's own inner resources and prepare his future self-sufficiency. Rousseau argued that books would impede this process; they were "the curse of childhood" for they contained useless knowledge. Nevertheless, he considered Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* to be an exception because Crusoe survived on the island by exploiting his innate capacities; consequently he was a suitable model

of self-sufficiency for Emile to imitate (Calder, 2003, p136). By facilitating the self-sufficiency and the child's free enquiry Rousseau was engaged in creating a free, autonomous individual (Gearon, 2010, p128). He longed for a more egalitarian basis to education and claimed to have found this basis in nature. Others however did not agree.

In his work *Outlines of Educational Doctrine*, Herbart suggested that proper nurture was necessary for education. He insisted that teachers should provide guidance on moral issues until the pupil has developed good judgement and the ability to engage in self-observation. The teacher should analyse the pupil's conduct over a period of time identifying "good and bad qualities" and where appropriate should dispense "praise and censure"; the censure must be deserved (Herbart, 1904, p194). Herbart argued that moral improvement does not result from reprimands and punishments; it occurs through discriminating between noble actions and base actions and imitating the good example and language of conscience displayed by others. In his words:

> Moral improvement is not brought about by the constraints of government, nor is the result of those pedagogical punishments which warn the pupil and sharpen his wits by means of the natural consequences of actions. But it is brought about through the imitation of the language of conscience and of genuine honor, as seen in impartial spectators (Herbart, 1904, p194).

In Herbart's view the main aim of education was to fashion citizens with moral character who would contribute to society. Certainly, he agreed with Rousseau that a child was born with unique potential but an education in the values of civilization would transform this potential into the perfection of individuality or character (Blyth, 1981, pp69-79). As a result the highest purpose of education was the development of ethical character; while knowledge, which dealt with "the motives and actions of men", including literature and history, should be studied to provide the ideas which affect the will and shape the character (Hiner, 1971, pp590-591). Herbart followed Kant in recognising that morality was not only the highest aim of education but also the highest aim of mankind (Rusk, 1955, p233).

John Dewey was another educationalist who made a significant contribution to education thinking in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. He blended the insights of Rousseau and Herbart and helped legitimate child-centred education theory. The purpose of education was to promote the growth of the individual (Dewey, 1916, p54). In his work *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, he stated that education should provide the conditions for growth:

> education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which insure growth, or adequacy of life, irrespective of age (Dewey, 1916, p61).

The child should engage in learning and activity in an environment that ensures fruitful growth in freedom and action in a social setting. Hence Dewey's philosophy is closer to Herbart than to Rousseau. The type of learning experience involved participation in community life was defined by Dewey as shared progress (Darling, 1994, p25). Education, therefore, had a social function, it could assist society to advance. He stated that an education system in a democracy should provide individuals with an experience of social learning and facilitate them to develop the attitude, disposition and intellectual habits which would develop them as social beings in a democracy. In his words:

> A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustments of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder (Dewey, 1916, p115).

Schools should not just pass on existing culture; they should help to formulate and improve it; they should contribute to the "constant reweaving of the social fabric" (Dewey, 1916, p3). Educators should promote student's interest in the common good "that they find their own happiness realized in what they can do to improve the condition of others" (Dewey cited in Fisman & McCarthy, 1998, p48). These are the

thoughts that echo the educational attitude of Thomas Davis writing in the Irish context. Similar to Herbart, Davis believed that one of the principal aims of education was to develop ethical character in citizens; and he would have agreed with Dewey that education should prepare citizens for democracy.

This thesis aims to prove that Davis was an educationalist like Herbart or Dewey, neither of whom he had read. Davis believed that his ideas on education would help to transform Irish politics and society. He considered nurture to be an essential part of the education process. He devised a nationalist curriculum to encourage citizens to see themselves as part of the Irish nation and to motivate them to contribute to the process of making it. His curriculum included nationalist ballads, articles in *The Nation* newspaper and the *Library of Ireland* series – all designed to nurture nationalists and future leaders. This is the story of Davis as an educator.

### 1.2 Davis's Nationalist Philosophy

Thomas Davis endeavoured to bring social and political prosperity to Ireland. He insisted that the poor were virtuous but uneducated. Bigotry, intolerance and ignorance had kept Ireland weak and its people oppressed. The solution to national degradation was political independence. He felt compelled to act in the national interest and for this reason he joined O' Connell's repeal movement. He believed that an Irish parliament would make good laws which would regenerate the country; and by joining the repeal movement he could also represent the interests of the Protestant minority against the threat of a Catholic ascendancy (Bartlett, 2010, pp277-279). Joining the repeal ranks was a significant political act for Davis because his family belonged to the Tory political tradition; and many Tories looked on the repeal movement with suspicion because it threatened the viability of the empire (Lengel, 2002, p23). When Davis chose a different political path he stated:

> if I am no longer Tory it is from conviction, for all those nearest and dearest to me are so still (Duffy, 1896, p3).

Though Davis and his colleagues supported O'Connell's political objective they occasionally disagreed with him on methodology; for example they disagreed with

O' Connell's Whig alliance during the 1830s. Davis believed that another approach was required to increase support for the repeal movement and the establishment of a domestic legislature. Consequently, he developed the concept of nationality to generate national sentiment and to encourage patriotic endeavour.

Davis's nationalist thinking was formed by his wide reading on Irish and European affairs, both past and present. He was interested in the nationalism and romanticism that were reshaping Europe in the early nineteenth century. There are similarities between Davis's views and those of German intellectuals, Lessing, Herder and Fichte on the importance of national culture, literature and language in creating a nation (Mulvey, 2003, p40). By Davis's own admission the main influences on his nationalism were his contemporaries at TCD and his active involvement in the historical societies of Dublin. He stated that the notion of "national independence or national policy" had been made in the historical societies of Dublin and belonged to TCD Protestants and a few Roman Catholics (Davis papers, MS 3199, National Library of Ireland).

Thomas Wallis, one of his tutors at TCD, claimed to have a decisive influence on the intellectual shaping of Davis. Wallis, who described himself as "Professor of things in general, and Patriotism in particular", helped to focus the minds of his students on Ireland as a separate entity from England. In a letter to Duffy, Wallis claimed that he was responsible for having "loosened the tenacious phlegm that clogged Davis's nature" (Wallis cited in Duffy, 1896). Duffy questioned this influence by arguing that Wallis's

> faculties were not his servants; the sinews of his will were so relaxed that he could never count on employing them on a given work on any given occasion (Duffy cited in O`Sullivan, 1978, p169).

Davis's friend, John O'Hagan, believed that Wallis's influence on the young student was minimal and that Davis was responsible for his own unique development (O`Hagan, 1891, p3).

Daniel Owen Madden (1815 -1852), editor of *The Speeches of Henry Grattan*, and author of *Ireland and its Rulers Since 1829*, provides additional evidence to support the conclusion that categorising Davis's political opinions prior to his nationalist declaration was an elusive challenge. Madden described him as "a hearty liberal" who was more concerned with imperial than Irish affairs (Madden cited in Duffy, 1896, p16). Duffy and O'Hagan agreed that Davis's earliest political views were Benthamite radical. The basic philosophy which underpinned Jeremy Bentham's social reforms was the principle of utility and the greatest happiness principle. The principle of utility approves or disapproves of every action according to the tendency which it appears to augment or diminish happiness and the greatest happiness principle promotes the greatest happiness of the greatest number (Ryan, 2004, pp25-26). The rightness of an action was measured by the value of its consequences – if an action provided advantage or benefit it was considered useful. Bentham's ideas contributed to the reform of prisons, the English judicial system, reform of the democratisation of election procedure and improvements in efficiency of the Civil Service. There is a lack of evidence available to explain why Davis embraced utilitarianism as a young man; but it is reasonable to assume, based on his political aims, that he supported Bentham's view that laws should create the greatest good for the greatest number. Davis would also have concurred with Bentham's support for the idea of religious liberty and political reform in Ireland (Crimmins, 1997, pp361-367). Furthermore, it is likely that his reading of Bentham would have informed his thinking on the utilitarian value of knowledge – that education should be useful and meet the needs of society. The merits of a utilitarian education will be examined in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, later in life, Davis revealed that he no longer supported Bentham's doctrine of utilitarianism. In a letter to Madden Davis described it as the selfish creed of political economy (Dwan, 2005, p30); he feared that it would corrupt the peasantry. He stated:

> Modern Anglicism-i.e., Utilitarianism, the creed of Russell and Peel, as well as of the Radicals-this thing, call it Yankeeism or Englishism, which measures prosperity by exchangeable value, measures duty by gain, and limits desire to clothes, food, and respectability,- this thing has come into Ireland under the Whigs, and is equally the favourite of the 'Peel' Tories. It is believed in the political assemblies in our cities, preached from our pulpits (always Utilitarian or persecuting); it is the very Apostles' Creed of the professions, and threatens to corrupt the lower classes, who are still faithful and romantic (Davis cited in O'Hagan, 1891, p9).

Davis's positive experience at TCD helped to inform his thinking on inclusive nationalism. Protestant and Catholic students collaborating in the Historical Society convinced him that it was possible for both religions to work together for the benefit of Ireland. His ability to cooperate with his political opponents and to unite them in a common cause was reflected in the substantial number of friends who contributed to *The Nation* newspaper. TCD provided him with the opportunity to form friendships without consideration of race or creed:

> We formed in it friendships which the grave has rather sanctified than destroyed; friendships unchanged by time or death or ambition as they originated without respect to creed or rank or race (Davis Papers, MS 10862, National Library of Ireland).

Davis's contemporaries were not the only influences on his nationalist thinking he was also a student of Irish nationalists. His political opinions were heavily influenced by a number of distinguished intellectuals from the Protestant tradition, including Jonathan Swift, Edmund Burke, Henry Grattan and Wolfe Tone. Their ideas assisted him to formulate his opinions about the necessity to encourage both Catholics and Protestants to unite as members of the Irish nation. Davis's desire to end the system of oppression resonates with Burke's thinking that Catholics should not only be politically represented but should form part of a domestic legislature that would benefit all Irishmen (Conniff, 1994). Burke feared that the Irish Volunteers would dominate an independent parliament to the detriment of Catholics; but in theory he subscribed to Tone's vision of independence (O'Brien, 1992, p252).

Davis insisted that a domestic legislature would make laws which would restore the rights of Irishmen to an education, to security on the land, to a fair system of taxation and thus would restore their dignity. He also agreed with Burke's view that a happy contented people in Ireland was essential to maintain the strength of the empire (Mahoney, 1960, p313). They believed that if Catholics were treated fairly they would be loyal subjects. A discontented Catholic population not only constituted a threat to Protestant politics but also to the unity of the empire. Burke was willing to break the Protestant monopoly; he argued that the Ascendancy was responsible for many of Ireland's problems. Similarly, Davis did not exonerate the Ascendancy from its responsibility but was unambiguous in his claims that England's policies caused most of Ireland's woes. Both Davis and Burke had a profound sense of justice and tolerance. Politicians should not be concerned with self-interest but had a responsibility to discharge their duties to benefit all men. Responsible, accountable members of a domestic legislature were necessary to exercise political authority. This political responsibility was, in Burke's view, a "holy function" (Ritchie, 1990, p187).

Davis's political opinions also benefited from a study of Grattan's strengths and weaknesses as a Protestant leader. Davis praised Grattan for advocating the "principle of equal religious toleration of all sects, and equal popular rights" (*The Citizen*, January 1840, pp155-156). Grattan argued that Catholics would not enjoy civil liberty unless they enjoyed the right of education, the right of self-defence and the right of full inclusion in juries. The right to vote and the right to share in political power were prerequisites to the creation of loyal Catholic citizens. Political unity between Protestants and Catholics would, he stressed, strengthen the Protestant position in the House of Commons. It concerned him that "the Protestant electors have not been able to carry a single point for these last ten years, nor any point for these last twenty years, except in 1779 and 1782" when they had the support of the Catholic community (Madden, 1853, p195). Davis concurred with Grattan's view that Protestants had more to gain by treating Catholics as fellow citizens than by treating them as servants or slaves.

Davis approved of Grattan's "love of liberty" and devotion to his country but it was difficult to reconcile these virtues with the manner in which the parliament of 1782 was relinquished. In Davis's words:

> Never did man or people more nobly found the freedom of a country. Never was freedom, once won, so weakly forfeited (*The Citizen*, January 1840, p154).

In Davis's opinion Grattan lacked the political vision, good judgement and ability to lead–all essential qualities of a statesman. Despite these deficiencies, Davis considered Grattan as one of the great Irishmen in recent history. The fact that he had served Ireland, opposed sectarian bigotry, promoted religious equality and was "always IRISH" - this was sufficient to overlook his weaknesses and to place Grattan in Davis's gallery of illustrious Irishmen (*The Citizen*, January 1840, p155).

Another significant influence on Davis's political thinking was the life and political ideas of Wolfe Tone. Davis's objectives were similar to those of Tone who devoted his political life to achieving political independence and the complete union of all Irishmen.

> To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connexion with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country – these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissentions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman, in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, Dissenter – these were my means (Wolfe Tone cited in Elliott 1989, p126).

There are striking similarities between Tone's political aims and Davis's principle of nationality. Similar to Tone's political philosophy, Davis's principle of nationality depended on political independence and the unity of all creeds. But differences in methodology exist. Davis placed a greater emphasis on developing Irish culture to create a national consciousness; he endeavoured to educate the people about their national rights and their responsibility towards their country. He also displayed a

greater understanding of the Catholic psyche; he knew that resistance to English presence did not result only from loss of land but also from religious persecution (Molony, 1995, p31).

Davis clearly admired Tone and was central to the creation of the Tone cult in the 1840s. He helped to reinvent Tone as a patriot who had served his country and as an inspirational role model for all Irishmen. Davis had planned to write a life of Tone, which would form part of the *Library of Ireland* history series. He died before completing it, leaving behind a dedication to Tone's wife, Matilda, a plan for the book, notes and a first chapter. Among the papers on Wolfe Tone, Davis revealed why he believed some men, like Tone, entered public life; key motives included a desire to remove injustice and to realise a national ideal. These ideals also influenced Davis's decision to serve his country: In his own words:

> Some men are politicians because they are vain, some to gain a livelihood, some from malice. Others leave the gentler ways of love and literature and piety because they detest injustice, because they long to rectify the disordered ….. condition of society and are moved to realise some great ideal of national life (Davis Papers, MS 1791, National Library of Ireland).

Davis saw himself as one of the "others" who pursued a career in public life to influence political and social change. He looked to Grattan, Tone, Burke and Swift as political role models who informed his nationalist thinking and assisted him to comprehend why he should devote his political life to nationalist politics.

Davis developed the concept of nationality to promote a sense of Irishness and to encourage the people to support the repeal movement; he believed that nationality would secure the "blessings of a DOMESTIC LEGISLATURE [sic]" and "raise our people from their poverty"; it would encourage patriotic endeavour; it would foster unity and nationality would be "stamped upon our manners, our literature and our deeds" (Mulvey, 2003, pp62-63). He stated that the Irishman who seeks nationality "revolts against England because the English parliament has too little familiarity with us and too much elsewhere to regard, because it cannot feel for us with the …

sympathy Irishmen could". Nationality would not be achieved by cultivating a dependent mentality; it would only be secured by "self-respect, self-rule and self-reliance" characteristics that could be developed through a programme of national education (Gavan Duffy papers, 12P15(13), Royal Irish Academy). Nevertheless, the system of national education established by the Stanley Act excluded knowledge about Ireland from the curriculum and, consequently Davis argued that it would not educate nationalists or encourage citizens to serve their country.

**1.3 Contemporary perspectives on the shortcomings in Irish education**

This section explores the arguments presented by two of Davis's contemporaries, Thomas Wyse, M.P. for Waterford, and Dr Robert Kane, lecturer at the Royal Dublin Society, on the deficiencies of Irish education. Davis read Wyse's major work on education entitled *Education Reform or The necessity of A National System of Education*. In a letter to his friend John Pigott, Davis stated that Wyse's book on education was "admirable" but he criticized it for "not sounding the depths of humanity" (Letter from Davis to Pigott, 11 April 1845, *Irish Monthly*, May 1888, p342). Wyse defined a good system of education as that which improves the "moral and intellectual habits of the people" (Wyse, 1836, p46). Education should preserve man from vice including inaction and indifference and prepare him for society. Wyse argued that a national education should keep in view the perfection and duties of the individual. It should fit him for each duty as a valuable, productive member of society:

> It should be an education which should make him not only a good son, a good brother, husband, father, and friend; but also a good citizen… It should be an education fitting him for the most skillful exercise of a particular trade, profession or functions to which his position in society will ultimately lead (Wyse, 1836, p54).

He argued that education should inculcate particular values including a love of labour, generosity and morality. It should create reformers of corruption, guardians of rights and masters of social prosperity (Wyse, 1836). The greatest aim of our education, according to Wyse, was to create a race of "reasonable men"; men who

would be “useful members of society; respectful family men; voluntary contributors to injurious charities” (Wyse, 1836, p92).

Wyse wanted the government to do more to educate the young people of Ireland. In 1835, there were 1,106 schools with 107,042 pupils; by 1850 this had increased to 4,547 schools which contained 511,239 pupils (Coolahan, 1981, p8). These schools served to reduce illiteracy levels and to provide a proportion of the population with the rudiments of education. However, in spite of the benefits of the state system, approximately 60% of school going age children were not attending school, due to a combination of poverty and lack of schools (Daly, 1979, p154). In a speech delivered in the House of Commons, 1835, Wyse set out a plan to show how the government could provide education opportunities to all classes in Ireland. He wanted the “experiment” of establishing state schools to be strengthened by further legislation. The object of his Bill was to “remove the defects, to extend the powers, and finally to render the operations sure, and the duration permanent” (Wyse, 1835, p19). He insisted that a Board of National Education should be established in Dublin, composed of a Catholic and Protestant Archbishop and five lay people, one from each of the provinces and one from Dublin. The Board should be given the power to buy land, to build schools and houses for teachers, to annex land for agricultural instruction and to provide all the articles required for teaching including books, libraries and collections. In each Parochial School there should be a parochial library which would be an instrument of education for both parents and children. He also suggested that the Board should appoint school inspectors to ensure that regulations on the management of schools were adhered to and to monitor the quality of teaching (Wyse, 1835, pp20-22). Schools should teach “essential studies” including reading, writing, English, Mathematics and elements of useful knowledge; students who have a good foundation in these studies should be introduced to “accessory studies” such as Natural History, Geography, History, Physics, and Astronomy (Wyse, 1836, p95).

Similar to Wyse, Davis suggested that each school should have "a library, a little museum, a playground and a farm attached to it" (*The Nation*, 27 July 1844). Both men believed that schools should be multi-functional and capable of providing citizens with useful knowledge that would improve their daily lives. A library would be a centre of learning as well as a repository of local, national and international knowledge; a museum would promote the study and collection of local artifacts and local history; a playground would encourage physical exercise and a farm would promote learning of the natural environment and new farming methods which would provide farmers and tenants with practical skills. Like Wyse, Davis believed that it was the Board's duty to teach students useful knowledge including reading, writing, geography, natural philosophy, and civil, natural and literary history (*The Nation*, 27 July 1844).

Wyse stated that the middle classes were in more need of education than the lower classes. In 1835 he chaired a committee to examine "the existing condition of the endowment schools and to suggest plans for the improvement and the advancement of education". The Committee's report appeared in 1838 and recommended the introduction of a broad curriculum in the national schools and projected a radical plan for secondary and higher education. The report sought the extension of the mixed education principle into secondary education; it proposed that these schools should be financed by a combination of local and state funding; the curriculum would be wide and balanced; teachers would be trained and would be entitled to salaries and a pension structure; inspectors would be appointed to ensure the system was effective (*Report from the select committee on foundation schools and education in Ireland*, House of Commons, 1837, (701), VII, p345). Religious denominations were against the proposal to extend inter-denominational education into more advanced schooling; consequently the report was shelved and the secondary system carried on in an unreformed and under-financed state (Coolahan, 1981, p59).

The committee recommended that a scheme of provincial colleges was required to meet the education needs of the middle classes. Given the fact that Ireland's population had increased dramatically Wyse insisted that a second university should be constructed without delay. He denounced the exclusive system of education provided by TCD and called for it to be nationalized so that it would be "open to all communions alike"; he also suggested that the new universities should be established on the mixed education principle (Wyse, 1835; Clifford, 1992, pp24, 34). He proposed that a system of university education should be "open to all sects, professions, and classes"; and that it would be "cheap, universal, and durable" (Hutton, 1871, p750). Similarly, Davis also called for the extension of academical education which would benefit the middle classes. He argued that the universities proposed by the Queen's Colleges Bill, 1845, should be multidenominational; and he also suggested that the Protestant monopoly of Trinity College Dublin should end. His ideas on university education will be examined in the next chapter.

Wyse stated that education should continue throughout one's life; but for that to occur the "Means must be devised to continue and constantly augment education received" (Wyse, 1836, p303). He recommended that supplementary and subsidiary education should be developed; he defined supplementary education as the development of Adult schools like the Mechanics Institute and subsidiary education was effectively continued education through the medium of Literary and Scientific Institutions, Museums, Galleries and Botanic Gardens. Davis would have agreed with the idea of continuing the process of education into adulthood through social resources like Museums and Art Galleries. Nevertheless, he considered these cultural institutions as a means of educating nationalists; they would house artifacts from a proud past and introduce the people to the achievements of previous generations of Irishmen; they would help to generate nationalist sentiment and remind the public that they were members of an artistic, creative, imaginative people.

Similar to Wyse, Davis also wanted to educate good citizens who would transform their country; he hoped they would serve society in a positive way by working tirelessly to win political rights, by empowering their neighbours through education and by contributing to make Irish society peaceful and prosperous. Nevertheless, unlike Wyse his perception of a national education was dominated by his nationalist political philosophy. While Davis wanted to educate good citizens his primary objective was to use education as an instrument to make a nation. Wyse, on the other hand, was a Catholic Unionist, who wanted to maintain the political connection with England. He was not a supporter of the repeal campaign; and he viewed education as a means to transform society rather than as a political instrument.

Dr Robert Kane also identified deficiencies in the Irish education system; in his seminal work *The Industrial Resources of Ireland*, he highlighted the need for industrial education to transform Ireland from a stagnant economy into a robust industrial economy. Davis was so impressed by Kane's book that he wrote a positive review for *The Nation* newspaper entitled *The Resources of Ireland* and he advised Pigott to get a copy of this book because "tis *almost* all it should be" (Letter from Davis to Pigott, 9 June 1844, *Irish Monthly*, May 1888, p270). Kane examined the industrial resources of Ireland: the mechanical powers of the country including fuel and water; its mineral resources such as iron, copper, lead; more effective modes of farming such as crop-rotation, manuring and draining; how agriculture could supply a successful secondary industry including woolens, linens, starch, sugar and spirits; the importance of new modes of transport to industrial development; the condition of labour in Ireland and its cost; capital and the need for industrial education in Ireland.

Kane insisted on the importance of education to inform the people of the existence of natural resources and to encourage them to exploit them. He argued that a lack of industrial knowledge was the reason for Ireland's economic stagnation; it was the reason why unemployment was so high, and why emigrants could only "fulfill the lowest offices in another land"; it was also the reason why "our harbours were bare of ships, our rivers undisturbed by the bustle of industry … our fields producing but

a third of what they might supply" (Kane, 1845, p412). He had no doubt that the lack of industrial knowledge prevented the Irish from building an industrial economy. The Irish were to blame for this deficiency. He stated that "we do not know how to succeed; we do not want activity; we are not deficient in mental power, but we want special industrial knowledge". The English possessed this knowledge and therefore had a strong industrial economy.

Kane insisted that the need for industrial education was underrated in the country. There was widespread ignorance of the significance of this type of education. It was accepted that a professional could benefit from a college education but that a tradesman would not. He argued that it was incorrect to assume that a tradesman was educated to a sufficient standard if he was literate; and he lamented the fact that a college education based on the classics would not prepare future tradesmen for the realities of industry. In his opinion "it was worse than no education whatsoever" because the tradesman's mind is so unprepared that he "becomes appalled at the stern calculations of a problem, in which his liberty, his fortune, his home is involved" (Kane, 1845, p415). Kane insisted that a college education should develop the skills and prepare tradesmen for the challenges of industry. Initially they should receive a general education in the physical and natural sciences and in elementary mathematics. Then they should specialize in a particular branch of knowledge as a metal worker or chemist. This theoretical education should be followed by practical experience of the workshop which Kane considered to be most important. The English gained practical knowledge by working in the factories of industrial cities but this option did not exist for the Irish (Kane, 1845, p417, 420). He stated that the Royal Dublin Society, if properly funded, should be the source of industrial education for the middle classes; its means of effecting good were considerable principally because of its Botanic Garden, Museums of Agriculture and Natural History, the annual cattle show and School of Art and its continuous lectures on every branch of applied science (Kane, 1845, p422). Furthermore, he set about putting his ideas into practice. In 1845 the museum of economic geology was instituted with Kane as director; he developed its educational function and it became

known as the Museum of Irish Industry. This museum worked in conjunction with the Royal Dublin Society which evolved into the Royal College of Science, formally established in 1867 with Robert Kane as its dean (Coolahan, 1981, p121).

Kane was optimistic about the future benefits of state schools on the working classes. The schools would provide the working class with a moral education, a sense of purpose in life and prepare them for society:

> with the education which the National system will give to every individual of the growing race, there is no danger but that industry will be accompanied by intelligence, intelligence by morality, and all by the steadiness of purpose, and tranquility of habits, on which the happiness of the family and the peace of the community depend (Kane, 1845, p426).

In his review of Kane's work, Davis stated that Kane was no party pamphleteer pandering to national vanity but a philosopher who provided the people with the results of his scientific studies. He praised Kane's "knowledge of the physical products and powers of Ireland and his mastery of chemical and mechanical science" (*The Nation*, 25 June 1844). Davis provided his readers with a brief summary of how Ireland was endowed with resources–the existence of coal west of Lough Allen and iron ore at Arigna; the undeveloped Irish bogs which could be used to smelt Irish iron; the abundant supply of water-power on the Shannon and other rivers which could be harnessed to generate energy. He was impressed by Kane's findings and especially by his suggestions on the development of resources; this "manual" of national resources promised a better future for Ireland (*The Nation*, 25 June 1844).

Davis believed that if the natural resources identified by Kane were developed Ireland could be prosperous. He deplored the inhumane life of the factory worker in industrial England; his preference was for the development of domestic industry where a "simple domestic life" would be retained (*The Nation*, 25 June 1844). But his idealized view of rural life was challenged by reality; and he feared that Ireland would have to conform to modern industrial trends. He called for the establishment of a rail network to connect the major towns and for quays to be put on our ports and

mills on our rivers; he wanted steam power to be used to develop our flax, wool and minerals but under restrictions and guarantees. He did not specify what these guarantees should be but he stated that he did not want to see Ireland imitate the abuses of the English factory system, where the "ill effects of forcing the people to work in crowds" were all too evident (*The Nation*, 25 June 1844).

Nevertheless, Davis appreciated that unless ignorance was replaced by knowledge the people would remain as slaves. He argued that the acquisition of national knowledge was evidence of one's commitment to the Irish nation; ignorance was a barrier to nationhood. He asked his readers a direct question about Ireland's resources which was designed to provoke them into action:

> Now let us ask the reader what he knows upon any or all of these subjects: and whether he ought, as a citizen, or a man of education, or a man of business to be ignorant of them. Such ignorance as exists here must be got rid of, or our cry of "Ireland for the Irish" will be a whine or a brag, and will be despised as it deserves (*The Nation*, 25 June 1844).

He stated that Kane was partly right when he claimed Ireland was backward and poor "from want of industrial knowledge". Davis identified other reasons why Ireland was poor including "foreign invasion, forfeiture, and tyrannous laws" combined with misfortune and misgovernment. Like Kane he argued that the acquisition of knowledge was a prerequisite to emerge from the current economic predicament; and he added that education was necessary to develop the character necessary to succeed in politics, trade and literature.

**1.4 Davis's national education**

In spite of his demand for more state schools Davis criticized them for providing education in a "stunted, partial anti-national way". Education was used to integrate the Irish population closer to England; the aim of the Education Board, 1831, was to inculcate loyalty to the state (Hill, 1980, p94). Tests used in national schools avoided any subjects which might provoke a nationalist spirit (Keogh, 2008, p217). *The Nation* claimed that there was a careful suppression of national knowledge in all elementary books of education (*The Nation*, 16 March 1844). However, the Young

Irelanders praised the patriotic content of the new textbooks published by the Christian Brothers; "the tenor of the Brothers' texts was unapologetically Catholic and Irish" (Keogh, 2008, p235).

Davis argued that a national education should promote a sense of nationhood; he insisted that an education in Irish culture would cultivate a sense of belonging to the Irish nation or the national community; it would create national character and provide integrity to Irish claims for independence. His thinking on educating for nationhood was influenced by German cultural nationalism. In Germany membership of the "Fatherland" was part of a struggle against Frenchified nobility for cultural authority and social status (Sheehan, 1989, pp 372-373; Leerssen, 1986, p19). There were several states in central Europe where similar cultural traits existed but Germany as a political or geographical entity did not exist. The idea of Germany was conceptually fashioned by intellectuals including Goethe, Lessing, Schiller, Fichte and Herder. They developed a national identity by emphasising the unique cultural characteristics of Germany including language, customs and character. Davis's thoughts on cultural nationalism and creating a national identity through education are similar to the ideas of Herder and Fichte. It is likely that he accessed Herder's philosophy through Carlyle's writings (Foster, 1988, p311); and we know that he was so impressed by Fichte's *Addresses to the German People* that he recommended it to his fiancé, Annie Hutton (Hone, 1945, p17; Molony, 1995, p326). In a letter to Davis's sister, Charlotte, a year following Davis's untimely death, Hutton identified similarities in character between Davis and Fichte. She stated that she liked Fichte's book because there were:

> points in his character, which resembled that of our beloved, the same intense earnestness of soul, the same longing after perfection, the same extraordinary abilities, the same beauty of mind and the same power of attracting all around him (Hone, 1945, p17).

Though there is a lack of available evidence to show how Herder and Fichte influenced Davis there is a similarity of ideas on how an education in culture could create a nation.

In his work *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, Herder justified the existence of the German nation when he stated that "the most natural state is therefore one nation, with one national character" (Herder, 1803, p408). His conception of the nation was cultural rather than political in character; a nation should be "regarded as a separate natural entity whose claim to political recognition rested on the possession of a common culture rooted in language" (Wiborg, 2000, p240). His conception of national identity was cultural rather than racial (Sikka, 2001, p126). He developed the idea of the *Volk*, a national community through which history, culture, and individual life acquired meaning (Sheehan, 1989, p165). Herder claimed that "there exists such a thing as a spirit (*Volkgeist*) and character of a nation" (Stöter, 1998, p173); this character was common to people who shared a cultural heritage. Moreover, he suggested that a sense of belonging to the nation was essential for the development of the individual; it would encourage individuals to develop their talents, comprehend their purpose in life and especially their moral responsibility to the community (White, 2005, pp171-174). The character of a nation was defined by those who shared a cultural heritage, according to Herder, and education was central to developing it.

Fichte feared that France's power would threaten Germans' cultural existence. He argued that it was only the common characteristics of being German that would allow them to avert the "downfall of our nation which is threatened by its fusion with foreign peoples" (Fichte cited in Kelly, 1968, p3). He considered education to be an instrument of social and political reform; and he led the German states to accept this new role of education to achieve both social solidarity and national awakening (Sharma, 1997, p119). He wrote the *Addresses to the German people* to convince the German people to accept the need for a national education (James, 2011, p187). This education would prevent "the degradation of our people" and to encourage a "love of fatherland". In his words:

> They [the addresses] propose that you establish deeply and indelibly in the hearts of all, by means of education, the true and all powerful love of fatherland, the conception of our people as an eternal people, and as the security for our eternity (Fichte cited in Kelly, 1968, p129).

Fichte insisted that education was the only means of saving German independence. He argued that all Germans should be educated to a "sense of fatherland" and this would spur them on to create an independent state. Once the German people possess a love of fatherland they would be prepared for national challenges including defending their country or living as peaceful, honest citizens, according to Fichte. He argued that a national education would create a nation of Germans dedicated to Germany's future:

> By means of the new education we want to mould the Germans into a corporate body, which shall be stimulated and animated in all its individual members by a common interest (Fichte cited in Kelly, 1968, p12).

Just as German nationalists reacted against the threat of French culture Davis's nationalism developed in reaction to English misrule in Ireland and the spread of English culture and values. He saw himself as an Irish man, although, in reality, he was a product of English culture and was influenced by an English university education at Trinity College Dublin. Nevertheless, despite the influence of English culture on Irish life throughout the centuries of colonization he claimed that the Irish were culturally distinct. He embraced the challenge of defining the Irish nation as a cultural entity by creating a native literature and reviving the national language (Boyce, 1995).

Like Fichte, in relation to German culture, Davis believed that an education in Irish culture was necessary to create a sense of nationhood; it would promote and advance his concept of nationality and create Irishmen of national character. Since the state schools were not providing an education in national knowledge Davis and his colleagues in Young Ireland developed a national curriculum consisting of local knowledge suitable to educate Irishmen. He included history in his curriculum to provide the nation with a sense of credibility and integrity; it confers on the people a

sense of who they are; it is essential to the formation of national identity. In Davis's words: It is "the birthright of her sons – who strips them of that takes that which not enriches him, but makes them poor indeed" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p29). He insisted that national histories must be written to provide people with knowledge to face contemporary challenges and to build a nation. His thoughts on the significance of history and his contribution to writing history will be examined in Chapter 5.

Together with his Young Ireland colleagues Davis developed a curriculum in cultural education in the columns of *The Nation* and in the *Library of Ireland*, a series of books on national subjects. His curriculum was designed to provide the people with national knowledge, to generate a sense of attachment to the Irish nation and to encourage citizens to serve their country. Since the Irish possessed little knowledge of their history he claimed that a national art should be developed to educate the people about their past and their unique identity. He argued that a national literature was also a means of expressing national identity and it would encourage the people to imagine that they were part of a nation; it would define the unique qualities of the Irish character and the Irish way of life and it would help Irishmen to reclaim their identity. Through *The Library of Ireland* series he set about educating the people about the concept of the Irish nation. He edited *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Philpot Curran* and many of his poems and songs from *The Nation* were included in *The Spirit of the Nation.* These books helped to educate the average Irishman about his national history, heritage and culture; they were also written to politicise the people so that they would engage in patriotic activity and support the political movement for repeal. His cultural education will be explored in Chapter 6.

### 1.5 Davis's policy to educate wise and influential citizens

Davis insisted that Irish society required citizens who possessed a range of virtues including a sense of justice, tolerance, self-reliance and a sense of civic duty. He believed that education was the means by which wise and influential citizens could be created, and he engaged in the process of educating citizens in his writings.

Davis's thinking on social justice and on the duties of citizenship was influenced by his own moral education. Daniel Owen Madden, a friend of Davis, recalled that few things were more effective in "forming Davis's high-toned character than his ethical studies". Of all the moral philosophers, he admired the commonsense and rationality of William Paley (1743-1805) but Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752) was his favourite (Madden cited in Duffy, 1896, p15). He included Butler's ideas on moral philosophy in his curriculum and these will be explored in Chapter 3. Paley encouraged people to apply Christian values in their daily lives. It was his conviction that "God willed human happiness" and that central to attaining happiness was to live a moral life (Paley, 1804, p154). He defined moral virtue as "*the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness*" (Paley cited in Wellek, 1978, p35). In this statement he identified the subject, rule and motive of human virtue. He believed that the demands of self-interest were compatible with the common good because individuals would be motivated by a purpose of achieving the pleasures of heaven and avoiding the pains of hell. For this reason he has been called a "theological utilitarian" (Le Mahieu, 2002, xvi).

Like Paley Davis also used Christian motives to promote moral behaviour but they did not inform all his impulses for moral action. He outlined patriotic, political and economic reasons together with appeals to Christian values in order to promote political unity amongst Catholics and Protestants. In an article to mark the opening of the Conciliation Hall, where repeal meetings would be held, Davis appealed to the Christian values and to the patriotic sentiment of his readers:

> We trust that the opening of the Conciliation Hall will be a signal to Catholic and Protestant to try and agree. Surely our Protestant brethren cannot shut their eyes to the honour it would confer on them and us if we gave up old brawls and bitterness, and came together in love like Christians, in feeling like countrymen, in policy like men having common interests. Can they – ah! tell us, dear countrymen!- can you harden your hearts at the thought of looking on Irishmen joined in commerce, agriculture, art, justice, government, wealth, and glory? (Davis cited in Rolleston, 1910, p275)

Paley provided advice on a range of duties including moral obligations, contracts of labour, right of property, business contracts and oaths. He also addressed other duties which emphasised the Christian values of justice, charity and individuals' duty to themselves, society and to God. These values informed Davis's social conscience; and they encouraged him to help the poor and to promote justice and fairness in society. The manner in which he championed the rights of tenants is a good example of this.

Davis shared a concern for the poor like many of his contemporaries including Edmund Rice and Catherine McAuley. They considered education as a way to improve the lives of the poor and they undertook the daunting challenge of educating the poor. Rice helped the "down-trodden and suffering poor children" (Rushe, 1995, p52). Rice and the Christian Brothers laboured "to train up …children in early habits of solid virtue, and to instill in their young minds principles of integrity, veracity and social order" (Keogh, 2008, p112). In her schools McAuley gave daily religious instruction and supplied the children with food and clothing. She was conscious of the need to provide girls with an education "to enable them to help themselves, to raise them from destitution and to imbue them with that sense of dignity which would make them self reliant" (Bolster, 1990, p22).

Unlike Rice and McAuley, Davis did not engage in educating the poor directly; the target audience for his views was the literate middle classes and the aristocracy. He believed that the middle classes had the responsibility to lead the poor out of poverty, to educate them and improve their condition in life. However, some members of these classes possessed poor moral character – they placed self-interest before the common good. Davis undertook the challenge of providing them with a moral education – if they could see their moral deficiencies he hoped they would embrace change and become agents of justice and charity.

Davis tried to promote justice and equality in the relationship between landlord and tenant. In an essay in the *Citizen* entitled *Norway and Ireland - Udalism and*

*Feudalism*, he provided readers with an education on the merits of peasant proprietorship that existed in Norway and its positive social consequences; this type of ownership involved the local community and encouraged peasants to think of the community rather than self-interest. He outlined his opposition to the land system in Ireland which benefited landlords at the expense of the tenant population; he stated that "the social order in Ireland is essentially bad, and must be changed from top to bottom". Nonetheless, he did not outline how this might be done but suggested that peasant ownership of land was necessary to alleviate acute poverty. Davis wrote:

> What are the evils under which the peasantry labor? Poverty. Give them land of their own to work on, they will then have motives to labor, and will soon cease to be poor (Davis cited in O'Donoghue, 1914, p87).

His suggestion of peasant proprietorship was more radical than the calls from tenant spokesmen who articulated demands for "fair" treatment rather than outright possession (Ó' Gráda, 1994, p122). In a review of Gustave De Beaumont's two-volume work on Ireland, Davis argued that landlords lacked moral character and a sense of humanity. He agreed with De Beaumont's rejection of the "injustice" to which Ireland had been subjected at the hands of England. He condemned landlords for fattening on Irish lands and on the fruits of peasant labour, while many of them lived abroad in abundance and idleness. Landlords formed an aristocracy which provided poor government for the people and was destitute of the first essential quality "respect and sympathy for the objects of its sway". Landlords were

> hated when absent, and, when present, cursed – monopolising the land in a country where "land is life", and drawing enormous revenues from a people, to whom it renders not a farthing in return (*The Citizen*, March 1840, p330).

Davis proposed that legislation should be enacted to ensure that where land was for sale, tenants should be given the opportunity to purchase it in small holdings. Nevertheless, he did not reflect on concerns such as a tenant's inability to raise sufficient finance for such a purchase. Small proprietors were preferable because they were valuable members of society and they were, according to Davis, "always

resident, generally industrious and a citizen of the state" (*The Citizen*, December 1840, p448). He rejected the English system, which imposed a dependent mentality where one man or one class was subordinate to another, in favour of the land system in place in Switzerland, Belgium and Norway. Peasants must be rewarded for their labour. If that occurred they would see the advantage of hard work and a sense of self-reliance would develop. Under the current system they were weakened by their subservient position. Personal independence was in Davis's words "the true strength of a nation". If a true sense of social freedom existed it would be the true mark of liberty (*The Citizen*, December 1839, pp77-78). Davis worked with O'Connell and O'Brien on the land question and proposals were presented in the first and third reports read to the Repeal Association, 1845. The first report recommended the legalization of Ulster Tenant Right, which was a custom designed to guarantee a tenant some revenue on eviction; the previous owner would receive "the price of his right of occupation or goodwill" (O'Connell, 1845, pp297-298). The third report also recommended compensation for land improvements, an absentee tax, compulsory conacre on pasture holdings over 200 acres, reclaiming of land, division of estates, agricultural schools and giving protection to tenants under threat of eviction. However, despite the radical nature of these proposals there was no reference to peasant ownership which Davis had advocated in *The Citizen*. Furthermore, due to a lack of evidence we do not know how Davis influenced the proposals (Mulvey, 2003, p150).

Nevertheless, Davis would have agreed with Paley when he encouraged people to embrace the love of God and to treat the poor with compassion.

> The love of God will prompt us undoubtedly to do kind and generous and compassionate things towards our friends, our acquaintances, our neighbours and towards the poor. In our relation to, and in our intercourse with mankind, especially towards those who are dependent upon us, or over whom we have power, it will keep us from hardness and rigour and cruelty (Paley, 1808, p39).

Though Davis was a member of the social elite he empathized with poor. He tried to do something practical to alleviate poverty by urging landlords to treat their tenants with humanity:

> start not, my lord; your tenants, after all, are *men* – have the passions, and the impulses, and the sentiments of men; for of the same clay hath God made them and you, deny it or not but these tenants of yours have souls (*The Citizen*, December 1839, p82).

Six years later in an article in *The Nation* entitled *The State of the Peasantry*, Davis once again tried to alter landlord's perception of the peasantry; he called on the aristocracy of Ireland to consider the poor and to improve their circumstances. His detailed description of peasant conditions was designed to evoke a sympathetic response from the gentry. By appealing to their sense of humanity he hoped they would accept that they had a duty of care towards the peasant:

> Ye nobles! Whose houses are as gorgeous as the mote's …. - ye strong and haughty squire – ye dames exuberant with tingling blood – ye maidens, whom not splendour has yet spoiled, will ye not think of the poor?-will ye not shudder in your couches to think how rain, wind, and smoke dwell with the blanket-less peasant? …will ye never try to banish wringing hunger and ghastly disease from the home of such piety and love? … Will ye do nothing for pity – nothing for love? ….will ye for ever abdicate the duty and the joy of making the poor comfortable, and the peasant attached and happy? (*The Nation*, 24 May 1845).

In this article Davis also warned what might occur if the aristocrats did nothing - an agrarian war could become a reality. Paley was also fearful of power falling into the hands of the poor; he regarded them "as politically unpredictable and politically dangerous" (Le Mahieu, 2002, xxi). For Davis the fears were real – he predicted that inaction by the gentry would lead to:

> a rapid multiplication of outrages … collisions between the People and the Police, coercive laws and military force, the violation of houses, the suspension of industry – the conflux of discontent, pillage, massacre, war – the gentry shattered, the peasantry conquered and decimated, or victorious

> and ruined (for who could rule them) – there is an agrarian insurrection! May heaven guard us from it! - may the fear be vain! (*The Nation*, 24 May 1845).

Davis was concerned that an agrarian rebellion could lead to a breakdown in society; it could overthrow the Protestant aristocracy and allow the peasantry to dominate. If that occurred his own class and tradition would be under threat; and, though he did not refer to the threat of a rising Catholic middle class he was fearful, like many of his Protestant contemporaries, that a Catholic ruling class would seize power relegating Protestants to an inferior political and social position (Boyce, 2005, p85). His concept of nationality was, in his view, the best option - where Protestant leaders would share political power with Catholics to create a prosperous Ireland. It guaranteed Protestants a major role in the future of Irish politics. By outlining the threat of a rebellion Davis hoped to compel the aristocracy to take action to end poverty and to promote happiness and contentment amongst the peasantry. There is no doubt that he wanted to improve the lives of the peasantry; and despite his opposition to landlordism, he did not call for the removal of this class but appealed to their sense of humanity; that they act was a moral imperative. He was content to see the class system maintained if the peasantry were removed from poverty and allowed to benefit from their labour. His temperate approach might be explained by the fact that he was aware of the potential political benefits of not alienating the gentry – they could be powerful allies in his struggle to repeal the Act of Union and to establish a domestic legislature.

Davis believed that Irish people required citizenship rights to prepare them for education and citizenship education to prepare them for freedom. He encouraged the people to display prudence and resolve in the struggle for repeal. By their behavior they had to convince the English government that they were capable of governing themselves; and the Catholic majority must also convince their Protestant contemporaries that they possessed the character needed to govern with justice and tolerance. Davis insisted that the people had to be self-disciplined, self-reliant, sober, peaceful and organised–all essential qualities for winning liberty. In his words: “Our desire was to check the vices, increase the knowledge, and consolidate the virtues of

all these classes" (*The Nation*, 14 October 1843). His thinking on improving the moral character of the people resonates with the ideas of Father Mathew, temperance reformer. Davis stated that Father Mathew had helped "to make a nation" by delivering a large number of people from the vice of alcohol. Some men neglected their duties to their wives and families because of this vice (*The Nation*, 8 March 1845). This "moral liberator" had restored to the people courage, virtue and forbearance. Davis also praised him for removing a national stigma–the Irishman was characterised by drunkenness and he believed this low estimate of himself. Father Mathew had redeemed the Irish people; and Davis praised the fact that he had raised their national character.

Nevertheless, Davis argued that religious tolerance was a virtue which the Irish must learn–the struggle for independence depended on national unity. He concurred with Paley's views on religious tolerance. Paley advocated "complete toleration" insisting that "liberty of conscience" was a right every citizen should demand (Le Mahieu, 2002, p412). In his view, complete tolerance was not only just and liberal, but the wisest and safest system which a state should adopt; it was conducive to peace and public safety. Like Davis he could see no reason why men of different religious persuasion could not work together.

### 1.6 Davis's policy to educate moral leaders

Ireland needed patriotic leaders of high moral character who would be just and fair in their administration of power as landlords, judges, priests and politicians. Davis believed that future leaders must be educated; they must acquire knowledge, a sense of moral duty, self-reliance, and a sense of patriotism. In his presidential *Address delivered before the Historical Society, Dublin*[1], 1840, he introduced national stereotypes to highlight virtues which he claimed young men from other countries possessed and young Irishmen must acquire. He questioned whether the young men of Ireland possessed the virtues of the patriotic French; or the diligent, laborious,

[1] The original presidential *Address to the Historical Society, Dublin* located in the National Library of Ireland, Davis papers, MS3199, is difficult to decipher. Therefore, I have used Rolleston's verbatim account of the Address which can be found in *Prose writings of Thomas Davis*, T.W. Rolleston, London, Walter Scott, 1890; hereafter cited as *Address*.

thinking qualities of the young men of Germany; or were they like the young men of America, England and Scotland, patient and successful? (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, pp1-2). By introducing these stereotypes he hoped that members of his TCD audience would aspire to be like their contemporaries. He also challenged young Irishmen to reflect on their weaknesses and to consider what they must do to acquire the qualities of successful public men. If the young men were "careless, prejudiced, unhonoured….. if no manhood of mind, no mastery in action comes for most of them, if preparation, thought, action, wisdom, the order of development of successful men, is not for them?" He asked challenging questions: who is to blame? Are the misleaders of the present system solely to blame ? He answered the question emphatically:

> No; you, young Irishmen, must blame yourselves. The power of self-education, self-conduct is yours….Are you ambitious of honourable success? – you must become learned, determined, just and pious (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p2).

Davis questioned whether the privileged class was worthy of their country. He insisted that if they united with Irishmen regardless of party or sect they could transform Ireland from an impoverished province of England to a prosperous Irish nation governed and managed by Irishmen. He appealed to their sense of patriotism and urged them to serve their country:

> You have capacities; will you use them or will you not? Will you use them for free thought – for virtue – for Ireland? …. How long will you sin against patriotism? Let no one dare to call me factitious for bidding you act in union with any man, be they of what party they may, for our common country (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p3).

He reminded his audience that they were Irishmen and that Ireland would not emerge from her current condition of poverty and suffering without their help and unconditional loyalty. In Davis's words:

> It is because her people lieth down in misery to suffer, it is therefore you should be more deeply devoted. Your country will, I fear, need all your devotion (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p3).

In an attempt to train responsible leaders Davis cautioned the young Irish men against abusing political power. He encouraged them to reflect on their responsibilities and to act for the common good. They would have power over the people and this should be used to make them "wise, great, good". He insisted that future leaders must be self-disciplined, honest and virtuous and be prepared to resist temptation:

> In your public career you will be solicited by a thousand temptations to sully your souls with the gold and place of a foreign court, or the transient breath of a dishonest popularity; ….yet most assuredly, if you be eloquent and strong thinking, threats and bribes will be held out to you. You will be solicited to become the barking misleaders of a faction, or the gazehounds of a minister – dogs who can tell a patriot afar off. Be jealous of your honour and your virtue then; yield not (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, pp39–40).

While nurture was central to his education vision he also valued the redemptive power of nature. In moments of moral doubt when temptation appears overwhelming Davis suggested that leaders should seek spiritual guidance from the poets of the Romantic period. He described Burns, Wordsworth and Shakespeare as "nature's priests" who would help man to understand himself and his role in the world. Reflecting on nature would generate divine thoughts and encourage one's "native nobility" to return (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p40). Davis also looked to Wordsworth for inspiration on patriotism. O'Hagan stated that in Wordsworth Davis found "the idea of pure and exalted love of country, an idea that took full possession of him" (O'Hagan, 1891, p3). Mulvey suggests that it is possible that Wordworth's poems *On Extension of the Venetian Republic* or *The Ode to Duty* may have provided some inspiration for Davis's patriotism (Mulvey, 2003, pp25 -26). He insisted that those intending to engage in public life should educate themselves about Ireland's condition, past and present. Only then would they possess sufficient knowledge and understanding to allow them to serve responsibly.

Though he turned to nature for moral guidance active citizens who could think for themselves would have to be nurtured. He suggested that the curriculum at TCD should be reformed to train character and to prepare leaders for the challenges of public life. In his view the main purpose of a university education was to create useful citizens; it had a duty to teach the duties and responsibilities of leadership; it had a responsibility to educate citizens about their country and to develop the skills necessary to be effective public men. He recommended that the course of Moral Philosophy at TCD be reformed, considered the sermons of Bishop Butler along with the works of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and John Locke (1632-1704) as inspirational and felt that their ideas would inspire "truth and freedom" (Davis cited in Rolleston 1889, p10). He also insisted that the TCD course on Oratory should be reformed to provide citizens with the skills to convince and persuade. Davis argued that Irish orators including Curran and Grattan should be studied to provide students with positive examples of eloquence and to introduce them to role models of justice and patriotism. He also included English Philological studies in his curriculum; it would be useful to the formation of style and would facilitate young men to communicate their thoughts effectively.

Davis also insisted that a university had a duty to train students how to think. He argued that TCD should fashion citizens who were prepared to apply their intellectual talents to Irish problems; and he feared that students who were not trained to think properly would be incompetent leaders – they would have difficulty making good decisions; they would not think for themselves and would be indecisive when faced with the challenges of public life.

## Conclusion

This chapter explored some features of Davis's experience that pointed to his role as a nationalist educator. In doing this it looked at some of the influences which shaped his thinking on education. His views on education were influenced by German romanticism and by Ireland's problems including political subservience, economic degradation and social inequality. He wanted to transform his country and improve

the condition of the people and he saw education as the means by which this could be achieved. Though he acknowledged that nature had a redemptive quality he saw proper nurture as an integral part of the education process; given proper education, citizens could be agents of social and political change; consequently he set about putting curriculum resources in place, even though they took the form of general social resources, like ballads, political newspaper articles and a political movement towards nationalism rather than a formal, primary curriculum or the like.

Like Herbart, Davis believed that education in citizenship and moral principles would facilitate citizens to express themselves in freedom and action. Like Rousseau, he recognized the natural benefits that such an education would entail but his key idea was an education in national identity. If active citizens were educated in the values of social justice, charity and civic duty within the Irish context he believed the process of national regeneration would be underway and a general peaceful outcome to the social divisions in Irish society would become possible.

In order to facilitate political change and to give momentum to the repeal movement Davis believed that nurture in the form of a nationalist education was required. If the people were educated in local knowledge including Irish history and culture he believed that a sense of nationhood would be developed. He hoped that this type of education would generate an attachment to their country and encourage the people to serve it. He designed a national education curriculum to encourage people to see themselves as members of the Irish nation and to urge them to participate in shaping it. Davis's national curriculum will be examined in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Before the Queen's Colleges were established in 1845 TCD was the only university in Ireland and Davis believed that it should be reformed to meet the challenges of society: to educate leaders and influential citizens, to promote inclusion between different races and sects. The next chapter examines Davis's vision of a university education. It examines his proposals for university reform and it explores his contribution to the debate on the Queens Colleges Bill, 1845.

# Chapter Two: University Education

## Introduction

This chapter examines Davis's vision of a university education and it explores his thinking on how a university education could best serve Irish society. Trinity College Dublin (TCD) was Ireland's only university at the time (1840) and, in Davis's view, it did not meet its national responsibility, which was to educate Irish men about their country and to focus minds on serving Ireland. He believed that a university education could actively promote nationality but TCD failed to discharge its national duty. The purpose of a university education, in his opinion, was to "make a wise and influential citizen" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p24). He believed that the Irish nation required a sufficient supply of public men trained in every branch of knowledge and business to carry on her internal government and foreign relations (Duffy, 1896, p54). Leaders were required to assist Ireland to gain independence and thereafter to lead the country into a period of peace, unity and prosperity; but, in Davis's view, TCD was not creating a sufficient number of public men who were dedicated to Ireland's improvement. In order to address this deficiency he insisted that the university system required substantial reform.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the debate concerning the purpose and nature of a university education, which occurred in both Ireland and England during the early part of the nineteenth century. The ideas of Cardinal Henry Newman are introduced to add another perspective to the debate about university education. In 1851, Newman was invited by Cardinal Cullen to inaugurate the new Catholic University of Ireland. Newman outlined his arguments in favour of establishing a new Catholic University following the opposition of the Catholic Church to Sir Robert Peel's Queens Colleges Bill, 1845, which advocated secular education. A comparative analysis of the education philosophies of both Newman and Davis is designed to increase our understanding of the intellectual debate surrounding university education; in addition, it helps to place Davis's contribution to the debate in its proper context.

The second section examines whether his theories on university education could be reconciled with the practical challenges of establishing the new colleges proposed in the Bill. It explores the arguments he proposed to convince members of the Repeal Association of the merits of multi-denominational or mixed education; and it examines his thinking on a range of issues relating to the proposed Colleges including religious instruction and the Protestant monopoly of TCD.

### 2.1 Utilitarian Education or Liberal Education

Was the purpose of university education to develop the intellect for the sake of intellectual excellence, which advocates of a liberal education argued or as the utilitarians argued to provide a useful education, which would equip students with both the knowledge and skills to satisfy the political and economic needs of society? The universities of Oxford and Cambridge provided a liberal education which was "Renaissance in form and classical-literary in content" (White, 1986, p39). This "liberal-classical education" was primarily suited to the interests of the landed gentry; it was the "great social legitimizer" and remained dominant throughout the century (Bowen, 1979, p307). Advocates of a liberal education claimed that a mind trained in an abstract liberal discipline could apply itself flexibly to any other subject matter.

There was a growing demand amongst utilitarians for professional education to meet the needs of a growing industrial society. In *Chrestomathia*, Bentham argued that the classical, liberal education was "pernicious, useless, purposeless and antiquated" (Itzkin, 1978, p305). He tried to convince the upper classes of the merits of useful instruction which would lead to an improvement in "health, domestic economy and personal comfort". His curriculum consisted of practical subjects including science, technology, maths, commercial subjects and bookkeeping; these subjects would develop skills needed in an industrial economy (Smith and Burston, 1993, xxvii). Bentham's influence was evident in the utilitarian ethos of the first London University which was founded in 1828 by two members of Bentham's social circle in London, Joseph Hume and Henry Brougham; both were educated at Edinburgh University and were influenced by its curriculum which promoted arts and sciences

(Powell, 1965, p101). The purpose of London University was to educate white collar, professionals of inner London (Rothblatt, 1988, p638). It would provide professional education to the youth of England who were deprived of the opportunity; unlike the universities of Oxford and Cambridge this university was open to all religions and would appeal to "persons of easy yet moderate circumstances" (Sockwell, 1994, p148; Sanderson, 1975, p59).

While utilitarians questioned the value of a liberal education to meet the needs of a growing industrial economy they were also concerned that citizens should be prepared for the challenges of civil society. *The Edinburgh Review*, a Whig magazine, edited by Sydney Smith and John Playfair argued that a professional education was more useful to society than a liberal education. In a review of *Edgeworth's Professional Education*, written for the 1809 edition of the *Edinburgh Review*, Smith criticised English universities for the inordinate emphasis on the classics. He echoed Locke and Bentham when he questioned the value of a young Englishman spending sixteen or seventeen years studying Latin and Greek while other branches of knowledge were neglected; he argued that these languages should only be studied "for the solid utility we derive from them" (Smith, 1845, p51). The manner in which classical students were bestowed with honours created the impression that only classical students were learned; in his view they emerged with "exaggerated notions" of learning and were unprepared for the world.

Smith's definition of a university was "a place where every science is taught which is liberal, and at the same time useful to mankind". Like Bentham, he argued that an Oxford education would be much more valuable if there was a shift in focus from a classical education towards developing the liberal arts and sciences. Smith claimed that Oxford was involved in "doing useless things" and that it would find change difficult. "A set of lectures upon political economy would be discouraged in Oxford, probably despised, probably not permitted" (Smith, 1845, p53). Furthermore, he suggested that knowledge should be pursued for its utility in future life. A Student destined for a career in public life should have knowledge of his country's past and

should be given the opportunity to explore and analyse the moral and political questions of the day. A university had a responsibility to help a student "to educate himself for the offices of civil life".

Two leading Oxford academics, Edward Copleston and John Davison responded in "defence" of Oxford education. Copleston issued *A Reply to the calumnies of the Edinburgh Review against Oxford* and he followed this with a *Second Reply* and a *Third*. He accused Smith of "petulant sarcasms" and of expounding "false opinions and accusations"; and he refuted Smith's charge that political economy was unknown or discountenanced in the University. Copleston claimed that students had access to the best work in that branch, as well as in the elements of Law and Politics with the full support of their instructors; but he emphasised that the provision of a liberal education was their main purpose before pupils specialise:

> it is never forgotten that to lay a foundation of liberal literature, ancient and modern, before any particular pursuit absorbs the mind, is our main business (Copleston, 1810, p154).

Commenting on the utility of classical learning Copleston argued that the purpose of a classical education was not to fit a pupil "for any specific employment or to increase his fortune", though this was the objective of most parents. He argued that, despite its shortcomings in preparing a man for employment, a liberal education was the mode of education that would develop his moral character; and it would prepare him to contribute most to society:

> And thus, without directly qualifying a man for any of the employments of life, it enriches and enobles all. Without teaching him the business of any office or calling, it enables him to act his part in each of them with better grace and more elevated carriage; and if happily planned and conducted, is a main ingredient in that complete and generous education, which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously, all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war (Copleston, 1810, p112).

Copleston argued that a professional education was inadequate to prepare man for society; this type of education focused on the interests of the individual rather than on the interests of society. He described this mode of education as "narrow, selfish, and mercenary". The exclusive preparation for one type of employment was degrading for it stunted one's intellect, limited one's sphere of action and impacted negatively on one's ability to contribute to society. In his opinion "society itself requires some other contribution from each individual besides the particular duties of his profession" (Copleston, 1810, p112).

Davison concurred with Copleston's arguments on the merits of a liberal education. In *The Quarterly Review*, 1810, Davison acknowledged that "the arts and studies which relate to the improvement of manufactures and to raising and multiplying of the means of subsistence" are necessary but that their results "are not the first order of good, nor are they the principal ends of human life" (Davison, 1811). He suggested that man should endeavour to correct and advance his intellectual, and especially his moral nature through classical learning:

> We may add, that the appropriate subject of almost all that is commonly called classical learning is nothing else than man's moral nature – his passions, his plans of action – their springs and various movements–and whatever humanity or moral speculation is concerned with. All that deserves the name of wisdom, all the common sense of life in its improved state is drawn from this source (Davison, 1811).

Davison suggested that classical studies rather than studies in arts or science were suited to developing man's understanding of human nature and especially man's moral nature. Both Copleston and Davison influenced Newman's thinking on liberal education.

### 2.1.1 A comparison of the university ideologies of Davis and Newman

Davis's vision of a university education was a response to the real challenges facing contemporary Ireland. Ireland required active citizens to win political independence and to lead the country into an era of economic prosperity. His thinking on

university education drew from the utilitarian and the liberal traditions: he insisted that students should receive a professional education to enable them to fill positions of leadership in society; and similar to advocates of a liberal education he argued that a university should develop the intellect and educate moral citizens who would contribute to the betterment of society.

Newman complemented Copleston and Davison for the "clear sighted and large view" which they took on the subject of liberal education; and he acknowledged that he profited from their doctrine. Similar to Copleston and Davison, Newman emphasized the importance of intellectual excellence. He argued that the purpose of a liberal education was to train the intellect not for a narrow purpose but for its own sake.

> This process of training, by which the intellect, instead of formed or sacrificed to some particular or accidental purpose, some specific trade or profession, or study or science, is disciplined for its own sake, for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own highest culture, is called Liberal Education (Newman cited in Iglesias, 2009, p152)

Newman suggested that a liberal education was the most effective way to train the mind to think accurately and logically. The purpose of a university education was "to give the mind clearness, accuracy, and precision" (Ker, 1991, p18). He argued that if the College of Physicians was a useful institution because it advanced bodily health, Newman proposed that an academic institution should be considered useful for advancing intellectual health.

In his *Address*, Davis echoed Newman and advocates of a liberal education when he suggested that education should strengthen the intellect of man and that this was a means of ennobling him; he also claimed that to achieve "this end is a duty from which no one aware of it can shrink" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p38). He argued that the purpose of a university was to develop the intellect. One of the failings of Dublin University was the inordinate emphasis on developing the memory rather than a student's capacity to think and reason. Davis found it

extremely irritating that a recollection of definitions was sufficient to ensure college success. This debased standard did not require students to analyse or reason[2]. He stated:

> The students are taught to skip the principles of reasoning and perch on the conclusions, with a touch which transmutes into dogmas the last doubts of the sceptic (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, pp10-11).

Minds untrained in the process of thinking were a product of the college system. Davis was in favour of philosophical inquiry and considered the formal study of metaphysical and moral philosophy essential. He recommended the writings of Butler, Cicero and Hume to the audience of the Historical Society. An early acquaintance with these philosophers was essential to equip minds "to force their way through the thicket of subjects and authors which surround them in modern society" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p12). He insisted that students would not only learn many subjects but they would also develop the critical temper, which could be applied to all their studies.

Newman defended the integrity of a liberal education. In response to Locke's arguments that children's time should be spent in "acquiring what might be useful to them" and his claim that it was incredible that a child destined for a career as a tradesman should learn the Roman language, Newman argued that it would be absurd to neglect in education those matters pertaining to a child's future career; and he disagreed with Locke's condemnation of any teaching which "tends to the general cultivation of the mind" (Newman cited in Iglesias, 2009, pp159-160).

Newman argued that a useful education was not exclusive to a professional education; a liberal education would develop the intellect and was also useful. He

[2] A similar criticism prompted Benjamin Bloom and a research group at the University of Chicago to develop a taxonomy of educational objectives in the 1950s to cultivate skills associated with high level mental processes.

quoted from Smith's review of *Edgeworth's Professional Education,* to support his claim that supporters of a liberal education and the writers of the *Edinburgh Review* shared a common goal - to develop the intellect; and he concluded that the intellectual qualities that the utilitarians considered the objective of a useful education were essential components of "*good* or *liberal* education". Newman stated:

> the cultivation of the "understanding", of a "talent for speculation and original inquiry" and of "the habit of pushing things up to their first principles" is a principle portion of a *good* or *liberal* education. If then the Reviewers consider such cultivation the characteristic of a *useful* education … it follows, that what they mean by "useful" is just what I mean by "good" or "liberal" (Newman cited in Iglesias, 2009, p163)

He redefined the term "useful" to show that a liberal education was also useful; "I say, let us take 'useful' to mean, not what is simply good, but what *tends* to good, or is the *instrument* of good" (Newman cited in Iglesias, 2009, p163). The outcome of a liberal education was a cultivated intellect which was an "instrument of good" to the individual and to society. He continued:

> If then the intellect is so excellent a portion of us, and its cultivation so excellent, it is not only beautiful, perfect, admirable, and noble in itself, but in a true and high sense it must be useful to the possessor and to all around him; not useful in any low, mechanical, mercantile sense, but as diffusing good, or as a blessing, or a gift, or power, or a treasure, first to the owner, then through him to the world. I say then, if a liberal education be good, it must necessarily be useful too (Newman cited in Iglesias, 2009, p164).

Despite his view that a useful education and a liberal education shared a common objective to develop the intellect Newman concurred with Copleston and Davison that a professional education limited the intellect. He was not interested in promoting a liberal education whose main purpose was to create an active citizen or a statesman, though this might be a student's chosen career. First and foremost the intellect must be developed as an end in itself. If a student's intellectual capabilities were developed he would be in a position to pursue any one of a variety of careers:

as “a lawyer, or as a pleader, or an orator, or a statesman, or a physician, or a good landlord, or a man of business, or a soldier, or a engineer, or a chemist, or a geologist, or an antiquarian” (Newman cited in Iglesias, 2009, p166). Without the benefits of a liberal education success in any one of these careers would be difficult. In a student address in 1854 Newman suggested that a university education should do more than provide an education of special use in the professions; “but it was more than that, it was something to fit them for every place and situation they might meet in life” (O’Rahilly, 1961, p366).

Davis recognised the value of a professional education which was a pragmatic response to Ireland’s lack of skilled tradesmen and professionals but he did not include mechanical knowledge in his university curriculum. He understood that Ireland required men who were educated in a range of professions to make her prosperous. In his view “the difference between rich England and poor Ireland was industrial knowledge” (*The Nation*, 22 June 1844). If freedom were gained tomorrow, he insisted, Ireland could not “grow rich without having skilled farmers, highly educated and keen mechanics, adventurous and upright merchants, bold seamen, masterly generals, and wise statesmen”. He was cognizant that a professional education should benefit the individual as well as greater society. He did not want Ireland to grow rich at the price of human suffering; for instance he opposed the English factory system which exploited workers while capitalists grew rich. He lamented the loss of domestic manufactures where work could be done with human dignity rather than the repetitive, mind numbing work endured by the factory worker. He stated that he would prefer

> one housewife skilled in the distaff and the dairy–home-bred, and home taught, and home- faithful – to a factory full of creatures who live amid the eternal roll, and clash, and glimmer of spindles and rollers, watching with aching eyes the thousand twirls and capable of but one act–tying the unbroken threads (*The Nation*, 15 June 1844).

Newman argued that the purpose of a university was to teach universal knowledge; a university should not discriminate against any particular area of knowledge. He

insisted that theology was a branch of knowledge which was no less important than any other; and as a consequence, it should be reflected in the university curriculum. If theology were omitted by ignorance or by design Newman questioned whether a university could claim to be called a seat of learning:

> I say, then that if a University be, from the nature of the case, a place of instruction, where universal knowledge is professed, and if in a certain University, so called the subject of Religion is excluded, one of two conclusions is inevitable, - either, on the one hand, that the province of Religion is very barren of real knowledge, or, on the other hand, that in such University one special and important branch of knowledge is omitted. I say the advocate of such an institution must say *this*, or he must say *that*; he must own, either that little or nothing is known about the Supreme Being, or that his seat of learning calls itself what it is not (Newman cited in Iglesias, 2009, p21).

Newman argued that if theology were excluded from the curriculum this would be a dangerous precedent which could result in the exclusion of aspects of secular knowledge. In his view, secular and religious had a valid claim for inclusion. He suggested that it was impossible "in fact" to address secular or religious knowledge without one interfering with the other; both were intrinsically linked. For Newman knowledge was a system and to keep order in that system theology should be arranged as its "queen" or at the top; otherwise secular knowledge would fragment. He warned that "You will soon break up into fragments the whole circle of secular knowledge, if you begin the mutilation with the divine" (Newman cited in Ker, 1988, p38). Newman appreciated that a university may not in practice teach all branches of knowledge, but in theory it must be open to doing so (Ker, 1991, p24).

In contrast to Newman Davis's understanding of knowledge was local; he selected knowledge to educate citizens about Ireland and included knowledge on his curriculum which was of practical benefit to citizens. He acknowledged the benefits of a classical education to an educated man; but he feared that the inordinate emphasis on the classics in the undergraduate program at TCD meant that students had more knowledge and a greater understanding of Ancient Rome than they

possessed about their own country. While knowledge on Ancient Rome had a valid claim in Newman's liberal education Davis was prepared to discriminate against knowledge which was of limited use in the Irish context – he selected knowledge for its utilitarian value. Echoing Bentham, he insisted that "useful knowledge" should be on the TCD curriculum including Philosophy, History, English and Modern Languages. His curriculum contained political knowledge which would be of "direct use and application to citizens". He believed that every man should learn knowledge about the society in which he lives: "knowledge of his own nature and duties, of the circumstances, growth and prospects of that society in which he dwells" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p15). He encouraged students to acquire knowledge of Ireland to advance the principle of nationality–national knowledge would generate national feeling and national habit necessary to win liberty and to promote individual prosperity (*The Nation*, 15 October 1842). Only when students were educated about Ireland should they study knowledge relating to other societies; he insisted that a mature intellect could use knowledge about Ancient Rome to benefit Ireland.

Davis opposed the view that knowledge was its own end. In *The Nation* he insisted that a common mistake made by many young students was to try and master all knowledge. This resulted in students "hurrying over a multitude of books" and being deceived into believing that they know everything because they "have skimmed many things" (*The Nation*, 8 February 1845). Accumulating knowledge in a random manner was, in his view, illogical. He argued that someone who aimed to know everything would be utterly convinced of its hopelessness after a week's rummaging in a public library (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p30). Like Newman he considered it a futile activity to accumulate fragments of knowledge without employing some structure or purpose.

Davis believed that a trained intellect would not only benefit the individual it would also benefit society. An individual with a developed intellect and good moral character has a capacity for action and direct influence which should be used to make the people "wise, great and good", according to Davis. He argued that "reason

points out our native land as the field for our exertions" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p39). Newman also argued that a trained intellect best enables an individual to "discharge his duties to society"; and if a practical end must be assigned to a university education it was to train "good members of society" (Newman cited in Iglesias, 2009, p177). This practical end implies that intellectual training is not really for its own sake because it enables the recipient of a liberal education to "discharge his duties to society" (Downing, 2005, p1). However, Newman stressed that a refined intellect was the priority over any practical application. He did not attempt to identify what the practical results might be because his concern is not with the practical (Flanagan, 2006, p136). Unlike Davis, Newman did not identify a particular society that would benefit from a liberal education because this type of education would fit an individual for every place.

Unlike Newman, Davis advocated a useful university education in a liberal yet political sense. If knowledge was political but inapplicable to Ireland it was of limited use; whereas local knowledge was, in his view, more useful. He argued that a university should educate self-reliant Irishmen who were willing to serve their country; it should teach those destined for a career in public life about moral duty and the responsibilities of leadership. He understood that a university could be a catalyst for political and social change. In his *Address* Davis emphasised the importance of national unity: "Let no one dare to call me factious for bidding you act in union with any man, be they of what party they may, for our common country" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p3). Davis argued that a university should not be exclusive or a place of "reputed bigotry" like TCD. He accused TCD of having "lost the office" for which it was well paid, "of preventing the education of the Irish" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p6). To the Protestant audience of the Historical Society, Davis outlined the defects of TCD:

> The College in which you and your fathers were *educated*, from whose office seven-eights of the Irish people are disqualified by religion, from whose porch many, not disqualified by religion, are repelled by the comparative dearness,

> the reputed bigotry, and the pervading dullness of the consecrated spot (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p6)

A university had a duty to promote unity, tolerance and understanding between Irishmen of different religions and political traditions; and for this reason he advocated mixed education and by this he meant that Catholics and Protestants should be educated together. Citizens who emerge from this type of education would, he hoped, have a greater capacity to serve Ireland rather than their sect. A university should contribute to the "nation's march" by creating citizens who would be the architects of a New Ireland.

## 2.2 The Queens Colleges Bill, 1845

This section explores whether or not Davis's vision of university education could be realized when faced with practical politics surrounding the Queens Colleges Bill; would he be able to convince opponents of the merits of his vision or would he have to compromise when faced with practical difficulties?

This section examines the details of the Queens Colleges Bill and the responses to it, both positive and negative. It begins by setting the context with a brief examination of how the provision of elementary education influenced peoples' perceptions of mixed education, prior to the introduction of the Bill. The arguments expressed by O'Connell and John MacHale, Archbishop of Tuam, who opposed the Bill and by Davis and other leading repeal members like Smith O'Brien who favored the Bill are explored. The main focus of this section is to investigate Davis's thinking on a range of issues integral to the debate on the future of university education in Ireland including: the value of mixed education, religious instruction in universities, the monopoly of TCD, government appointment of professors, joint management between Catholics and Protestants and dual professors.

### 2.2.1 Background to the Queens Colleges Bill

In response to a political crisis in Ireland resulting from the foundation of the Repeal Association, which spearheaded support in favour of repeal of the Act of Union, combined with a powerful display of popular support for repeal at the monster

meetings, Peel's government decided to address the potential unrest in Ireland by introducing a number of measures to pacify the country: the Land Bill was designed to compensate evicted tenants for improvements in their holdings; a second bill substantially increased the annual grant to Maynooth College, the seminary for training Catholic priests; and the Queens Colleges Bill was designed to reform university education. Peel hoped that these reforms would convince Catholics that the Act of Union could benefit Catholics and to impress upon them that "Toryism was not wholly bound to the ascendancy interest" (Jackson, 2010, p52).

The Queen's Colleges scheme embraced a principle of education, developed on the continent during the revolutionary era and recently popularized in England by Lord Brougham and John Lancaster. This principle stated that "education was the prerogative of the state and hence that it must transcend the views of particular private societies, including those of the various religious denominations" (Culler, 1955, p125). Peel's thinking on education reform in Ireland was influenced by the findings of a House of Commons select committee on education which was established in 1835. This committee, chaired by Wyse, recommended a system of mixed education. Peel had reservations about the principle of mixed education but believed that in certain circumstances it was the correct approach to adopt. He had firsthand knowledge of the religious antagonisms aroused by the National Education policy of 1831, which established a system of nondenominational primary schools where secular instruction was separated from religious instruction. Peel argued that in the national schools children of different religions had developed a "bond of connexion" (Peel, Peel, Parker, 1853, pp522-523). He implied that the academic institutions would build on the progress made by national schools. In effect, the Colleges scheme could be considered a logical extension of Stanley's "mixed system" for elementary education (Shipkey, 1987, p457).

The National school policy set a precedent, which coloured peoples' opinions of mixed education proposed in the Queen's Colleges Bill. The key components of the Bill were that three Colleges of university standing should be established, one in

Cork and Belfast and the third in either Limerick or Galway; 100,000*l* would be allocated for the purposes of building and founding the Colleges and the expense for salaries and other expenses was estimated at 18,000*l* per annum. These Colleges would constitute a new university, the Queens University of Ireland. They would be strictly nonsectarian in nature; there would be no religious examination on entrance or on admission to degrees, no religious instruction would be provided except what might be provided by the various religious groups. Effectively it proposed a system of mixed education where Catholics and Protestants would be educated together. The Crown would undertake the appointment of professors, which would "exclude any undue interference with religious opinion". No provision would be made within the College for residence of professors or students but "external supervision" would be exercised indirectly (Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, volume 80, pp354-357, 1137). TCD would not be interfered with. It was described as "entirely a Protestant foundation", which was "founded avowedly for Protestant purposes" (Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, volume 80, p360). This was a controversial proposal and it explicitly revealed that Protestant privilege would continue in TCD.

The attempt to exclude religion from the curriculum and to dilute its place in the culture of university life was a daring and controversial proposal. Opponents to the Bill could identify double standards in the government's approach to the issue of religion in education: TCD would continue as a bastion of Protestantism whereas the new universities located in areas with a Catholic majority would not be Catholic institutions. The opinion of the Catholic Church on the Bill would be a major factor in determining whether it was accepted or rejected and Catholic Ireland which was represented by O'Connell and his repeal party would look to the Church for guidance.

### 2.3 The Catholic Church and University Education

Initially, most of the Catholic bishops welcomed the national school system (1831) in spite of the fact that these schools were intended to be multi-denominational. The bishops recognized that the new system provided primary education to thousands of

children who would not otherwise benefit from an education. It was a small but progressive step towards improving the position of Catholics in society. When suspicion arose over the impartiality of the board of administration a minority of Catholic bishops were unwilling to cooperate with the system. They feared that some members of the board were abusing their position by using the board as an instrument of proselytism. A minority led by John MacHale, Archbishop of Tuam, withdrew their support while a majority led by Daniel Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, searched for a compromise and the matter was referred to Rome (Culler, 1955, p126). In 1841 the Holy See responded that each bishop should decide for his diocese whether or not to support the national schools.

The Catholic Bishops were divided on the Queens Colleges Bill: Opponents of the Bill, including MacHale and Archbishop Slattery of Thurles, claimed that the faith and morals of Catholic pupils would be compromised. Slattery also insisted that travel and accommodation costs incurred by students attending the Colleges would be prohibitive for the majority of the Irish people; consequently he concluded that the Colleges would be "of no advantage" to them. Furthermore, the new Colleges would not grant degrees and students would have the additional expense of attending TCD for their degrees. Slattery reflected on his time in TCD and exclaimed that "God only knows how I passed through the ordeal" (Slattery to Cullen, 6 February 1846 cited in Tierney, 1966, p91). The "ordeal" was a direct reference to cost; but he was also motivated by a "feeling of charity for others" and the need to rescue them from "imminent danger" that their morals would be exposed (Barr, 2003, p36).

Archbishop Crolly gave his approval to the Bill. He referred to the papal ruling of 1841 that bishops could decide about national school in their own diocese. This position antagonized opponents of the Bill who argued that the Colleges served the entire country not just a particular diocese (Doherty, O'Riordain, 2011, p185). Bishop Murray also supported the Bill in principle but sought a number of amendments. An uneasy compromise was reached between both sides in the dispute. The Bishops' response was provided in *The Memorial of the Roman Catholic*

*Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland*, which proposed that a fair proportion of the professors should be Catholic, that dual chairs should be established in certain subjects to ensure that the morals of Catholic pupils would not be exposed to "imminent danger", that Catholic Bishops should have the power to dismiss any College official who attempted "to undermine or injure the morals of any student in those institutions" (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845). Despite agreement on these issues the Bishops could not agree on whether they were accepting or rejecting the principle of mixed education. In June 1845, they voted seventeen to eight against the Bill, "and on November 18, after the Bill had become law, they decided unanimously to refer the matter to the Holy See" (Culler, 1955, p127). In October 1847 Rome issued a Rescript which condemned the Queen's Colleges. Despite this, some Bishops acted independently of Rome and co-operated with the Colleges taking the view that the Colleges were here to stay and that Catholic interests should be protected; for example, Bishop O' Donnell of Galway appointed a Catholic clergyman to the position of vice-presidents chair in Queens College Galway and a Catholic as Dean of Residence.

Opponents of the Bill believed that these actions were incredible and damaged the authority of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Bishop MacHale used the word "enemies" to describe those who supported the Bill and was adamant that they should be held accountable for their actions (MacHale to Slattery, 13 November 1845 cited in Tierney 1966, p86). Both MacHale and Bishop Cullen supported Rome's proposal that a Catholic University should be established "to counteract the damaging effects of the liberal universities" (Mitchell, 2000, p52). A meeting of Irish Archbishops and Bishops was held at The Synod of Thurles, 1850, to discuss the Colleges – of the twenty eight participants fifteen voted for the condemnation of the Colleges and thirteen against–this narrow majority was an indication of how divided the Church was on the Queens Colleges Bill. Nonetheless, the persistent lobbying of bishops by MacHale and Slattery undoubtedly influenced the outcome; the correspondence between Slattery and MacHale reveals that they had no interest in reaching a compromise with other bishops on the Colleges issue. They overlooked

the potential benefit of these Colleges and pursued a dogmatic course "to put an end to secular intrigue in Ireland" (MacHale to Slattery, 14 October 1848 cited in Tierney 1966, pp83 -120).

The Synod passed a number of decrees which prohibited Bishops from pursuing an independent approach in relation to the Colleges; clergymen would face "automatic suspension" for assuming or retaining offices in them. Bishops of the minority found it difficult to accept some of the decrees; led by O'Donnell they objected to the request to remove from the Queen's Colleges the Catholic youth and the Catholic Residence. They appealed a number of decrees to Rome and they received a dogmatic response - they had "an obligation of unquestioning obedience" to follow the decrees of the Synod (Mitchell, 2000, p61). This was sufficient to force the minority group to accept the decision of the Synod. In March 1852 Pope Pius IX reiterated the confirmation of the decrees and requested the support of all bishops for the establishment of a Catholic university.

Despite Church opposition to the Bill some Catholics did attend the new Colleges. During the first twenty years (1850–1869) out of a total of 952 students entering at Galway 431 were Catholics and a larger proportion attended lectures, 1,195 out of a total of 2,319 (Hutton, 1871, p751). This is an indication that the appetite for university education was significant amongst the Catholic middle classes; they were willing to attend the Colleges and overlook the instruction of MacHale and other opponents of the Colleges not to attend. Nevertheless, some Catholics undoubtedly accepted guidance from Bishops who supported the Colleges. It is unsurprising that a significant proportion of the students attending Queen's College Galway were Catholic for Laurence O'Donnell, Bishop of Galway, supported the College (Mitchell, 2000, pp59-60).

Though the Synod provided clear direction to Bishops on the Colleges it did not hide the division that existed; however, five years earlier when the Bill was debated in the Repeal Association both sides depended on "The Memorial of the Catholic

Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland" for guidance. The ambivalent position of the Bishops on the issue of mixed education served to confuse rather than clarify matters for both the supporters and the opponents of the Bill. O' Connell, an opponent of mixed education, used the Memorial to strengthen his argument, while Davis and supporters of mixed education interpreted the Bishops' response to consolidate their position.

## 2.4 The debate on the Education Bill in the Repeal Association

Davis's support for mixed education, by which he meant inter-denominational education, was consistent with his political ideology; mixed education would promote trust and encourage reconciliation between the sects; and he believed that Irishmen united could win liberty and transform their country. The Bill was progressive and, in his view, it should be exploited to the full. Ignorance had divided the Irish people, diminished the chance of political unity and created a culture of subservience and poverty. He outlined the problems caused by religious division and he highlighted the potential benefits of mixed education in *The Nation* newspaper:

> For centuries the Irish were paupers and serfs because, they were ignorant and divided. The Protestant hated the Catholic and oppressed him – the Catholic hated the Protestant, and would not trust him. England fed the bigotry of both, and flourished on the ignorance of both. The ignorance was a barrier between our sects – left our merchant's till, our farmer's purse, and our state treasury empty – stupefied our councils in peace, and slackened our arm in war. Whatsoever plan will strengthen the soul of Ireland with knowledge, and knit the sects of Ireland in liberal and trusting friendship, will be better for us than if corn and wine was scattered from every cloud (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845).

This written endorsement of the Bill was followed by a significant contribution made by Davis to the debate on the Bill at the Loyal National Repeal Association. Here Davis articulated his thoughts on the positive and negative aspects of the Bill and he endeavoured to convince members of the Association that despite its weaknesses the Bill was worthy of their support.

His contribution to the debate on the Bill was overshadowed by a public dispute with O'Connell which had its roots in differences between members of Young Ireland and O'Connell on the lack of political success on repeal since the monster meeting campaign of 1843. The political progress of that campaign was undermined by a government order to abandon a monster meeting planned for Clontarf in October of that year; fearing bloodshed O'Connell cancelled the meeting. Davis and members of Young Ireland disagreed with O'Connell's act of submission, in their view, he should have resisted any violation of the right of public meeting. Davis believed that the repealers should have duplicated the actions of the Volunteers in 1782 and stood for liberty by displaying a willingness to fight for it (Duffy, 1896, p144); he claimed that retreat was sometimes dishonourable, and perseverance was better than peace (Geoghegan, 2010, p164). He also feared that the repeal movement had been damaged irreparably by this retreat and that popular confidence in the movement was badly shaken. This view is confirmed by Duffy who asserted that Clontarf was a missed opportunity to stand united against England and that conflict would have been preferable to retreat:

> The gathering confidence of the people in their own strength, their reliance on the profession of their leader, as well as the new desire which Davis had done so much to plant, that their acts might adequately correspond with their words, were all dissipated. After such an anti-climax it was impossible to believe that a conflict with England, in which the whole nation would be arrayed under the green banner, would take place during the lifetime of O'Connell (Duffy, 1896, p142).

Davis's concern for the future of repeal was exacerbated when O'Connell, Duffy and leaders of the press were arrested and prosecuted for seditious conspiracy. As editor of *The Nation*, Duffy had to answer a number of charges concerning the seditious content in his newspaper; some of the offending articles were written by Davis including *The Morality of War*, and *Something is coming* [on the council of 300] (Molony, 1995, pp207-208). O'Connell and Duffy were sentenced to twelve months and six months in prison respectively; both men served three months in comfortable surroundings at Richmond prison (Geoghegan, 2010, p183).

Following the Clontarf debacle Davis considered leaving the Repeal Association and serving Ireland in some other way but was persuaded by his colleagues to continue his involvement with the repeal movement. The lack of faith in O'Connell's political policy is reflected in the new approach taken by Davis and Young Ireland. Duffy stated that from this time on "the energy of the young men was employed in projects of education and discipline" (Duffy, 1896, p144). This new course was the most effective way to prepare the people to seize the next opportunity to express their desire for liberty. Furthermore, Young Ireland also differed with O'Connell on the issue of slavery in the United States of America (USA); O'Connell publicly deplored the policy of slavery whereas Young Ireland was critical of O'Connell for interfering in the foreign policy of a country that was a potential ally to Ireland and the struggle for repeal (Geoghegan, 2010, p210); O'Connell's commitment to repeal came into question. One could argue that on the issue of slavery Young Ireland adopted a hypocritical stance given that they claimed to represent tenant farmers in Ireland who they described as "slaves"; but it also reveals a willingness to make a political judgement by overlooking moral indiscretions of another country for the potential benefits of repeal.

The Bill was debated against a background of political uncertainty over repeal and this was compounded by undercurrents of religious animosity that already existed in the Association. Davis became embroiled in the controversy; he was accused by Mr Walsh, a national schoolmaster who contributed ballads to *The Nation*, of rejecting a poem on account of the Catholic sentiments it contained; and Davis defended his friend, Madden, from a claim in a religious periodical that he had abandoned his Catholic religion for a more prosperous one (Duffy, 1896, pp190-193). In Davis's mind an anti-Protestant movement was at work in the Association, which gained expression not only by those loyal to O'Connell but also in the ultra-Catholic press (Mac Donagh, 1989, p266). In a private letter to Smith O' Brien, a senior Protestant member of the repeal movement, Davis argued that he would not be used as a tool by the Association to establish an ascendancy which would undermine Protestant's

rights to religious freedom (Gwynn, 1948, pp20-21). In response to a number of attacks on *The Nation*, Davis made representations to O' Connell "to prevent religious bigots from interfering in religious liberty". O' Connell denied that there was any plot against *The Nation* and rebuked Davis for being over sensitive by requesting that he "lessen a little your Protestant zeal' (Mc Grath, 1951, p54; Molony, 1995, pp270-271). Despite Davis's sensitivities and concerns for Protestant rights it would be unfair to conclude that he was "quite definitely anti-Catholic" (Gwynn, 1948, p20). He was defensive of the religious interests of his creed and perhaps he should have followed O'Brien's advice to focus on promoting unity and to remember that "we are Protestants and that the bulk of the Irish nation are Catholics" which implied that Davis should expect some instances of bigotry and intolerance against the minority religion (Duffy, 1896, p195). What is clear is that religious tension existed prior to the debate on the Education Bill between O' Connell and members of Young Ireland.

The debate on the Bill in the Repeal Association was another opportunity where religious loyalties were tested. O'Brien was the first to speak in favour of the principle of mixed education (Sloan, 2000, p128). He believed that uniting young men of different persuasions in education would generate friendly associations, which would "subdue the animosities of manhood" (Davis, 1998, p184). O'Connell as leader of Catholic Ireland denounced the Bill primarily because of the proposal to establish secular institutions. He argued that every religious "persuasion should have a distinct and separate system of religious instruction" and he called on the government to guarantee that the children of each religious group, Protestant, Presbyterian, Dissenter and Catholic, "should be educated in the religious profession of their fathers". In his view it was a mockery that the proposed system of mixed education made no provision for religious education. Nevertheless there is evidence to support Duffy's claim that O' Connell had once favored mixed education. In 1839 in the course of a debate on national education, O'Connell stated that "there was no country in Europe where children of different persuasions were not educated together… That was the spirit which ought to exist between Christians (Kerr, 1982,

p310). For O'Connell mixed education was an aspiration but he was faced with the challenges of practical politics; consequently, he declared that he unequivocally favored separate education by proposing that each denomination should be taught in a separate College:

> I would propose that the Protestants should have one college, that the Presbyterians should have another and that the Catholics should have another, and,… that the Protestants of Ireland should have Trinity College (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

He continued: "I now as a Catholic and for the Catholics of Ireland, unhesitatingly and entirely condemn this execrable bill". O' Connell opposition to the Bill was possibly influenced by his loyalty to MacHale who had helped to launch the repeal movement after its slow start in 1840 (Boyce, 1995, p165). It is also likely that he opposed the Bill because he feared that state controlled education would not only be anti-Catholic but also anti-national. He also viewed this Bill as a devious scheme to undermine his support in Ireland (Geoghegan, 2010, p216). His son, John O'Connell was equally trenchant in his opposition to the Bill. It was another attempt by the government "to seduce, and obtain by fraud and deceit, that ascendancy over Catholicism". He also sounded a note of discord calling upon the people of Ireland to decide between those who supported mixed education and those who did not (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

During the debate, Mr Conway, a contemporary of Davis's at TCD, had been rejected as a candidate at the Eighty-two Club, an unarmed national militia designed to further the cause of repeal, partly because he did not have the support of the Young Irelanders and, according to Duffy, "was ripe for mischief". He suggested that Davis and Dillon and other members of the Young Ireland group, were in favour of the Bill because they were "indifferent to religion" (Duffy, 1892, p255). Davis responded with a sarcastic reference to Conway's religion that was ill judged and provocative given the tense atmosphere that existed. It provoked a sharp response from O' Connell:

> Mr Davis: I have not more than a few words to say in reply to the useful, judicious, and spirited speech of my old college friend–my Catholic friend–my very Catholic friend-
> Mr O' Connell: It is no crime to be a Catholic, I hope.
> Mr Davis: No, surely no, for –
> Mr O'Connell: The sneer with which you used the word would lead to the inference (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

Davis responded by declaring his lack of bigotry, his love of his friends, of his Catholic countrymen and his dismay that the prospect of disunity would again destroy Ireland. He stated:

> No! sir, no! My best friends, my nearest friends, my truest friends are Catholics- I was brought up in a mixed seminary, where I learned to know, and knowing to love my Catholic countrymen- a love that shall not be disturbed by those unhappy and casual dissensions (hear, hear) Disunion, alas! has destroyed our country for centuries. Men of Ireland shall it destroy it again (no, no)? (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

Despite the emotion generated by this exchange and the stress he was undoubtedly under, Davis held his composure and continued to address some of the points raised by previous speakers about the Education Bill. Like Smith O' Brien, he argued against separate education: he stated that separate education would "deepen the differences" between the Catholic and Protestant boys of Ireland. Separation in youth would not encourage unity in manhood. He asked those present to focus on the detrimental effects that separate education would have on the struggle for political unity and political independence:

> Will you take the boys of Ireland in their earliest youth and deepen the differences between them? Will you sedulously seclude them from knowing the virtues, the genius, the spirit, the affections of each other? If you do, you will vainly hope that they who were carefully separated in youth will be united in manhood and stand together for their country (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

### 2.5 Davis's interpretation of 'The Bishops Memorial'

Davis set himself an ambitious challenge to convince members of the Repeal Association, who were predominantly Catholic, that O'Connell's interpretation of the Bishops' Memorial was incorrect. He insisted that the Bishops were not against

mixed education, as claimed by O'Connell, but that a careful reading of the Memorial would convince those present that the Bishops would be agreeable to the Bill if their concerns were addressed and if certain safeguards were put in place. Davis brought his barrister training to bear and set out his case in a coherent format. It was based on his analysis of four propositions in the Bishops' Memorial. Initially, that it was in favour of mixed instruction – quoting from the Memorial, which stated, "a fair proportion of the professors, and other office bearers in the new colleges, should be members of the Roman Catholic church", Davis argued that the Catholic Bishops demanded that a proportion should be Catholic, "meaning, beyond doubt – meaning beyond reasonable dispute – that the remainder should be Protestant" (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845). The Bishops demand, in his view, was just and fair.

Furthermore, he suggested that the Bishops were in support of "mixed management". Referring to the Memorial, "that all the office bearers in those colleges should be appointed by a board of trustees, of which the Roman Catholic prelates of the province, in which any of those colleges shall be erected, shall be members", Davis argued that the use of the words "*of which*" referred to the Bishops willingness to be members of the board of trustees which would also include Protestants. He also referred to the weaknesses of the management structure at TCD where one creed dominated and where members of another were admitted. Referring to comments made by Mr O'Hea, a member of the Repeal Association, about pressure experienced by a small number of Catholics to convert to Protestantism, Davis implied that the problem was probably more widespread: that instead of knowing half a dozen Mr O'Hea "might have known twenty–Catholics who were bribed into Protestantism" (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

In addition, Davis asserted that the Bishops were in favour of Catholic professors teaching Catholic students in some "specific branches of knowledge". This was a clear reference to the memorial, which stated:

> That the Roman Catholic pupils could not attend the lectures on history, logic, metaphysics, moral philosophy, geology or anatomy, without exposing their faith or morals to imminent danger, unless a Roman Catholic professor will be appointed for each of those chairs (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

Davis understood this to mean that the Bishops supported "a demand for separate chairs in a mixed college". He believed that it was a just and wise demand to request separate chairs for the instruction of particular subjects, especially where a subject Professor from one creed would cause offence to students from another creed. Teaching a subject like history could be particularly contentious; consequently he suggested that:

> if it is not impossible, it would be difficult to get a Protestant who would convey history without being unjust to the Catholic, or a Catholic without being unjust or offensive to the Protestant, and therefore it is a most wise and cautious demand that the professor of history should not be the same for the Catholics and the Protestants (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

The same method should apply for the selection of teaching staff in other subjects such as Metaphysics, Moral Philosophy and Logic; but he did not believe that the "sectarian differences" were sufficiently acute in subjects like Geology or Anatomy to make a demand for separate chairs. He believed that this proposal was motivated by a desire to guard against "infidel opinions" rather than against sectarian differences (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845). Finally, Davis also agreed with the Bishops' concern to protect the faith and morals of students in the new Colleges. The Board of Trustees should have the power to dismiss any office-bearer in the new Colleges convicted of transgressions in this regard:

> if any president, vice-president, professor, or office bearer in *any of the new colleges*, shall be convicted before the Board of Trustees of attempting to undermine the faith, or injure the morals of any student in those institutions, he shall be immediately removed from his office by the *same* board (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

In order to emphasise the protection offered to the Catholic faith by the system of "mixed management", Davis reminded members of the Association that, he

believed, Roman Catholic prelates would form part of the Board of Trustees. He continued to placate Catholic fears of the Bill by agreeing with the Bishops' demand that a Roman Catholic chaplain should be appointed to "superintend the moral and religious instruction" of the students. He suggested that there should be a provision for the religious discipline of the boys living away from parents. Catholic deans should be appointed to inspect the conduct of Catholic students and Protestant deans should inspect the behaviour of Protestant students (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845). He stressed that the Bishops' demand for religious instruction should be included in the Bill. In a private letter to Smith O'Brien, Davis revealed that he was not a strong supporter of religious education and accepted it in the Colleges Bill "chiefly to conciliate" (Davis to Smith O'Brien, n.d., Smith O'Brien papers, MS 432. No.880, National Library of Ireland).

However, O'Connell's position regarding the Bishops Memorial was very different. A week prior to the main debate on the Bill, O Connell stated that he would adhere to whatever decision the Catholic Bishops arrived at respecting the religious portion of the Bill. Although he was willing to express his "own individual opinion" he reserved the right to alter that opinion if the Catholic Bishops decided to the contrary. He called on the Bishops to provide "an authoritative opinion" upon the subject (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845). In the Prelates Memorial the Bishops rejected the Bill in its current format outlining that it would be "dangerous to the faith and morals of the Catholic pupils". While the Young Irelanders argued that the Memorial was evidence that the Bishops accepted the principle of mixed education if a range of concessions were granted O'Connell viewed the Memorial as evidence of the Bishops's opposition to the Bill. He did not refer to the aspects of the memorial, which searched for a compromise. There is little doubt that O' Connell had his mind made up prior to the Bishops' Memorial that the Bill was an insidious proposal.

### 2.6 Reaction to the Protestant status of Trinity College Dublin

O' Connell had no difficulty agreeing to a system that allowed Protestants a monopoly of TCD or Presbyterians a monopoly of an institute in Belfast or Derry

once Catholics had a monopoly of the Catholic Colleges in Cork and Galway. He stated that he desired "nothing for the Catholics that I would not be equally willing to see conceded to the Protestants". He was bitterly frustrated with the restrictions imposed on Catholics and believed that the Bill was designed to separate the people from their religion. He proposed that the deans of the Colleges in Cork and Galway should be Catholic clergymen, "whose appointment shall be vested in the Catholic Bishop of the diocese". He described the argument that TCD should remain a Protestant monopoly because Maynooth was equally a monopoly to Catholics as absurd. In his view there was no comparison between the two: Maynooth was strictly a theological and clerical institution while TCD was both a theological institution and an academic institution for the education of the gentry of the country (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845). O Connell's proposed solution to continue the system of monopoly in Irish education would undoubtedly have aggravated and perpetuated sectarian differences in Irish society.

Unlike O'Connell, Davis insisted that TCD should end its monopoly. In his *Address*, he deplored the monopoly enjoyed by Protestants in the College. Davis echoed Wyse's claim that the university was anti-national when he stated that it was "an obstacle to the nation's march" (Clifford, 1992, p24; Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p20). This exclusive, privileged system of education was anathema to Davis's principle of nationality, which encouraged reconciliation and unity amongst all Irishmen. TCD was a symbol of the Ascendancy which perpetuated bigotry and prejudice rather than endeavouring to promote reconciliation and understanding between the sects. Worse still it failed to replace ignorance with knowledge, which was a prerequisite for political unity and commercial prosperity. Davis believed that university education should be accessible to all members of the middle classes regardless of political or religious persuasion. It should be free from the "disease of Ascendancy" and should be "within the reach and means of the middle classes" (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845).

Davis's criticism of the Protestant monopoly at TCD was echoed by Denis Caulfield Heron, a liberal Catholic, who unsuccessfully challenged the practice of excluding Catholics from attaining scholarships (Walker, 1846, pp3-8). Heron claimed that there was pressure on Catholics to convert to Protestantism in order to attain scholarships which would contribute to career advancement. He suggested that the monopoly exacerbated existing sectarian animosity which did not help the people reconcile for Ireland's benefit:

> The sectarian feud which still survives in Ireland, through means of this educational monopoly, acts as a barrier to all union between the people. Sectarian feud is still a rankling, running sore, preventing the health of the nation (Heron, 1847, p185).

During his analysis of the Bill, Davis was ambiguous about whether TCD was a positive example of a university where the system of mixed education operated. In *The Nation*, he stated that the system of mixed education "has worked well" in TCD (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845). Given his support for mixed education it is understandable why he portrayed the system of mixed education at TCD in a positive light. He hoped to win support for the idea of mixed education by describing the system operating at TCD in such positive terms in a newspaper that was read primarily by middle class Catholics.

Despite his argument that TCD was a positive example of mixed education Davis understood that this sounded hollow to the Catholic population who comprised only 10% of the student population in TCD. He insisted that Sir James Graham was unwise in his desire to maintain the monopoly of TCD for the "preservation of that institution in its exclusiveness and richness would hazard the success of the new universities" (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845). *Taits Edinburgh Magazine*, a liberal literary and political magazine, edited by Christian Isobel Johnstone, echoed this argument; it claimed that the government measure of academical education would have been more successful if TCD emoluments had been opened to Catholic candidates; it argued that TCD should have been "unsectarianized" by the admission

of Catholics to its lay offices or by the creation of new professorships and fellowships (*Taits Edinburgh Magazine*, Volume 12, January 1845). If this had occurred it may have softened O'Connell's thinking on creating more monopolies but it is unlikely that he would have supported the Bill unless the Catholic Church was given greater influence in the management and organization of the Colleges. It is also likely that O'Connell was cognizant that Peel's government was engaged in undermining support for repeal by introducing reforms including the Education Bill to Ireland (Geoghegan, 2010, p215). By opposing this Bill O Connell would send a message to the British government that Ireland would not be distracted from its political goal by a reform that threatened to distance its people from the Catholic religion.

Davis did not wish to see TCD in competition with the new universities, for it had an unfair advantage, worthy or not, given its distinguished teachers and its confirmed rank. He did not want to see Catholics attending Colleges with poor facilities; and, as a Protestant, he "demanded for Irishmen admission to the scholarships, professorships, and fellow-ships of Trinity College" (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845). Nevertheless, there is another reason why he counseled against competition, which he did not reveal. He undoubtedly feared that opponents of the Bill would use TCD's exclusive position as a reason for advocating the establishment of an exclusive Catholic University. Effectively, this was the position adopted by O'Connell. Davis advocated greater access to TCD for all Irish people regardless of religious persuasion: "he wanted to have the education of the Roman Catholic level with the education of the Protestant".

During the Bill debate in the Loyal National Repeal Association, Davis set out his thoughts about TCD with greater certainty. He did not want to see any College established upon the same principles as TCD where students had to sit an entrance test before being admitted. He stressed that he wanted to have open Colleges where religious tests would not be a barrier to entry and he criticised TCD for employing these sectarian methods (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845). It was a university that

belonged to Ireland and, according to Davis, it was a great insult to exclude Catholics and Presbyterians from any office in that university on religious grounds (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845). He also argued that management positions should be filled by candidates on merit rather than on religious grounds.

## 2.7 Reaction to Government plans to appoint Professors

O'Connell was suspicious of government plans to control the power to appoint professors. He questioned whether "one independent man" would be appointed under the new system. These professors were compared with the revenue officers and police officers who were rewarded for their unfriendly attitude towards their country. O'Connell understood that government appointees had the capacity to influence and shape the political allegiances of their students and it was unlikely that they would promote the cause of patriotism, which was essential oxygen for the success of the repeal movement. He argued that government appointees were rewarded for their desire to "smother expressions of patriotism and … revile the land of their birth – only so long will their services be continued". In his opinion, the Bill was a "political delusion" capable of corrupting the young minds of the nation by educating them into sycophancy and "servile flatterers" which would serve the existing political system (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845):

> Can you call that "education" which bribes a man of virtues and morality out of his patriotism and love of country – out of his early professions, and make him a trafficker for base speculation and reward (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

He hoped the Irish people would not allow themselves to be deluded by this treacherous government, intent on imposing Protestant professors as educators of a Catholic population. It was an attempt by the government to curb the power of the Catholic clergy (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845). This was unacceptable to O' Connell not only because he was a Catholic but also because the repeal movement depended on the Catholic clergy to organise and plan repeal meetings; and the clergy filled the critical office of repeal inspectors. They selected the repeal wardens, supervised the local repeal reading rooms and were the main channel of communication between the Association and the people (MacDonagh, 1991, p505). Any government

initiative such as the Education Bill, which would diminish the influence of the clergy over its flock, would have had an adverse effect on the repeal movement.

Like O' Connell, Davis was against that provision which gave the government the right to appoint and dismiss professors in each of the Colleges. Comparing this measure with a previous Bill, introduced by Lord Clare, which allowed the government to appoint thirty-two county judges, resulting in the Four Courts and the Irish Bar losing their independence, Davis criticised the Bill in its current format as "an anti-Irish, a treacherous bill". He was sceptical of the government's intention on this issue and stressed that this measure would not only corrupt the social class supplying the professors but also the students:

> If this bill pass[es] in its present shape the government will have the appointment of ten or a dozen professors in each of those colleges, but they will have the sway of hundreds. They will only bribe thirty or forty professors, but they will corrupt the class that supplies those professors (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

## 2.8 The Queen's Colleges Bill: a source of division

The objection to the Bill that it did not provide for mixed education was, in Davis's opinion, an error. He considered O'Connell's interpretation that only Catholics would attend the Colleges of Cork and Galway and that only Protestants would attend Belfast to be a misinterpretation of the facts. In Cork and in Belfast where Catholics and Protestants dominated respectively, Davis argued that students from the religious minority would also attend these Colleges because it was less expensive to do so. He believed that students from middle class Protestants in Cork combined with the sons of the poorer gentry and middle class Catholics would be sufficient to "produce all the wholesome toleration and goodwill, of the mixed system of Trinity" (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845).

There is no doubt that O'Connell perceived Davis's line of argument on the Bill as unreasonable and provocative. And perhaps O Connell would have agreed with Davis's friend, Denny Lane, who, in a private letter to Davis, stated that there was something in his manner that was "very dictatorial" and self-righteous which

"frequently makes enemies, and always deters those who would otherwise become converts" (Gwynn 1948, pp84–85). O'Connell had heard enough from the young pretender. He accused Davis of manipulating the meaning of the Bishops' Memorial by arguing that they had referred only to the education of Catholics and had not interfered with the education of Protestants. Referring to what he believed was their rejection of the system of mixed education, O'Connell stressed that there "may be several principles in the bill – there is but one system, and that system they condemn". His patience with Davis's argument was at an end and he launched a verbal attack on *The Nation* for supporting the Bill. This was "a newspaper professing to be the organ of the Roman Catholic people of this country, but which I emphatically pronounce is no such thing". He then accused the Young Ireland party of playing "pranks" (*The Nation*, 31 May 1845).

Davis's inexperience of sharp political debate and the anxiety and shock generated by O'Connell's rebuke combined with a fear that this controversy might lead to a split in the repeal movement resulted in Davis breaking down and shedding tears. O' Connell thanked him and offered his hand in reconciliation which was greeted with enthusiasm by the Association. However, many members of the Young Ireland group took offence at what they perceived to be an unfair attack on Davis and their group. This event exacerbated differences that existed between Young Ireland and O' Connell. This controversial episode was a lesson to Davis that "Old Ireland" was not as he liked to imagine it; he underestimated the level of distrust and suspicion that existed amongst O'Connell and Catholic Ireland towards government policy which could undermine the role of the Catholic Church in education. Moreover, it is likely that O'Connell used the dispute over the Bill to assert his control over the Repeal Association and this motive may also have clouded his judgement on the benefits of mixed education. He also rejected the Bill to force Peel into revising it so that it would be more favourable to Catholic Ireland. He advised MacHale to maintain his intransigent stance on the Bill because he believed that a better Bill would be produced in twelve months; and he urged the government to take "one step more and consider whether this Bill may not be made to accord with the feelings of

the Catholic ecclesiastics of Ireland" (Kerr, 1982, p314). The government responded by making a slight amendment to the Bill–religious instruction should be allowed in Colleges if it was paid by private endowment; but besides this amendment other requests were ignored.

Following the Association debate Davis wrote a petition which was signed by leading citizens of Dublin requesting amendments to the Education Bill. However these amendments and the Catholic bishops' amendments to the Bill were ignored by the government. On 10 July 1845 the Bill was passed in the House of Commons. The Colleges were opened in 1849 and the Queen's University to which the Colleges were affiliated received its charter in 1850. The new institutions opened during the famine which inflicted deep trauma and suffering on the people.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored Davis's theory on the purpose of university education. In contrast to Newman's view of a liberal education which focused on education as an end in itself, Davis's theory of university education was useful in a liberal yet political sense. He stressed the importance of local knowledge – his curriculum included knowledge to create active citizens who would contribute to the advancement of their country. He insisted that contemporary Ireland should be the focus of their talents and abilities. In contrast Newman's understanding of knowledge was not local but universal; it would fit an individual for any society in any time period.

This chapter also showed how Davis's theory of university education was challenged during the debate on the Bill. His support of mixed education was compatible with his nationalist principles. It was essential to create the conditions of reconciliation and unity necessary to make Ireland an inclusive nation. He repeatedly stated that if the people were united the government would be unable to resist their demands to repeal the Act of Union. However, Davis also appreciated that unless the principle of mixed education received the support of the Catholic Church and O'Connell the new Colleges would not be supported by the majority of the people and political progress would be remote. O'Connell's intransigent position on the Bill

was motivated by political reasons including his desire to reaffirm his control of the Repeal Association and to force Peel to revise the Bill so that it would be more favourable to Catholic Ireland. Davis misinterpreted O'Connell's broader political motives and, despite, the context of difference that existed between Young Ireland and O'Connell he believed that disunity should not destroy the potential for social change which the Bill promised. Unfortunately religious and political tensions surfaced during the debate; and the negative reaction to the Bill was a missed opportunity for Ireland.

Davis opposed segregated education because it was exclusive and it did not promote cooperation and understanding between the sects. The Protestant monopoly of TCD symbolized the divison, the prejudices and elitism that existed in an unequal society. This model of education was inappropriate to create tolerant citizens who would serve all the people not just a portion of them. One could predict Davis's response to Newman's Catholic University idea – To replicate the flawed system of TCD was a backward step. It was entirely the wrong political context for a New Ireland.

The next chapter will examine Davis's university curriculum which was designed to educate nationalist leaders and active citizens. It explores what knowledge was included in his curriculum and it explains why some knowledge was excluded.

# Chapter Three: Davis's University Curriculum

## Introduction

This chapter examines the university curriculum proposed by Davis which was designed to educate citizens and to create leaders of society. I plan to explore his ideas on educating citizens to introduce a new generation to his thinking and to inform the on-going debate on citizenship education.

Davis wanted curriculum reform because he believed that the curriculum at TCD was anti-national and that it contained an inordinate amount of knowledge, which had little or no relevance to Ireland or the challenges facing its people. Like Herbart, he believed that a university education should nurture the character of citizens. Ireland required public men who possessed the following virtues: patriotism, a sense of civic duty, tolerance, charity, good judgement and national knowledge. In his view they should be trained in every branch of knowledge and business to provide good government and to advance and protect the rights of citizens. Nurture in the form of a reformed university education is what was needed to create active citizens and exceptional leaders and these catalysts for change were needed to regenerate their country.

Section 3.1 explores his experience as a student at TCD. It focuses on his perception of the deficiencies of TCD's curriculum and it examines his motives and proposals for curriculum reform. Section 3.2 examines Davis's university curriculum; it assesses the arguments he presented for selecting knowledge including philosophy, modern languages and English. This section also explores why the classics were peripheralised in Davis's curriculum and it investigates why he recommended a new syllabus for moral philosophy and oratory which already formed part of TCD's curriculum. Irish history was also part of his curriculum and this will be examined in Chapter 5.

## 3.1 Davis's experience of Trinity College Dublin

TCD was founded "for the education of youths …that they may be the better assisted in the study of the liberal arts" (Boylan and Foley, 1992, p20). The TCD curriculum was designed to educate the Anglo-Irish gentleman and the Church of Ireland

minister (Coolahan, 1981, p111); it was influenced by conservative education policies, which prevailed from 1800 up to 1830. Uncertainty in the political world influenced decisions made by the Board of Management at TCD. Protestant insecurity resulted from the rebellions of 1798 and 1803, the success of the Catholic emancipation campaign and an increase in agrarian unrest. This period of uncertainty combined with the dominance of Tory politics created an era of conservative rather than radical politics. As a result, few changes were made to the curriculum until the appointment of the provost, Bartholomew Lloyd, who introduced a number of reforms. He introduced an honours degree system into the primary degree, which allowed students, who passed the ordinary examination with distinction, to specialise in their chosen field. Two new chairs were founded, Political Economy and Moral Philosophy and, the Lectureship in Divinity was converted from a part-time to a full-time post (Mc Dowell and Webb, 1982, p152).
Davis attended TCD as a student from 1831-1836. During this period he graduated with a B.A. and he took further examinations in Logic and Ethics. He studied the following curriculum: in Junior Freshman year, three subjects were taught: Greek, Latin and Mathematics; in Senior Freshman year, Logic was introduced in addition to the classics; in third year, Junior Sophisters year, Astronomy and Physics were introduced and in Senior Sophisters year, students were required to study Astronomy, Physics, Ethics, Greek and Latin (*The Dublin University Calendar*, 1839, pp17- 21; 29, 45). The focus of the B.A. curriculum ensured that a student received an education in three fields – mathematics and physics, classics and philosophy. Davis's experience of the curriculum allowed him to identify its strengths and deficiencies.

Davis's memory of his student days was positive; he had "not one sad or angry reminiscence of old Trinity" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p20). He acknowledged that it provided him with the opportunity to make good friends. Nonetheless, despite the "many pleasant hours" spent in TCD he did not overlook its many faults. He criticized TCD for its exclusive, Protestant monopoly and its bigoted laws and he was especially critical of its curriculum. Despite the curriculum

reform introduced by Lloyd, Davis believed that TCD was failing in its duty to educate "wise and good citizens". Ireland needed leaders who were knowledgeable, wise, tolerant and just and who were willing to serve. It concerned him that young Irishmen were not sufficiently independent to challenge the prejudiced environment of partisan politics and, in his view, they were not patriotic. He urged his TCD audience to develop the virtues of successful men; but in order to do so they would have to educate themselves. Furthermore, there was another reason why they should engage in self-education. Their monopoly on political power would be challenged by the middle classes emerging from national schools and from the proposed provincial colleges. He claimed that his Protestant contemporaries would have to "fight a hard battle for their literary laurels and political renown. Prepare for that time. If you would rule your countrymen you must be greater than they" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p7). This highlights his concern for the "active and intelligent participation of his own Protestant people in the future life of the country" (Mulvey, 2003, p34). It also reveals his concern that his tradition might be peripheralised at a time when O'Connell's repeal party held out the promise of political change. He advised his Protestant countrymen that it was their duty to become politically active for Ireland. The challenges facing the young men of Ireland were significant. He had no doubt that great men were needed to lead Ireland into a period of liberty and prosperity. In Davis's words:

> Men make a state. Great men make a great nation …without them liberation will come without honour, and resources exist without strength – corruption and slavery, if they do not keep watch, will resume their sway, without alleviation or resistance (*The Nation*,17 June 1843).

Davis understood that education was the means by which "Great men" could be created. He insisted that because of the failings of the university system young Irishmen had a responsibility to educate themselves. In order to realise his political vision he devised a curriculum to provide a political education and especially to develop the qualities of character a statesman should possess. The subjects he selected included moral philosophy which, he argued, would teach "the moral

principles by which society is tied together"; the study of history would teach "the head and heart"; oratory, he claimed, should involve the study of thoughts and prepare public men to "speak well"; English studies were necessary for "the formation of style" and the classics had limited value for a young student but could be of benefit to an educated man, according to Davis (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, pp5,11,35). While the following section explores his curriculum it also highlights his thoughts on the merits and deficiencies of Trinity's curriculum.

## 3.2 Davis's University Curriculum

### 3.2.1 Oratory

While Oratory formed part of the Batchelor of Arts curriculum at TCD Davis believed that this subject should be reformed; he was not content with the methodology applied. The exam questions indicate that students were examined on the history of Oratory and in particular on distinguished orators of Greece and Rome. For instance, Mr Sadlier, the examiner, questioned students about Aristotle, Longinus and Cicero. Two typical questions were: a) By whom was the art of oratory introduced at Athens? Who was considered as its true founder and why? and b) Principal causes of the decline of eloquence among the Romans after the time of Cicero? (The Dublin University Calendar, 1839, lxiv). The knowledge that was required to answer these questions was peripheral to the practical needs of young orators. Davis knew a lot had been written on the principles of persuasion and the tactics of debate, by writers on metaphysics and rhetoric "from Aristotle to Mill, and Quintilian to Whately"; but, in Davis's view "their advice was general" and was difficult to act on. His utilitarian mindset focused on identifying problems that his contemporaries experienced and suggesting practical solutions. He set out

> to deal with what is *now here*, and not *what might be*; and rather to offer a *few careful*, than *many loose* recommendations (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p36).

Cicero influenced Davis's thinking on eloquence and on the qualities citizens and leaders should possess. Cicero's ideas on civic duty and on eloquence had endured throughout the centuries to the early nineteenth century. During the Enlightenment

there was renewed interest in classical antiquity and in Cicero's reputation as a philosopher, a dedicated patriot, a courageous statesman and an ardent defender of liberty against tyranny (Wood, 1988, p3). As an undergraduate in TCD, Davis studied Cicero's *De officiis* and *De oratore*; and in his *Address*, Davis claimed that both he and his contemporaries had read the books of Cicero, Shakespeare, Butler and others "nearly as much as our newspapers" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p10). Cicero's thoughts on public duty were echoed by Davis; that leaders should be "inspired by a lofty patriotism" (Petersson, 1963, p37). In Cicero's view man's "first duty is to the immortal gods, our second, to our country; our third to parents" and general society (Cicero cited in Goold, 1975, pp6, 165). He insisted that leaders must be patriotic men of

> vigour and energy, not men of sloth, men of high reputation, not voluptuaries, men who believe that they are born to serve their country and their fellows, to seek honour and high reputation, not to spend their days in sleep, feasting, and self-indulgence (Cicero cited in Lacey and Wilson, 1978, p224).

In his *Address* to his contemporaries Davis echoed Cicero by appealing to their sense of patriotism. He knew that Protestants had benefited from their close relationship with England. They looked to London for political security and cultural certainty (Boyce, 2005, pp 1-4). Davis accepted the challenge of convincing them that only one country deserved their loyalty. It was not England. Ireland should be the focus of their efforts; its political and social condition should be a priority in the minds of his audience. He emphasized that it was their country:

> The country of our birth, our education, of our recollections, ancestral, personal, national; the country of our loves, our friendships, our hopes; *our* country (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p 39).

Cicero believed that eloquence was the foremost hallmark of civilised man. It was the supreme expression of a statesman and it demonstrated one's fitness for political office (Mitchell, 1991, pp24–25; Rawson 1975, p152). The statesman should display both moral excellence and cultural learning in the conduct of an eloquent speech (Combs, 2007, p187). Davis appreciated the importance of eloquence for effective

communication in public life and that it was necessary for success as a statesman. He also considered advocates of civic virtue as proponents of true eloquence. There is evidence to suggest that Davis used civic duty as a criterion when he recommended Irish orators to TCD students. For instance, Grattan and Lord Plunkett served in the Irish parliament established in 1783, Burke was a supporter of Irish independence and all three had been strong advocates of greater equality between Catholics and Protestants.

Davis knew that many attending the Historical Society aspired to positions in public life. The study of eloquence and the ability to make the best use of information and intelligence in public speaking was an essential skill which needed to be cultivated. He provided advice to his student audience about the serious effort and preparation required to become a proficient orator. They should condition and cultivate their minds in order to "prepare for eloquence". This preparation would include research, meditation before, during and after research. In a typical rhetorical flourish Davis's revealed his thoughts:

> information is the seed-sowing, and study and experience the sun and shower, without which no harvest of eloquence can gladden the mind (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p5).

Cicero set a high standard for those who wished to develop the skills of an orator. Preparation should enable one to display "sound knowledge, and proper arrangement of his material, and a good style, and a retentive memory, and an impressive delivery" (Cicero cited in Grant, 1971, p259; Sutton and Rackham, 1942, p49). An orator should be capable of applying his talents to any subject and to an impressive standard, according to Cicero. He expected orators to prepare by learning about all the important subjects and arts that exist. This was an ambitious challenge and he acknowledged that some people might think he was aiming too high. His preferred areas of learning included the study of literature, especially poetry which would develop the memory and skill in criticism; knowledge of law was necessary for legal advocacy; ethics provided greater understanding of human psychology; logic would

assist in the art of disputation and like Davis he suggested that knowledge of history and philosophy would equip the orator with greater insight into the motives and actions of human beings (Mitchell, 1991, p 28). While Cicero considered knowledge and memory important, he also referred to other key areas including selecting one's words carefully, understanding human emotion, use of wit, physical deportment, gesture of the arms, facial expression and voice production (Cicero cited in Sutton and Rackham, 1942, p15). Like Cicero Davis encouraged his contemporaries to prepare for eloquence. Davis advised them to prepare for debates and discussions at the Society meetings. They should read and reflect on the Societies questions for at least two or three years before their style was adequately developed; and he discouraged students from speaking until they had developed a good style. Davis outlined the characteristics of accomplished orators, which he encouraged students to attain:

> They are self-possessed, and have all their resources at command. The memory, the knowledge must be prodigious that can carry a man through the common business of life (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p34).

Like Cicero, he insisted that an orator should have good knowledge of his subject and it should be thoroughly comprehended. "For it is from knowledge that oratory must derive its beauty and fullness, and unless there is such knowledge, well-grasped and comprehended by the speaker, there must be something empty and almost childish in the utterance" (Cicero cited in Sutton and Rackham, 1942, p17). Davis cautioned his fellow-students not to indulge in extemporising, which was the style embraced by those with "unabashed brows and flippant tongues". He also warned them against indulging in the practice of uttering smart sentences. While language was important Davis, like Cicero, counseled his contemporaries that fine words were useless unless strong thoughts were contained within them:

> No, gentlemen, but thoughts, thoughts; the wise man against the wordy man all the world over. And even for style's sake, study thoughts before words (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p35).

However, a good memory and thorough knowledge of the material would not guarantee success as an orator. Davis echoed Cicero's thinking on the need for orators to understand the "sympathies and prejudices of *all* his audience, but *especially* of their influential men". Both understood that a quality, persuasive speech could move the mind of man but that an inarticulate speech was "politically impotent" (Mitchell, 1991, p27). Cicero argued that during the great contests of public life one must possess courage and good judgement; he articulated the importance of keeping "one's presence of mind and one's self-possession and not to swerve from the path of reason" (Cicero cited in Goold, 1975, p81). Davis appreciated that orators must have a practiced memory, wisdom and intuition. But like Cicero he believed that "*presence of mind*" was a vital quality that the orator and the public man must possess (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p34).

In addition to his advice regarding preparation for eloquence, Davis followed Cicero's example of learning from other distinguished orators. He urged members of his TCD audience to study the speeches of orators who had distinguished themselves in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. He advised his contemporaries to address deficiencies in style so that they would become competent orators. He advised his audience to study and to copy

> the speeches of Pitt for splendid plausibility; Fox for an easy diction and fluent logic; Sheridan, for wit; Curran, for wit and pathos; Burke and Grattan, for grandeur and sublimity of thought, language and illustration. Erskine possessed most of these qualities ….. but perhaps surpassing all, are the speeches so valuable, and so little known, of Lord Plunket (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p19).

Similar to Cicero, Davis believed that eloquence was a skill which could facilitate citizens to communicate their thoughts on justice and patriotism. He would have concurred with Lord Bolingbroke's suggestion that only "the good citizen could be a good speaker" (Pothay, 1994, p126).

Despite having benefited from studying Cicero, Davis rejected the exclusively classical oratorical syllabus of TCD in favour of a syllabus based on local knowledge that he considered more relevant to prepare Irishmen for public life. He used this argument to support his claim that there was excessive emphasis on the classics in TCD's curriculum. His concerns were legitimate for the classics were examined each year in the four year undergraduate course (*The Dublin University Calendar*, 1839, pp17-20). The dominance of the classics leads students into four years of "specious idleness", according to Davis; and it provided students with a limited amount of time to acquire useful knowledge (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p15). His objection to the classical system of TCD was that, if well pursued, it would be too time consuming and he feared that students immersed in the ancient world would not have time to educate themselves about their country. In Davis's opinion TCD had a duty to ensure that knowledge about Ireland was on the curriculum; since this had not occurred he suggested that students had a duty to educate themselves.

A significant part of the Latin curriculum was dominated by histories of Ancient Rome including Tactitus *Annals*, Books i - iv and Livy's *The War with Hannibal*, Books xxi - xxv. In Davis's view, this knowledge was of value to the educated in society but it would not educate a young student about modern history or facts relating to Ireland; and if he did not know and understand his country how could he serve it? In Davis's words:

> He is ignorant of modern history, including that of his own country, whose facts would, if stored in his memory, be of direct use and application, unlike those of any remote time or unconnected country, which are of use only by analogy (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p13).

However, Davis did argue that a classical education held some advantages for the educated in society. It would benefit a learned man for it would complement the useful knowledge already obtained from studying the society in which he dwelled.

He acknowledged the valuable contribution that the Classical era contributed to mankind.

> But in sooth we have been, through every faculty of mind, and every member of society, through our literature, our languages, our laws, our arts of war and peace, galvanized, as it were, by the minds of Greece and Rome (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p12).

Davis benefited from a classical education and he suggested that if students wanted to pursue it they should learn politics, philosophy and poetry for this knowledge contributes to peoples' understanding of human nature and of contemporary society rather than the rules of prosody and translation of words which dominated the classics curriculum in TCD. He invited students to consider this point by asking: "Seriously, what does the student learn besides the words of the classics?" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p15).

Nevertheless, Davis did not insist that the classics should be banished from the TCD curriculum but he called for the inclusion of local knowledge – if a student did not know and understand his country how could he serve it? In order to provide students with national knowledge he suggested that Irish orators should be included in the TCD curriculum. The principles advocated by Irish orators including Grattan and Lord Plunket helped to inspire Davis's idea of nationality and it was his intention to direct his contemporaries not only to study the style employed by them, in their speeches, but also to study the thoughts contained within them. Davis hoped that these orators would inspire his contemporaries to work for Ireland.

In a review of Madden's collection of Grattan's speeches in *The Nation*, Davis focused only on the positive aspects of his subject. He acknowledged Grattan's talents as an orator but he praised Grattan the writer:

> No other orator is so uniformly animated. No other orator has brightened the depths of political philosophy with such vivid and lasting light. No writer in the language except Shakespeare has so sublime and suggestive a diction (*The Nation*, 22 February 1845).

The comparison with Shakespeare provides a useful insight into Davis's thinking. He seized the opportunity to change how the Irish perceived themselves. He wanted his audience to believe that an Irishman was capable of writing to the same exceptional standard as the eminent Shakespeare. If Irishmen were going to claim their political rights they would have to shed the cloak of inferiority and believe that they were equal to their English counterparts. Davis used hyperbole to create a new image of Grattan, the gifted writer; he produced "the finest specimens of imaginative eloquence in the English language" according to Davis (*The Nation*, 22 February 1845). Nonetheless, Goodrich argued that while Grattan possessed a powerful intellect his efforts had "too much the air of harangues"; and that his orations were full of antithesis and epigrammatic turns which had the appearance of "labour and affectation" (Goodrich, 1853, p385).

John Philpot Curran (1750-1817) was another public figure that Davis admired more for his patriotism than his ability as an orator – though he was recommended as a source of study for both these reasons. Davis considered his speeches to be of such value to the nation that he published a collection of Curran's speeches, including a number of his speeches at the bar and a selection of his parliamentary speeches. Curran represented a number of leaders of the United Irishmen with eloquence and patriotism following the failed rebellion of 1798 (Dunn, Lennox, 2004, p393). Even though they were executed, despite Curran's pleading, Davis was full of praise for his sense of justice, mercy and genius. His speeches, according to Davis, "will remain less as models of eloquence than as examples of patriotism and underlying exhortations to justice and liberty" (Davis, 1965, xxiv, xxv). Students of these speeches would gain inspiration from them and would be informed about the qualities required to serve Ireland during times of adversity.

Davis explained that Curran had developed the habit of soliloquy. He never wrote his speeches because he believed that it was difficult to calculate before how to shape his discourse exactly and he possessed the genius to marshal and summon his

thoughts on the spur of the occasion. Davis, who was not an advocate of extemporising, was quick to add, that though Curran "wrote none of his speeches, he generally *prepared them with the most intense and passionate care*" (Davis 1965, xxiv, xxv). Curran prepared for eloquence during his free time when he organised his thoughts and shaped his argument. In order to eradicate bad habits he practiced daily before a mirror reciting passages of the best English orators (Philbrick, 2007, p453). Davis recommended aspects of Curran's speeches because they were examples of perfect oratory from a mature patriot.

Davis saved the highest praise for another Irishman, Lord Plunket (1764-1854), who as a member of Grattan's Parliament was a vigorous opponent of the Act of Union. Similar to Davis, he was an advocate of religious liberty and Catholic emancipation. His fame as a distinguished orator developed from his performances in parliament and in the courts. A contemporary of his, Lord Brougham, prefaced a book edited by Plunket's grandson on the life, letters and speeches of Lord Plunket. In it Brougham praised Plunket's powers of reasoning and his ability to construct a clear and impressive legal argument. Plunket selected language for its usefulness in advancing his case and not for its display or ornamentation. Even his wit was designed to throw light on the subject. The features that marked his talents were his use of:

> clear statement, close reasoning, felicitous illustration, all strictly confined to the subject in hand, every portion, without any exception, furthering the process of conviction (The Hon. David Plunket, 1867, p7).

Lord John Russell, leader of the Whig party and Prime Minister on two occasions, claimed that Lord Plunket was the "best speaker he had heard". Russell praised his brilliant imagination and ready wit; but they were "all adjuncts to his strong, cool inflexible argument" (Russell, 2007, p70). Davis stated that Plunket's "precise vigour marks him the Demosthenes of the English language". To be compared with this renowned Greek orator was indeed a tribute to Plunket's talents. Davis lamented the fact that his speeches were so little known and described them as "so valuable" to his audience. The value from Davis's perspective was that Plunkett defended the

oppressed and resisted the work of the unjust and the tyrant. He was projected as another positive role model for young Irishmen to follow (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p 19).

Davis offered a practical piece of advice to his audience and that was to keep to the plainer styles. The style used by Coleridge and Carlyle did not impress him for it was difficult to comprehend. Davis was not alone in his criticism of Carlyle's style. *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle's complex work received mixed reviews; on the one hand it was denounced as unintelligible and affected, with a faulty, barbarous style; on the other hand it was admired for its wild extravagancies and hidden wisdom (Seigel, 1971, pp9-10). Coleridge's penchant for fabricating new words or resurrecting an archaic expression may have added to the reader's difficulty in comprehending meaning. Moreover, Davis also denounced any style comprised of regional jargon which could not be accessed by the majority (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p19). It was not a style fit for a nation.

For Davis a curriculum was "a delivery system" and "a means to a given end" (Gleeson, 2010). He designed his curriculum to educate citizens to be patriotic, self-reliant and righteous; he prioritised knowledge about Ireland including the ideas and methods of Irish orators to cultivate a sense of national identity. If citizens received an education in national knowledge they would have a greater understanding of the challenges faced by the country and its people. He believed that local knowledge would generate a sense of attachment and a sense of duty towards Ireland. In his view a citizen should learn

> Knowledge of his own nature and duties, of the circumstances, growth, and prospects of that society in which he dwells, and of the pursuits and tastes of those around him …. If he does learn this, he has learned enough for life and goodness (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p15).

In summary, Davis advised his contemporaries to study the styles of orators who had distinguished themselves by serving Ireland. He hoped that this would fulfill a dual purpose; it would allow students to learn the skills of an orator and students would

also be imbued with patriotic sentiment. There is no doubt that Davis appreciated the oratorical talents of Demosthenes and Cicero and he knew that students would develop skills by studying their speeches. However, to recommend orators from the age of antiquity in favour of Irish orators would be anti-national and would not serve the cause of nationality for the content of their speeches would not inform students about Ireland. The next section examines Davis's aim to shape the moral character of future leaders of Irish society.

### 3.2.2 Moral Philosophy

Davis argued that many leaders lacked the moral compass required to serve the common good. He feared that self-interest and corruption would damage Ireland's struggle for independence and would impair economic and social progress. He suggested that moral leaders should be nurtured and educated to benefit Ireland and its people: political leaders were required to lead Ireland towards liberty and prosperity; landlords must treat tenants with humanity; the clergy must display tolerance and charity. A moral education would make citizens more aware of human rights and human responsibilities. Davis believed that an education in moral philosophy could influence character development; it would develop characteristics including temperance, charity, self-reliance, patriotism and a sense of social justice.

The courses in moral philosophy available at TCD were not creating men with a moral compass that would guide them through the challenges of public life. In Davis's view the courses were "hazardous commodities". Professor William Hamilton Butler delivered a series of lectures that focused on the science of the mind and the history of ancient philosophy. Outlining his approach, Butler stated that he would proceed to consider the nature, plan, and requisitions, of a perfect history of philosophy, which he described as "the Science of Principles" (Hepworth Thompson, 1856, p220). From Davis's perspective sufficient emphasis was not placed on providing students with knowledge on the principles of morality.

In his *Address*, Davis suggested how he would reform the courses in moral philosophy. He encouraged future leaders in his audience to study the works of

Bacon, Butler, and Locke for inspiration and ideas. Although Davis did not refer to specific texts written by these philosophers he identified topics which students should study including man's duty to God and the moral principles by which society is tied together, threats to democracy and religious tolerance. Davis did not link theories to a particular philosopher nor did he provide an in depth analysis of them. Nevertheless it is possible to connect subjects to particular philosophers and to suggest why Davis recommended this knowledge to his contemporaries.

#### 3.2.2.1 Man and Society

Like Herbart Davis believed that education was necessary to prepare man for society; Irishmen had a duty to contribute to the improvement of Irish society. In his *Address* he suggested that the future leaders of Ireland had a responsibility to help Ireland progress towards "happiness, holiness and peace" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p42). He argued that leaders must be trained to be virtuous and to be of service to the common good; and in order to nurture righteous leaders he directed them to read the philosophers and learn the lessons of civic duty.

Davis echoed Butler's elevated view of human nature when he argued that man has a duty to his own nature – "the nature in which God constituted and constructed him" (Gladstone, v.iii, 1995, p100). Butler used the concept of self-love to provide an explanation for human action. Self-love was associated with virtue and means to provide for man's own private good; it may work against man's happiness if it engrosses him and prevails over all other principles – for instance, selfishness would not promote happiness (Butler cited in Gladstone, v.ii, 1995, pp191–192). Reasonable self-love was more likely to generate happiness and, together with man's conscience, was one of the superior principles in the nature of man which would encourage restraint and lead them to do good (Mills, 2008, p35).

Davis recommended Butler's moral philosophy to assist students to understand "the moral principles by which society is tied together". Butler emphasised the importance of public virtue and man's duty to society. He argued that nature shows that we were made for both a personal and common end. If mankind embraced what

was good and right in their minds and hearts it would "tend to private good" and promote public good; he argued that duty and self-interest would always coincide (Folbre, 2009, p56). He insisted that there were indications in human nature:

> that we were made for society and to do good to our fellow-creatures; as that we were intended to take care of our own life and health and private good … (Butler cited in Gladstone, v.ii, 1995, p35).

Butler wrote a number of sermons containing moral guidelines to encourage people to consider the welfare of others and to promote the common good. He expressed it in biblical terms to "love thy neighbour as thyself"; he defined love as charity, goodwill or benevolence; our neighbour as the people we are acquainted with in our ordinary lives or that part of the country under our influence; and the words "as thy self" encouraged man to treat his neighbour with humanity and justice. In order to encourage right behaviour towards mankind Butler insisted that it was absolutely necessary that man must "love mercy" and that his heart and temper were formed to a "love and liking of what is good" (Butler 1726 cited in Gladstone, v.ii, 1995, pp213-214). An individual who desires to act a proper part in society, according to Butler, was close to fulfilling one of God's laws:

> the more that man does for his neighbour in terms of care, thought and fortune "the nearer they come to the law of perfection, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Butler cited in Gladstone, v.ii, 1995, p218).

Davis embraced Butler's moral principles relating to man's duty to the common good. His *Address* was dominated by the idea of cultivating a public spirit and preparing for public service as a leader and a good citizen. His opinions resonate with Butler's thinking on the responsibility the elite and powerful had for the condition of the poor. Butler acknowledged that those in positions of authority and the rich have the power to do a great deal of good and must be "highly blamable for neglecting to do so". Without instruction and good influence "the lower people" would grow rude and vicious (Butler cited in Gladstone, v.ii, 1995, p303). While Davis described the poor as romantic and faithful he understood that poverty was widespread and that peasants deprived of the necessities of life could be a threat to

society. He suggested that the middle classes could reduce this threat by showing leadership and civic spirit; he argued that they had a responsibility not only to remove the ignorance which disempowered the poor but also to treat them with charity and fairness. They should use their power to make the people "wise, great and good" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p39).

#### 3.2.2.2 Political Philosophy

Davis believed that education was necessary to inculcate principles of behavior which would guide future leaders through the challenges of public life. He understood that an education in morality and civic duty was necessary to "purify their morals" and to prepare leaders for the challenges of politics. Like Butler, Davis identified important qualities that future leaders needed to develop to advance democracy; these were charity in thought, word, and action; he insisted that there must be "generous faith and the practice of self-sacrificing virtue". The principles of benevolence and charity articulated by Butler were embraced by Davis to promote fairness and justice in society. He desired the diffusion of civic zeal, because in it he "saw the only means of human improvement" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p38).

Davis echoed Bacon on the dangers associated with the misuse of political power. Bacon's *Essays* provided guidance on morality to men of influence in government and business. His concise advice would educate an individual about human nature; it would assist one to weigh the character and motives of mankind; to understand how vices occur and how to avoid them; and ultimately "how to be good and happy" (Mintov, 2010, p26). In his essay *Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature*, Bacon articulated what he considered to be the greatest virtue which would most benefit mankind – goodness. He also used the words philanthropia and humanity to express it; and he associated goodness with the theological virtue, charity.

> This [goodness] of all virtues, and dignities of the mind, is the greatest; being the character of the Deity: and without it, man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing; no better than a kind of vermin (Bacon cited in Pitcher, 1985, p96).

Bacon insisted that some do not possess goodness – there are those that in their nature do not affect the good of others for they are possessed by envy and engaged in mischief:

> Such men, in other men's calamities, are as it were, in season, and are ever on the loading part: not so good as the dogs, that licked Lazarus' sores; but like flies, that are buzzing upon anything that is raw (Bacon cited in Pitcher, 1985, p97).

He identified envy as one of the basest vices of human nature; in the essay *Of Envy*, Bacon denounced this vice as "the violent affection, and the most depraved for which cause it is the proper attribute of the Devil" (Whately, 1856, p79). In *Of Truth*, he condemned dishonesty in civil business: "that mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work better, but it embaseth it; for those winding and crooked courses are the goings of the serpent" (Whately, 1856, p3). He described these dispositions as "errors of human nature"; and he explicitly linked men who possessed these dispositions to politics; perhaps, because their harshness and cruelty are suited to the harshness and cruelty of political life itself (Paterson, 1989, p467).

Davis also identified errors of human nature which were destructive both to the individual and to greater society. Modern civilisation had, in some cases, resulted in the freedom of man from oppression and domination; but a real danger to liberty and democracy existed in the actions of selfish people, according to Davis. In his words:

> But on the shore of democracy is a monstrous danger; no phantasm is it, but alas too real - the violence and forwardness of selfish men, regardful only of physical comfort, ready to sacrifice to it all sentiments – the generous, the pious, the just (victims in their order), till general corruption, anarchy, despotism, and moral darkness shall re-barbarise the earth (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p38).

In response to this danger Davis quoted De Tocqueville's *La Democratie en Amérique* which stated that to qualify democracy for power you must "purify their morals, and warm their faith". In his examination of American democracy De

Tocqueville was struck by men who "were intoxicated with their new power". He continued:

> They entertain a presumptuous confidence in their own strength, and as they do not suppose that they can henceforth ever have occasion to claim the assistance of their fellow creatures, they do not scruple to show that they care for nobody but themselves (De Tocqueville cited in Renshaw, 1998, p208).

Despite this threat De Tocqueville was impressed by Americans who almost always "manage to combine their own advantage with that of their fellow citizens"; they are conscious that it is in the interest of everyman to assist one another and to be virtuous (De Tocqueville cited in Renshaw, 1998, pp229–230). Davis would have agreed with these sentiments.

In TCD Davis studied Locke's work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* which was prescribed reading for the Logics part of the undergraduate course (*The Dublin University Calendar*, 1837, p18-19). He also referred to Locke in his *Address* where he claimed that "it was impossible for the student to read the bold and skeptical works of Bacon, Butler and Locke without imbibing some of their spirit" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p9). Though Davis did not refer to specific texts Locke's spirit is evident in Davis's thinking on civic duty, tolerance and leaders' duty to the governed.

In his *Two Treatise of Government*, Locke claimed that political power should be used for the preservation of society and the common good:

> So that the end and measure of this power, when in every man's hands in the state of nature, being the preservation of all of his society – that is all mankind in general – it can have no other end or measure when in the hands of the magistrate but to preserve the members of that society in their lives, liberties and possessions (Locke 1764 cited in Cook, 1947, 209).

Locke argued that all men are free and equal in the state of nature and possess certain natural rights including the right to life and liberty (Collinson, Plant, 2006, p90). In his view civil government should be based on the principle of consent (Ward, 2010, p73). A political community entrusted to maintain the humanity of all should have "some tendency to allow for the existence, the desires, actions and

needs of other men" (Laslett, 1988, 107). Legislative power should not be used to destroy, enslave, or designedly to impoverish the subjects (Locke 1764 cited in Cook, 1947, p189). If power was misused by a ruler this was an act of tyranny; this could occur when a ruler uses power

> not for the good of those, who are under it, but for his own private separate advantage – when the governor, however entitled, makes not the law, but his will the rule, and his commands and actions are not directed to the preservation of the properties of its people, but the satisfaction of his own ambition, revenge, covetousness, or any other irregular passion (Locke 1764 cited in Cook, 1947, p223).

A ruler loses all authority when he acts contrary to the public will of society and members of society no longer owe their obedience. In this instance Locke insisted that majority rule should decide to change governors; however, if the majority abused power, perpetuated itself in power and attacked men's rights a revolution would be justified (Cook, 1947, xxi). The people have a right to defend themselves and to resist with force the actions of a tyrant. If this theory was applied to Ireland, Davis knew that there were grounds for rebellion against English rule; but he believed that the constitutional option had not been exhausted. He encouraged the people to "terrify your tyrants by your organization, sobriety and resolute adherence to the law." Armed resistance as a final option was not ruled out by Davis; he insisted that citizens should be prepared to sacrifice everything for liberty including life itself; but he counseled the people to display "the virtues of freemen" – they should be "sober and just; learn much, think often, and bide your time" (*The Nation*, 13 May 1843). The people would have to prove to the English and to themselves that they were worthy of liberty. He urged them to be orderly, intelligent and conciliatory and, above all, to resist the temptation to engage in premature "insurrections, and needless provocation of party and military hostility"; he continued:

> Rapid, uniform, and careful organization for the Repeal agitation, charity and conciliation, and a strict observance of the law, are the pressing and present duties of every Irishman (*The Nation*, 29 April 1843).

Davis also wanted to provide clergymen with an education to remove ignorance which promoted bigotry and intolerance. He had no doubt that a moral education would inculcate virtues including charity and tolerance of different religions; it would broaden their understanding of man's duties to God and encourage them to live virtuous lives; in Davis's words he hoped they would "attain notions of the Deity as lofty as those of the philosophers"; and that men would "venerate nothing more highly than their own nature, save the nature of that Deity who moulded man in his own image" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p 10).

Davis hoped knowledge of Locke's views on morality would assist students to understand their Christian duty and also to provide students with motivation to engage in virtuous behaviour. In his *Essay* Locke indicates that he possessed lofty notions of the Deity. All men are servants of God. He argued that the existence of divine law or "that Law which God has set to the actions of Men" would, if men understood it, influence their action. Moral laws were not innate, according to Locke; God has given man the faculty of reason for discovering those laws which were necessary to curb and restrain "exorbitant desires" including a desire for happiness and aversion to misery (Locke 1706 cited in Yolton, 1993, p 36).

Locke identified a providential God who rewards and punishes in the afterlife as the ultimate guarantor for any theory of moral philosophy (Ward, 2010, p54). God has in his hands "rewards and punishments" and the capacity "to call to account the proudest offender". It is by comparing their actions to this law that men

> judge of the most considerable *moral good* or *evil* of their actions: that is, whether, as duties or sins, they are likely to procure them happiness or misery from the hands of the ALMIGHTY (Locke 1706 cited in Yolton, 1993 p193).

Locke believed that an awareness of the will and law of God would encourage men to engage in actions that were morally good; these actions would win them happiness and benefit greater society. In *The Two Treatises of Government*, Locke insisted that no man should harm another man in "his life, health, liberty or

possessions"; all men were the workmanship of God - they were "all the servants of one sovereign master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business" to use his faculties to preserve mankind (Locke 1764 cited in Cook, 1947, pp123-124). Davis believed that knowledge of Locke's ideal on morality would promote awareness of one's duty to his fellow-man and that he must be responsible for his actions. It would encourage people to live well and to prepare for the afterlife (Schneewind, 1994, p206). He hoped that depictions of God as Governor or Supreme Being together with references to him passing judgment would act as another motive to engage in moral action.

Davis hoped that those who gained a moral education by studying Locke would sooner or later transform the pulpit: "for superstition you may meet enlightened piety; for bigotry, generous tolerance and sweet-voiced charity" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p10). In *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Locke showed Europe how it was possible to end religious wars. He enunciated the principle of the separation of church and state; religion was a private matter "between the individual soul and his creator" while civil government was charged with the promulgation and enforcement of civil law (Oberman, 1996, p15; Stetson and Conti, 2005, p52). He viewed the churches as the principle protector of morality. The clergyman had a duty not only to encourage peace, good will and tolerance between men of the same religion but also to actively encourage toleration between men of different religions:

> He that pretends to be a Successor of the Apostles, and takes upon him the Office of Teaching, is obliged also to admonish his Hearers of the Duties of Peace and Goodwill towards all men; as well towards the Erroneous as the Orthodox; towards those that differ from them in Faith and Worship, as well as towards those that agree with them therein: and he ought industriously to exhort all men, whether private Persons or Magistrates (if any such there be in his church) to Charity, Meekness, and Toleration… (Locke 1689 cited in Tully, 1983, pp33-34).

Locke insisted that clergymen should not deprive another man that is not of their Church either "of liberty, or any part of his Worldly Goods". Those that promote intolerance should consider how powerful a provocation to "endless Hatreds,

Rapines, and slaughters, they thereby furnish unto Mankind"; this provocation would cause and justify revolt. As long as this opinion prevailed peace, security and common friendship would be compromised. He reminded all Ecclesiastical men that their primary duty was to "promote the Salvation of Souls" (Locke 1689 cited in Tully, 1983, p56); and he warned those who teach intolerance that they would have to answer to God:

> he either understands not, or neglects the business of his Calling, and shall one day give account thereof unto the Prince of Peace (Locke 1689 cited in Tully, 1983, p34).

Davis also believed that the philosophers could clarify and emphasise man's duty to God and that by contemplating the Supreme the hearts of men would be softened and souls ennobled (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p10). If the students of TCD reflected on Locke's assessment of the inadequacies of clergymen Davis hoped they would avoid the failings, become men of learning and embrace the principles of moral righteousness and virtue. He believed that the purpose of religion was not the expression of external pomp, nor the obtaining of ecclesiastical power or wealth "but the regulation of men's lives, according to the rules of virtue and piety". Religion was a matter of personal conscience, according to Davis, and similar to Locke he was acutely aware of how religious intolerance and bigotry could create division and conflict. He insisted that religious tolerance between Catholics and Protestants was an essential prerequisite for the attainment of national independence. A united, purposeful, educated public opinion was required to achieve this aim. Davis wrote a number of articles in *The Nation* where he tried to convince members of both creeds to bury their historical differences and unite to secure Ireland's political future. He emphasised their common interest:

> but the real interest of the vast majority of the Irish Protestants is (like that of the vast majority of the Irish Roman Catholics), to have Ireland governed *by* and *for* its inhabitants, and by and for them alone (*The Nation*, 17 December 1842).

Davis used his *Address* to encourage student clergymen to study the philosophers' theories on moral behavior and to remind students of their moral obligations. He believed that responsible clergymen were the moral guardians of the people. They had the capacity to promote tolerance and goodwill amongst the laity. If clergymen were learned, pious, tolerant and virtuous they would provide valuable moral and religious guidance to their flock. However, an ignorant, bigoted clergyman would be a disseminator of hatred, selfishness and suspicion. He praised those who preached "virtue and moral greatness and piety to his fellows" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p11). But he deplored the existence of bigotry, ignorance and intolerance in the opinions of the clergy. When the pulpit was used to propagate these opinions Davis described them as "misemployed pulpits":

> when I see the right to instruct, without learning; intolerance and intemperance in opinion, without self-denial in conduct; when I see a sentimental profession of dogmas intruding on the rightful domain of noble and kindly feeling and good works; when I see all this, I speak of "misemployed pulpits" as no imaginary evil, but a real and wide-spread infliction upon my fellow-religionists in this country (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p 11).

To summarise, Davis's proposed changes to the course on Moral Philosophy were motivated by his desire to educate moral leaders and good citizens; by directing students to read the philosophers he hoped they would promote tolerance and display charity and justice in thought and action. Prejudice, selfishness, intolerance and disunity had failed to advance the cause of liberty or the common good. A new generation of moral leaders was needed to win independence and to improve the lives of the people. It was imperative that political leaders and clergymen use their influence for good, for the benefit of the people and for their country; he insisted that leaders had a responsibility to prepare the people for liberty. He argued that "freedom would be useless unless the people were prepared for it" (*The Nation*, 30 September 1845). The people must develop moral character to prepare them for liberty; they needed "honour, patience, faith and valour"; and Ireland needed leaders who were patriotic and righteous.

### 3.2.3 English Philological Studies

English Studies did not form part of the TCD curriculum until 1856. Davis deplored the fact that such an important, relevant subject was not on the curriculum. He was aware that his contemporaries required a good standard of English to equip them for the demands of public life. The politician, lawyer and clergyman would benefit from a formal study of the English language to perfect an effective writing style and to enhance the orator's ability to convince and persuade. This was, in his view, knowledge which a citizen should know and in order to succeed it was essential that public men were able to communicate effectively.

Philological studies would provide a greater understanding of the rules of grammar, of how language works and of the meaning of words. Davis encouraged his contemporaries to study English philological studies because it would be useful to the formation of style. He described these studies as not essential but "they give an accuracy and aptness to the writing" of those who are familiar with them (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p17). He recommended a number of suitable authors and books which he hoped his fellow-students would study and, with the exception of a brief comment on each book, he did not engage in a scholarly analysis of each one. Davis described Noah Webster's *Compendious Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1806, as "the best" for its explanation of the common use of words. This dictionary consisted of 70,000 words of which 12,000 were native to America. Webster was concerned with recording the origin of words, the definition of words, the orthography of words and symbols were used to promote correct pronunciation. It was his aim to ensure that Americans had a dictionary that incorporated national differences; he also encouraged standardisation of the English language for the American people (Micklethwait, 2005). His dictionary was designed specifically for students, merchants and travellers; it would provide guidance not only to Americans but to all users of the English language. Davis was impressed by the manner in which this knowledge was presented and could appreciate its value to students of English.

He also recommended Richardson's handbook, *A New Dictionary of the English Language* for those who would "cultivate a pure English style". Scholars and professionals could access its "ample quotations" from distinguished authors; and the use of quotations to explain the meaning of words was very effective (Smith, 1849, p199). A critique in *The North American Review*, described this dictionary as a "philological storehouse; overloaded with the antiquities of the English tongue" which throws much light on the origin and progressive changes of English vocabulary (Sparks, Everett, Lowell, 1839, p535). But this review also stated that as a dictionary of reference for definitions and illustrations of words it was inconvenient. The examples cited, taken from the oldest English authors, were superfluous and "often of little value" (Sparks, Everett, Lowell, 1839, p535). Knowledge of ancient and modern English literature was necessary to benefit from Richardson's examples. It is for this reason that his dictionary was more appropriate for students who pursued comprehensive knowledge and expertise in the use of words.

Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley* was highly recommended by Davis because it allowed the reader to acquire "a critical habit in etymology and grammatical analysis". The main purpose of language, according to Tooke, was to communicate thoughts "with despatch" (Tooke, 1993, p26). He did not fully explain his meaning of the word despatch, except that additions or alterations for the sake of ornamentation or gracefulness should be disregarded, but one can assume that he meant thoughts should be communicated efficiently. Similarly, Davis did not want students to consider language as a weapon that should be used to impress or flatter. Words should be selected with care to ensure appropriate use.

Tooke provided students with an understanding of words which would facilitate them to perfect a good style of English. He divided words necessary for the communication of thoughts into two sorts: nouns and verbs. All other words not necessary for speech were described as abbreviations or substitutes (Tooke, 1993, p48). They add to the quality or excellence of the language. Tooke explained the

function of nouns, verbs, articles, conjunctions, prepositions and adverbs. He also emphasised that knowledge of word origins or etymology would increase peoples' understanding of the meaning of words and would reduce the potential for exploitation when unscrupulous authorities used language against them. This knowledge would also provide extra clarity and greater understanding of words and as a consequence the use of "metaphysical jargon" for illegitimate reasons would be discouraged. He believed that if the imperfections of language were "more thoroughly weighed" a great deal of the controversies in matters of law and civil government would cease and the way to knowledge, and perhaps peace, would "lie a great deal opener than it does" (Tooke 1993, xi, p32). By recommending Tooke Davis hoped students would develop an authentic style which would prepare them for the intellectual challenges ahead in the courtroom, political chamber or at the pulpit. A scholarly knowledge of the origin and meaning of words would assist people to distinguish between verbal truths and verbal trickery; and equally important it would help them to communicate effectively.

Another book of consequence in Davis's opinion was *Cobbett's Grammar*. It was designed for use in schools but especially for those who were taught to read and had to depend entirely on their own resources to improve their literacy skills. On the cover page, Cobbett identified his audience as young persons in general and soldiers, sailors, apprentices and plough-boys in particular. He wanted to provide ordinary people with the ability to express themselves so that they "could play a part in the affairs of the nation" (Clark, 2001, p39). By studying the English language he hoped that the working class would "achieve control over the elite language as a means of exercising political rights" (Walker, 2011, p33). He was motivated by incidents of social injustice and political exclusion; for instance petitions to parliament for voting reform were dismissed on account "of the vulgarity of language used by the petitioner" (Carter, McRae, 2001, p203). His *Grammar* offered the politically voiceless access to the language of power (Nattross, 2006, p17).

Cobbett argued that grammar was extremely useful for acquiring knowledge. It was the "gate of entrance" to many paths of knowledge. But its primary function was "to enable the possessor to communicate, by writing, that knowledge to others". Grammar teaches us "*how to make use of words*" (Cobbett cited in Stephen, 1906, p11). Good grammar not only allows the communicators to express themselves with clarity but also to minimise misinterpretation and misunderstanding. It was in his words "a science of substantial utility" (Cobbett cited in Stephen, 1906, pp11-15). Cobbett's practical teaching methodology ensured that his grammar lessons were very accessible to the reader. He began by providing a definition of grammar and divided it into four branches: orthography, prosody, etymology and syntax. Each branch was examined in detail and with refreshing clarity. He encouraged readers to think about each aspect of the lessons; learning by rote was discouraged. They were also urged to test themselves, for instance, firstly, by categorising a list of words as pronouns, adjectives and propositions, and secondly, by checking their answers against a dictionary. If some were incorrect Cobbett urged his readers to renew their exertions.

Cobbett may have influenced Davis's thinking on the negative impact that the classics could have on young students endeavouring to develop a good style. Cobbett was forthright in his criticism of those who believed themselves to be learned because they possessed knowledge of Greek and Latin. This knowledge did not prevent them from committing grammatical errors in their native language. He directed further criticism towards the authors of a king's speech, by stating that the least we have a right to expect in a minister is "the capacity of putting his own meaning clearly down on paper" (Cobbett cited in Stephen, 1906, p177). In order to show that grammatical errors were common in the writings of distinguished, learned gentlemen Cobbett also examined specimens of false grammar evident in the writings of Dr Johnson and from those of Dr Watts. In Cobbett's mind there was no excuse for poor grammar. Study and practice would remedy any defects. He had a clear opinion on what constituted the best writing; it was designed to best achieve the objective of the writer and the worst is least likely to affect that purpose. He

advised writers to write what they have thought and, "*Never write about any matter that you do not well understand*" (Cobbett cited in Stephen, 1906, pp185-186).

Cobbett combined the role of the grammarian with the paternal role of moral guide. He wrote a number of lessons to his son James in letter format; and Cobbett urged his son to educate himself to a high standard and to use his talents for the advancement of truth and justice:

> I have a hope not less confident of seeing you a man of letters, employing your time and talents in aiding the cause of truths and justice, in affording protection to defenceless innocence, and in drawing down vengeance on lawless oppression (Cobbett cited in Stephen, 1906, p13).

Davis's understood the importance of studying and practicing good grammar. He encouraged his contemporaries to learn by reflecting on Cobbett's thoughts on the subject. But equally important was the moral guidance provided by Cobbett who encouraged readers to use the written word to resist oppression and tyranny. Not only did Davis concur with this principle but he hoped that many of his fellow-students would accept the challenge; he hoped they would use their talents for good and become benefactors of humankind (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston 1889, p37). Other books recommended by Davis included the section on "words" in Locke's An E*ssay Concerning Human Understanding* and some chapters in Mill's *Treatise on the Mind*. Davis recommended all of these books as being "well worth reading".

During his *Address*, Davis recommended a number of distinguished authors that he believed contained the best vocabulary. There were occasions when he made exaggerated claims and sweeping statements about the styles of distinguished writers. Given that he was addressing a student Society as its President, his desire to impress his audience may have influenced his comments. For instance, he stated that the writers that preceded Lord Bacon were "rather affluent in words than critical in the application of them". He did not specify the writers he was referring to, nor did he provide evidence to support his argument. Other general statements include his

assessment of Shakespeare's writing as "exact and felicitous" and copious (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p19). Again no specific evidence was provided.

Davis suggested that the language of the early English poets and chroniclers suffered from a profusion of imagery, which in his view served to confuse rather than make plain. He recommended a number of authors that he was familiar with for their clarity of language and because they informed his thinking on a range of issues. These included Henry St John, First Vicount Bolingbroke, seventeenth century English politician and philosopher, who informed Davis's view of history; and Swift, who Davis described as one of the "mind-chieftains in the civil strife of Ireland" and Cobbett. Davis's knew that citizens would benefit from studying the ideas of these authors and from the style of English employed by them. Undoubtedly he had found them useful in developing his sophisticated, rhetorical style. He did not recommend the writings of those he considered to be anti-national; for instance, Samuel Lever, whose popular novels presented a negative stereotype of the Irish peasant and misrepresented Irish life and manners was criticized by Davis and his co-editors in *The Nation*. They "rejected his drunken squires and riotous dragoons as types of the Irish character" (Duffy, 1884, p185). This knowledge was not useful for it would exacerbate the defeatist mentality and negative self-image that many Irish people possessed. It would damage the cause of nationality regardless of its merits from a perspective of style.

## Conclusion

Davis's curriculum displays his vision for university education– that it should serve the needs of politics and society. He believed that there was a deficit of good leaders willing to serve Ireland and its people – education would help to fill this void and create leaders who were knowledgeable, patriotic and wise. A new generation of leaders like Swift, Grattan and Wolfe Tone was required to "make their country forward in her progress"; to win liberty and to lead the country out of economic deprivation and into a period of prosperity. He hoped that his *Address* would inspire young men to pursue a political career and to prepare for it.

He insisted that students emerging from TCD were unprepared for a life in politics and consequently would not be competent leaders; many of them lacked the communication skills necessary to succeed in politics; and he also feared that TCD had neglected to give them a moral education necessary to guide them to make decisions that would benefit the common good. His curriculum was designed to nurture the talents and skills necessary to prepare citizens for the challenges of public life and to encourage them to embrace the challenge of transforming their country.

He deserves considerable credit for constructing a curriculum that was practical and useful. Ireland needed leaders who were good communicators to represent it. Throughout his *Address*, he reminded students that developing an English style was not just an academic exercise it was an essential part of educating citizens who would be competent to fill public offices. Despite the fact that he had immense faith in the Historical Society to teach "things which a citizen should know" he encouraged students to engage in self-education. This was necessary because the absence of a course on English studies at TCD meant that those interested in developing a good style would have to perfect their skills during private study.

He also displayed practical insight by trying to educate competent orators. Public men must possess the oratorical skills necessary to persuade citizens to demand their rights, to win support for them and to succeed in political debate. Ireland needed good orators with the skill and ability to move the mind of man; to persuade a divided people to unite and to explain Ireland's grievances to a sceptical audience in the House of Commons. Orators had a role to play in shaping Ireland's political future; in a mature manner he urged his contemporaries not to expect instant success as an orator but to acquire knowledge and experience before displaying their talents.

Moreover, Davis argued that leaders who possessed excellent communication skills and a good understanding of local knowledge were deficient unless they possessed a highly developed moral character. His curriculum in moral education would ennoble

leaders and purify their morals – it would prepare them for the future when their moral fibre would be tested. If students studied the philosophers they would learn about their duty to God and especially their Christian duty to their fellow citizens; they would also learn about their responsibility to democracy – to suppress self interest and to use power for the common good. He hoped leaders would embrace the moral principles of charity and justice and be guided by them in public life.

Furthermore, Davis's sense of morality influenced his political life. In politics he was sensitive to corruption in the Repeal Association but he did not always articulate his concerns in public fearing that to do so would distract attention from the political goal of independence. In a letter to Smith O`Brien he reacted to his public dispute with O`Connell over the question of mixed education by outlining the imperfections of repeal politics. Davis stated:

> between unaccounted for funds, bigotry …… crude and contradictory dogmas, and unrelieved stupidity, any cause and any system could be ruined (Duffy, 1896, p220).

Nonetheless, despite the fact that his experience at the coal face of practical politics was challenging he was prepared to practise what he preached in his *Address*; he tried to suppress self-interest and make a positive contribution to Irish politics. Following the O`Connell dispute he was tempted to leave politics but motivated by personal honour and a dogged temper he decided to remain in the Association while there was "a chance, even a remote one, of doing good in it". In spite of wounded pride his sense of patriotic duty encouraged him to continue in politics.

Davis's concerns about political corruption in the early nineteenth century still resonate with us in the twenty first century. There is considerable evidence to suggest that political corruption is still a factor in Irish political life (Collins, Cradden, 2001). His ideas on educating moral character could be of benefit to a new generation. He considered education as a means of ennobling citizens to encourage them to adhere to moral principles in their daily lives. There is no doubt that the

current generation of aspiring public men and women could benefit from studying Davis's ideas on moral behavior and civic duty; and they would also benefit from studying and reflecting on the ideas of wise philosophers who have written quality thoughts on man's relationship with society.

Davis's vision for university reform did not only apply to the curriculum at TCD; he also examined defects in its teaching method. He feared that the university system produced too many graduates unprepared to think and that excessive attention was devoted to developing the memory rather than the faculties of reason and imagination. His proposals for improving the learning environment of TCD will be examined in the next chapter.

# Chapter Four: Teaching Methods and the Learning Environment

## Introduction

This chapter examines Davis's ideas on learning methodologies and on teaching methods. He wanted to train citizens how to think. His criticism of the system of instruction employed by TCD was that too many students were poorly educated. Davis stated that these "dunces" emerged from the College after five years of idleness (Davis cited in Rolleston, 1889, p8). Many of them were, in his opinion, incapable of thinking for themselves. He believed that the method of instruction at TCD was largely responsible for this unsatisfactory situation as it failed to train the intellect to inquire and to engage in critical thinking.

Section 4.1 examines Davis's thoughts on different learning methodologies including learning by observation, by experience, book learning and learning in the home. Section 4.2 investigates the deficiencies evident in the system of teaching and learning that operated at TCD; in particular it focuses on the argument against non-residence and the shortcomings evident in the tutorial and lecture system. Section 4.3 examines the teaching methods that were employed at TCD and these are compared and contrasted with his preferred method of instruction, Lyceum teaching. Section 4.4 investigates the inadequacies of the national school system. Section 4.5 outlines Davis's proposals to confront the widespread ignorance of the people by encouraging the development of repeal reading rooms.

## 4.1 Learning methodology

In an article entitled *Means and Aids to Self-education* Davis reflected on different learning methodologies with the aim of informing students how to learn. He argued that it was a common misconception "that books, and schooling, and lectures, are the chief teachers in life"; whereas the most significant things were "learned from the experience of the home, and of the practical parts of our trades and amusements" (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843). He acknowledged that book learning was necessary to the orator, poet and statesman. Knowledge gained from reading must be "well

digested and vivified by meditation" otherwise it was likely to produce inconsistency and confusion of the mind.

Davis advocated learning by observation and by experience. His thinking on this was undoubtedly influenced by exponents of the empirical tradition including Locke, Butler and Hume. This tradition argued that all reasoning concerning human nature comes from experience. In Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the mind is considered to be "white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas" (Locke cited in Yolton, 1993, p45). He asked: how is it furnished? Where does the vast store of ideas, "the materials of reason and knowledge" come from? To this he answered, "in one word, from experience". All our knowledge is founded in experience. He also emphasised that our observation "supplies our understanding with all the materials of thinking". Locke described both experience and observation as "the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or naturally have, do spring" (Locke cited in Yolton, 1993, p45). Davis was convinced that experience was a "greater well of knowledge than books". He argued that experience was something that happened to a learner and it should be deliberately noticed and treasured for use. This would involve

> our treating *every* scene and group as a book to be read, as materials for *every* variety of thought and sentiment (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p32).

Davis provided an example of how daily experiences could be used. When Aristo was rebuked sharply by his father he did not respond. His brother Ludvico questioned him on the matter and asked why he had not replied to his father. Aristo stated that he was thinking of a comedy he was writing; and that his father's words were suited to an old man chiding his son and thought only of using it in his comedy (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p32). As this example demonstrates Davis believed that experience should be stored in the memory and reflected upon with future application in mind. He argued that successful literary figures like Shakespeare used experience in this way. In his art Shakespeare transformed his life

experiences into an "aesthetic resource" (Bennett, 2010, p13). His play *Timon of Athens* addressed the themes of money inherited and money squandered; Shakespeare's experience of losing his inheritance bequeathed to him by his mother because his father used it in a mortgage inspired him to write about this issue (Knight, 2004, p77). In 1596 his only son Hamnet died at the age of eleven; in the winter of that year Shakespeare wrote *King John*, and it is likely that the moving death scene of Prince Arthur in that play was written to commemorate that event. Six years later he devised a more dignified memorial for his son in writing *Hamlet*, "which is to say that Hamlet is meant to be Hamnet, killed before he reached maturity, sexually unresponsive, as an eleven year old boy would be" (Bate, Levenson, Mehl, 1998, p108).

Davis was also influenced by Locke's thinking on learning by observation. Locke argued that both languages and good behavior were learned most effectively from observation. He suggested that the most effective way children learn manners and modes of behavior is by observing the examples of others and imitating them rather than from instructions or rules; and for that reason he encouraged parents to ensure that their children were surrounded by tutors who were "well bred":

> Virtues and vices can by no words be so plainly set before their understandings, as the actions of other men will show them, when you direct their observation, and bid them view this or that good or bad quality in their practice (Locke cited in Yolton, 1993, p93).

As a medical practitioner to family and friends Locke engaged in learning by observation; he carefully recorded the symptoms, treatment and progress of patients. A practitioner must compile natural histories of diseases; and diligent observation was necessary to monitor the progress of diseases and the effectiveness of medicines (Savonius-Wroth, Schuurman, Walmsley, 2010, p86).

Davis concurred with Locke and recommended learning by observation. He advocated the traditional family apprenticeship method which involved a student

apprentice learning by experience and observation. This method of learning dated back to the Middle Ages when boys acquired the knowledge of a trade "through everyday practice, from living and working with adults who were already fully trained" (Aries, 1973, p186). By the late eighteenth century in France apprenticeships for the upper and middle classes declined because of the development of technical and professional training – after that the working classes continued to practice apprenticeships. Family based apprentices also went into decline in Industrial England where factory apprentices were trained on the job and provided with a low wage. Children worked "long hours in unhealthy factories". The family became less a unit of production than a unit of wage-earners (Cunningham, 1995, p88, p144).

Davis argued that factories were insidious places where workers were engaged in repetitive mind-numbing work. The home was a more effective teacher of what he described as "designed learning". In his words:

> We learn arts and professions by apprenticeships, that is, much after the fashion we learned walking, or stitching, or fire making or love-making at home – by example, precept and practice combined (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843).

This learning method concurs with the pedagogical base of apprenticeship, learning a skill through observation and repetitive practice (Wolek, 1999, p396). In the 1940s Miller and Dollard claimed that people do not learn from observation alone; they must imitate and reinforce what they have learned (Hergenhahn, Olson, 2008, p327). Bandura challenged this theory–he suggested that one can learn from observation without having to imitate what was observed. Many skills are learned by what Bandura called observational learning–watching the actions of another person or noting the consequences of the actions (Coon, Mitterer, 2008, p243). Observational learning requires the child to actively attend to, encode and retain the behavior displayed by social models including parents or older sibling. Bandura suggested that children are not passive recipients. They are free to choose the models to whom

they will attend and, therefore, they have some say about what they will learn from others (Shaffer, 2009, p49). A lot of the behaviours that children attend to, remember and may imitate are actions that models display but would like to discourage including smoking and swearing.

Davis argued that apprentices could learn from watching, imitating and doing the task. Apprentices observe other men, at anything, "from ditching, basket-work, or watch-making, to merchant-trading, legislation, or surgery"; when they see other men do these things their interest is aroused and they desire to do the same (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843). Once the apprentices focus on the task, learning occurs at a gradual pace. Initially, they learn by observing how each part of the job is completed and the correct sequence of the tasks; furthermore, they endeavour to do the tasks. Finally, the apprentices should seek advice from the tutor if they experienced difficulty with any part of the task. The tutor in this case assumes the role of facilitator.

Davis suggested that learning by observation was an essential part of the learning process for apprentices; learning would be enhanced from the experience of experimentation or doing the task. Apprentices would be at the centre of the learning process for they could experiment, explore and guess at certain stages of learning thus changing how the next task should be approached. Apprentices who recognised a relationship between the task completed and the subsequent step exercised their judgement and advanced the process of thinking. In Davis's words, "they learn to do so by watching *how* and *when*, and asking, or guessing *why* each part of the business is done" (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843). Once they know how to do the task, they attempt to carry it out successfully. The processes involved in doing the task should be practiced over and over again "until they become internalized" (Wolek, 1999, p396). Davis believed that praise and encouragement should be offered to the apprentices at each stage. This would increase their self-esteem and encourage them to undertake the next part of the task or to repeat that part which was completed incorrectly. Once the tasks were completed in a correct manner, only

then should they "attempt some other or harder part of the business" (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843).

### 4.1.1 Learning in the Home

A contemporary work by Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744-1817) and Marie Edgeworth (1768-1849) entitled *Practical Education* was widely read as a child rearing manual in the early nineteenth century and may have influenced Davis's thinking on home education. It was a scientific study of the home as a place of learning; it was a site of knowledge production which advocated the teaching of science through domestic conversation (Nash, 2006, p60). The Edgeworths engaged in a process of "experimental science"; they recorded facts concerning children and noted the details of their experiments (Edgeworth, 1823, preface).

The Edgeworths wanted children to be excited by knowledge. Children were introduced to science through play; for instance they used "rational toys" such as carpenter's tools which encouraged experimentation and use of reason rather than toys bought from a store (Edgeworth, 1823, p42). Furthermore, the Edgeworths asserted that children learn by observation and "imitate what they see"; consequently they should not be exposed to the damaging influence of servants. Parents should provide good examples of behaviour for children to follow in a positive learning environment. A mother should try to cultivate a child's abilities and virtues by "patience and perseverance". It is better motivated by pleasure than by fear:

> a young child may be initiated in the mysteries of learning, and in the first principles of knowledge, without fatigue, or punishment, or tears (Edgeworth, 1823, p440).

Davis also argued that the child learns by observation in the home. Parents both "consciously and unconsciously teach by example and precept how to avoid the dangers as well as how to take advantage of the opportunities of life" (Stub, 1975, p78). The example and guidance provided by parents, in an informal setting, provide the children with an opportunity to learn valuable knowledge and to develop useful life skills. Parents with a good understanding of their role as educators have a major

influence on what a child learns. Davis believed that in homes where reading, writing and discussion about various subjects, including human nature, local history and religion, are considered important in the home, the child will imitate the parents and place high value on these things:

> Where the parents read and write, the children learn to do so too, early in life and with little trouble; where they know something of their religious creed they give its rights a higher meaning than mere forms; where they know the history of the country well, every field, every old tower or arch is a subject of amusement, of fine old stories, and fine young hopes; where they know the nature of other people and countries, their own country and people become texts to be commented on, and likewise supply a living comment on those peculiarities of which they have read (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843).

His support for home education was also a reaction against the teaching methods employed in private schools and the anti-national education provided in National Schools. In his view, private schools had a defective teaching method similar to that of TCD; rote learning was practiced which cultivated the memory without exercising the pupil's ability "to think exactly, to read and write accurately"; furthermore, not enough consideration was given to the practical use of knowledge. He stated that private schools "merely cram the memories of pupils with facts or words, without developing their judgment, taste, or invention, or teaching them the *application* of any knowledge" (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843). According to Davis the shortcomings evident in private schools mirrored those of TCD for they taught knowledge that was "least worth learning". Instead of learning the nature, condition, circumstances, and history of their own country, and then other countries students were "buried in classical frivolities, languages which they never master, and manners and races which they cannot appreciate" (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843). He believed that home education by honest parents could correct some of these defects. It was his hope that parents would teach the child knowledge about local and national issues, such as history and politics.

Davis described home as a "great teacher"; it is a teacher of mechanical skill, of labour by example and of moral behaviour. He directed readers of *The Nation* to read the writings of R.W. Emerson (1803-1882) and J.P. Richter (1763-1825) on bringing up children and teaching at home for they had written "deep and fruitful truths" on the subjects. Although Davis did not provide an analysis of their thoughts it is possible to illustrate how they may have influenced his opinions on how an honest home could be a suitable learning environment for children to grow and development. He believed that home could be one of the main teachers of life.

Both Emerson and Richter were influenced by Rousseau's thoughts on education. Rousseau was influenced by the Enlightenment and the doctrine of self-improvement; he also rejected the pessimistic "traditional Christian" view of the existence of original sin in humans (Zafirovski, 2010, p57). However, he was critical of the Enlightenment and its presuppositions of progress and the domination of nature through the application of science and reason (LaFreniere, 2008, p105). In his influential work *Emile* (1762), the child is allowed to discover the world for himself and at his own pace (Parry, 2004, p221). He believed in the development of the "goodness" and "individuality" of the child (O'Connor, 2010, p7). Unlike Locke he argued that no child should be formally educated before the age of fourteen; and rather than being a blank slate a child was born with innate talents and abilities that would emerge naturally without any prodding from adults (Horne, 2011, p11). Similar to Rousseau Emerson advocated the play method in education, the disparagement of textbook learning, the need to imitate nature and the use of sense experience to trigger the unfolding of the child's natural potential (Karier, 1986, p57).

In a lecture on "Domestic Life" (1843), Emerson outlined how events in the home shaped child and man:

> The household is the home of the man, as well as the child. The events that occur therein are more near and affecting to us than those which are sought in senates and academies (Emerson, 1910, p232).

Emerson insisted that if a person wanted to understand the real history of the world or the spirit of the age he should seek facts on the home rather than the state-house or the courtroom. The home was a barometer of the fortunes and misfortunes of society; it revealed information on moral character and on the mentality and condition of the people. In his words:

> Who could explain your misfortunes, your fevers, your debts, your temperament, your habits of thought, your tastes …..Is it not plain that not in senates, or courts, chambers of commerce, but in the dwelling-house must the true character and hope of the time be consulted (Emerson, 1910, p232).

Emerson argued that materialism and wealth were barriers to virtuous living. Homes should be places of simplicity, of subsistence where the study of ethical values was paramount. He insisted that homes should be for "plain living and high thinking" (Emerson, 1871, p105). The house should in its economy bear witness that "human culture" is the end to which it is built and garnished (Cooke, 2003, p190):

> Honor to the house where they are simple to the verge of hardship, so that there the intellect is awake and reads the laws of the universe, the soul worships truth and love, honor and courtesy flow into all deeds (Emerson, 1871, p107).

He appreciated that there were many homes where the environment was so negative that it inhibited the child's development. It was a calamity to find in housemates no purpose and to hear only dissention and criticism. Emerson stated that:

> To find no invitation to what is good in us, and no receptacle for what is wise;- this is a great price to pay for sweet bread and warm lodging, – being defrauded of affinity, of repose, of genial culture, and the inmost presence of beauty (Emerson, 1910, p 234).

Man required more than heat and food or offers of money to develop. If a person is sick, or mean spirited he requires "your heroism, your purity and your faith", according to Emerson. Homes which provided encouragement and understanding were more conducive to personal growth.

Emerson's experience of a challenging home environment informed his thinking on poor parenting and its negative consequences for the child's development; it also reminded him that parents had a responsibility to create the environment which would allow the children to unlock their potential. Emerson's father supervised his three sons' education with a "stern and demanding hand" (Leverenz, 1986, p45); and Emerson's memory of him was that he was "a somewhat social gentleman, but severe to us children" (Josh, 1987, p2). In an essay on *History* Emerson referred to the negative influence that a "hard formalist" could have on a child's ability to grow.

> The cramping influence of a hard formalist on a young child, in repressing his spirits and courage, paralyzing the understanding, and that without producing indignation, but only fear and obedience, and even much sympathy with the tyranny,- is a familiar fact … (Emerson, 1857, pp25-26).

This formal parenting had a negative influence on Emerson's brother, Charles, who had a certain "severity of character" which did not permit him to be silly or playful; he was always self-possessed and elegant whether morose or playful – this character mirrored the father's "power of face" (Leverenz, 1986, p45). Emerson reacted against domineering and stern parenting which inhibited the child's development. He suggested that each man's vocation should not be decided by his parents or friends but by his genius; – his originality or genius was his gift to the world (Goodman, 2010, p6). Like Rousseau, he insisted that the talent and unique ability of each individual should be recognized and encouraged. "We do not teach them to aspire to be all they can" (Emerson cited in Bosco and Myerson, 2005, p48). He argued that education should create "able, earnest, great-hearted men".

Richter also appreciated the significance of a positive learning environment for the development of the child. In his work *Levana oder Erziehlehre (Levana or doctrine of education)* Richter called on the goddess Levana to encourage the father to embrace the role of a genial educator so that he would avoid becoming an authoritarian tyrant who might impair the intellectual and emotional growth of his child (Black, 1980, p47). Parents must promote the development of the child through

education. He stated that the "spirit of education ….is nothing more than an endeavour to liberate … the ideal human being which lies concealed in every child" (Richter, 1866, xi). The means to that end was love and kindness. In childhood moral or immoral experiences can have a dramatic influence on a child rather than on an adult. In Richter's words:

> If in mature years great examples of moral worth pass by without influencing our course of life more than a flying comet does that of the earth, yet in the deep heart of childhood the first inner or outer object of love, injustice etc, throws a shadow or a light immeasurably far along its years (Richter, 1866, p24).

An environment that was nurturing and understanding would encourage the child to develop. Richter emphasised the importance of developing "child like trust, that imbibing power without which there could be no education" (Richter, 1866, p25). He insisted that it was imperative that the child received a spiritual or moral education to inculcate values, including "truth telling" and "kindness"; these values were the child's "pole star which will remain his guide in whatever regions he travels" (Pridmore, 2004, p283).

By referring readers of *The Nation* to the thoughts of Emerson and Richter Davis hoped that they would accept that tyrannical or domineering parents inhibited child development and compromised the unfolding of human potential. Davis suggested that parents needed to create a positive environment that was conducive to learning. He stated that "home learning depends, of course, on the knowledge, good sense, and leisure of the parents" (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843). This implies that home learning was unsuited to parents who were uneducated or lacked good judgement. His vision of home education was more suited to parents who were not living in poverty and had time to devote to this. Poor parents introduced their children to work at a young age out of necessity and education was often overlooked - many children started work at the age of ten or eleven; some were bound out to farmers and worked long hours as labourers or servants. In England, during the industrial

revolution young children worked exorbitantly long hours in factories where working conditions were inadequate (Cunningham, 1995, p88, p98).

Davis's vision of a home was that it should be a happy place where family members socialized together and created positive feeling and good memories. He stated that

> where the members of a family can read aloud, or play or sing, they have a well of pleasant thoughts and good feelings which can hardly be dried or frozen up (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843).

A genial home would encourage children to learn in a non-threatening, informal, happy environment.

Davis's was influenced by the Enlightenment doctrine of self-improvement. The capacity for *perfectibilité* which Rousseau attributes to human beings is a capacity for self-improvement; he suggested that man can better himself by his own efforts (Cranston, 1995, p232). Davis echoed this idea when he stated that "the *first* business of life is the improvement of one's own heart and mind" (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843). He acknowledged that this improvement could occur at home or at school; and similar to Emerson and Richter he believed that good homes had a decisive role to play in the formation of character and especially the moral growth of young people; in those homes they learned a virtuous value system:

> we learn (in a prudent home) decorum, cleanliness, order - in a virtuous home we learn more than these: we learn reverence for the old, affection without passion, truth, piety, and justice (*The Nation*, 18 February 1843).

He described these as the "greatest things a man can know". In honest homes these virtuous qualities are passed down from generation to generation. Davis considered the moral formation of the individual to be a priority. Echoing Emerson he argued that the accumulation of wealth or the attainment of talent was of little worth if a moral and just value system was absent.

The moral values and intellectual qualities, such as the ability to think and reason initiated and developed in good homes were not, in Davis's opinion, sufficiently advanced by the university system. He argued that both the system of non-residence and the teaching methods used were not conducive to learning in a manner that would develop the intellect. The next section examines these deficiencies.

### 4.2 Trinity College Dublin – Non-residential degrees

TCD provided accommodation for about twenty percent of its students. It offered boarding school facilities on campus while College tutors were required to discharge the "quasi-parental functions of house masters". The residential component of a university education could be compared to a "home" of sorts, while many of the day-students would naturally feel disconnected. The majority of students from the city and its suburbs, including Davis, resided at home with their families; others lived with trusted friends. It is unsurprising that parents, who had no family or close friends in Dublin, were unwilling to allow their young sons to reside in unsupervised accommodation during term time in a city which was too large for the university to exercise disciplinary jurisdiction outside the College walls (Mc Dowell & Webb, 1982, pp115–116). Some students from outside Dublin were members of "the country list system". They enrolled in the non-resident degree which required them to attend college for no more than two or three days each term while they completed their examinations.

The fact that a student could obtain a degree without attending lectures or tutorials called into question the essence of the university system. Non-residence was at variance with the letter and with the spirit of the original statutes and it is unclear when and how this system originated (McDowell and Webb, 1982, p115). It would appear that the practice of non-resident degrees was allowed to continue because the fees paid by these students were a welcome source of funding for TCD. Non-residence was an attractive option for a substantial minority of students who intended to obtain a degree. In 1855 of the 270 students that entered TCD, 69% were resident and 31% were non-resident (Andrews, 1867, p7). Limited residential

accommodation at TCD, the desire to maintain parental supervision and minimal costs incurred were the main reasons why parents chose this option.

Davis opposed the non-resident degree option. He insisted that unless residence was enforced that university education was "intellectually useless". The intellect could not be properly trained if students were absent from lectures and tutorials. Students did not benefit from the expert knowledge of lecturers who interpreted complex ideas and presented them in a simplified, accessible manner. They also missed out on advice and encouragement provided by lecturers; and their non-attendance at lectures did nothing to motivate them to learn at a steady pace which the lecture system encouraged. Many students found it difficult to cultivate the habit of industry to study in the home environment and weaker students were especially disadvantaged by the non-residence system. Difficulties experienced by those students while doing the "higher course of reading" seemed for some insurmountable and could "force many of them to abandon their studies" (Andrews, 1867, p10). The reality is that a majority of non-resident students became disillusioned with their studies during first year and were most likely to give up their studies during that year: "the falling off among non-residents in first year was more than five times greater than the corresponding falling off among resident students". This abandonment of the undergraduate course by non-resident students was also reflected in the decline in the number of graduates from this group. In 1855, of the 186 resident students who registered in first year 61.9% proceeded to the degree of B.A., while only 31% of 84 non-resident students who registered proceeded to the degree of B.A. (Andrews, 1867, p7; pp10-11).

However, it was not just the failure to complete the course of studies that concerned Davis. He strongly believed that residence at university was more conducive to the development of the intellect than non-residence because non-resident students did not attend lectures or tutorials on a regular basis. Many of the non-resident students who passed the examinations did so with the assistance of a private tutor. Bartholomew Lloyd, Trinity Provost during Davis's student years, was of the view

that some non-resident students relied excessively on the assistance of private tutors or crammers to prepare them for examinations. This involved students learning by rote ideas that they did not fully understand. Their intellectual development was not enhanced by this exercise. In the majority of cases, students discovered that they were "submitting to a painful and irksome labour, without gaining positive knowledge or making progress in mental discipline" (Andrews, 1867, p10). Lloyd insisted that the system of non-residence promoted cramming, which allowed the "great end of academic teaching – the discipline of the mind itself" to be overlooked. It was his view that residence should be encouraged, "if not enforced" (Andrews, 1867, p5). But it was not enforced under Lloyd's term as provost and non-residence continued until the growth of provincial universities reduced this practice towards the end of the nineteenth century (Mc Dowell and Webb, 1982, p117).

While Davis was in favour of student residence on campus he harboured concerns about the effects residence could have on the morals of students. University life had the potential to be "morally pernicious" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p21). He was also concerned that the college system could be morally destructive "by destroying family ties and, too often, purity of character". It is unclear what vices Davis was concerned about but he was most likely referring to students' new found independence away from the moral authority of the family. Moreover, a number of Catholic students entering TCD were subjected to pressure to convert to Protestantism. As already noted in Chapter Two he believed that this practice was insidious and unjust; and given the distrust generated by religious differences in Irish society he argued that religion was a private matter that should not be exposed to the trickery or sophistry of others. Despite these concerns, Davis's support for residence on campus was based on a desire to ensure students were properly supervised and to protect them against the uncivilised influences of city society. This was a practical suggestion because many of the teenagers who attended TCD were young, immature and vulnerable.

Davis favoured residence not only because students would be supervised but also to promote an academic environment where students could interact and learn from each other. In his words: "tis a matter of consequence to keep the students together, to foster an academic spirit and character, and to preserve them from the stupefying influences of common society" (*The Nation*, 17 May 1845). Davis's views on bringing young men together to develop an academic environment, which students would both help to create and benefit from, were very similar to Newman's thoughts on the subject. Newman was opposed to a university system, which dispensed with residence and gave its degrees to any student who passed an examination; he favoured a system where young men were brought together and provided with the opportunity to learn from one another. This was an invaluable way of training and strengthening the intellect:

> When a multitude of young men, keen, open-hearted, sympathetic, and observant, as young men are, come together and freely mix with each other, they are sure to learn one from another, even if there be no one to teach them; the conversation of all is a series of lectures to each, and they gain from themselves new ideas and views, fresh matter of thought, and distinct principles for judging and acting, day by day (Newman cited in Ker, 1988, p130).

This positive learning environment described by Newman was evident in the student Historical Society at TCD, of which Davis was an advocate. Students researched a particular topic then they proceeded to discuss and debate the motion. Both resident students and non-resident students living in Dublin city attended these debates. The diverse range of political and social topics examined by the Society provided students with the opportunity to learn from each other. Davis's preference for the Society's learning environment and method of instruction was a reaction to the defects evident in the tutorial and lecture system of TCD.

### 4.3 System of Instruction - Tutorial and Lecture system

When he was a student at TCD, Davis was not impressed by the teaching system. He insisted that it was an "effete system of instruction" which was a negative assessment of both the lecture system and the tutorial system (Davis 1840 cited in

Rolleston, 1889, p20). However, despite the flawed teaching system he did not support non-residence: the practice where students studied at home and attended TCD to sit the examinations. Despite its faults the college environment was more conducive to learning and, he insisted that if the teaching system was reformed students would emerge with the ability to think for themselves.

In 1830, the tutorial system was operated by eighteen Junior Fellows, the majority of whom were tutors. They were responsible for most of the teaching and examining and for the general supervision of students. Other duties undertaken by tutors included the position of Junior Dean, Junior Bursar and Registrar of Chambers, a few administrative posts, one or two Professorships and over twenty lecturing posts– lecturers in Greek and Science, assistants to the Catechists, assistant lecturers in Hebrew, Divinity and Mathematics, and university preachers. In addition, each tutor was responsible for the tuition of on average 100 students (Mc Dowell and Webb, 1982, pp103-104).

An excessive workload was a factor which militated against the provision of quality instruction. Many Fellows found the work involved in tuition duties to be extremely demanding which left little time for undertaking study and research. Robinson, a Fellow at TCD, stated that they "can scarcely be expected to devote themselves to any work of research or even of compilation" given that they were "constantly involved in the duties of tuition, which harass the mind more than the most abstract studies"; consequently, at the end of the day, Fellows would have little inclination to "commence a new career of labour" (Robinson, 1820, vi-vii). The *Dublin University Magazine* also commented on the excessive workload that Trinity Fellows had to endure and it was amazed that distinguished men of genius had sufficient time to develop their talents. The College

> exacted the most overwhelming labour from its fellows; of whom the number was not more than barely adequate to their most wide and burthensome range of duties rendering it a question of curiosity to understand how men like Berkeley, Hamilton and Young could have attained their distinguished

> eminence in letters and science (*Dublin University Magazine*, Volume xxvi, October 1845, p484).

Nothing less than the highest genius could overcome the difficulties and demands placed on Fellows to "extend their intellectual walk beyond the mental treadmill of the classes and daily lectures" (*Dublin University Magazine*, Volume xxvi, October 1845, p484).

Another deficiency was that the Fellowship examination system did not always ensure that the successful candidates were competent to lecture in subjects such as Theology and the Classics. Greater effort was invested in mastering Mathematics and Science because greater merit was awarded for those subjects than was awarded for academic excellence in the Classics. As a result there was less incentive to study the Classics; but despite this defect, Fellows were appointed to fill lecture posts in the Classics department even though very few had sufficient knowledge to qualify them for such teaching. Teachers of Theology learned their subject only after they had obtained a Fellowship. Fellows were expected to study these subjects in an intensive manner over a short time period to prepare for lectures. This gave rise to "that system of cram" which was so often deplored by the university (Anderson and Reichel, 1858, p 5, 9, pp 20-21).

An additional problem which was not conducive to learning was the regular student absences from lectures and the situation was occasionally exacerbated by an absent lecturer:

> no cognisance was taken of irregularity either on the part of the lecturer or the lectured; and consequently there was a great deal of it on both sides. A fellow was often absent from his class; the class oftener absented themselves from the fellow (*Dublin University Magazine*, Volume v, March 1835, p355).

Absences certainly impaired the efficiency of lectures, and in 1834, the tutors' committee introduced a number of regulations to improve matters. Tutors agreed to

record student attendance and to summon students to account for their negligence; it also recommended that each lecturer should be obliged to send to the tutors a report of student attendance. Tutors attendance at lecture was also addressed and the committee decided that a weekly record of tutor attendance should be undertaken. Moreover, a deputy lecturer would be appointed if a tutor was absent from lecture duties for more than five days (*Dublin University Magazine*, Volume v, March 1835, p354).

The lecture system was very different from the conventional method employed in universities today where academics provide their expert analysis of a topic to a large group without asking questions. In contrast, in TCD, in the 1830's, asking questions of the students was standard practice throughout the lecture. Students of the Classics were also required to have homework completed in the form of a piece of translation. These were positive methods of assessment which promoted students' understanding of the lecture material and they also provided lecturers with regular opportunities to monitor the progress of their students.

However, a weakness of the lecture environment was that some students experienced difficulty in large lecture halls; they did not benefit from the lecture experience and felt excluded from the learning process. In a letter written by an undergraduate, Robert Armstrong, to his father, he was clearly dissatisfied with the Greek lecture given in a public hall which he attended three times weekly. As a result of the large class size he did not feel like an active participant in the class. In the previous months a question had not been put to him and this contributed to his sense of exclusion and did nothing to arouse his interest in the subject:

> Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at nine o' clock, I attend a Greek lecture (in Homer), from which, indeed, I derive no *advantage whatever*; for among such a number, some may be there for months and never have a question put to them, which has been my case. This is a public lecture given in the hall (Henderson, 1859, p2).

The system of instruction was certainly weakened by overcrowding in lecture halls, by Fellows who were inadequately trained and by poor attendance at lectures. These deficiencies were exacerbated by an ineffective method of teaching which, Davis believed, was incapable of training the intellect. This prompted Davis to question – Should the University system continue in its current format? The next section examines the teaching methodology employed by TCD and it outlines Davis's thinking on the subject together with his preferred method.

### 4.4 Teaching methodology

True to his utilitarian thinking, Davis believed that the teaching methods employed should facilitate students to develop their intellectual capabilities and to train the mind how to use knowledge. It concerned him that subjects were ill-taught because they failed to encourage students to think about the evolution of human thought and the relationship between knowledge and human progress. Students were not encouraged to think how and why knowledge is connected.

Davis believed that students should "study subjects, not authors" so that their thinking on a subject would be influenced by more than one author. This was the most effective way of accumulating useful knowledge and he encouraged the members of the Historical Society to continue using this method:

> Thus alone can you go through the wilderness of writers, *and it is only by requiring ourselves to master subjects that we render this society what it is – a means of sound general education* (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p30).

In an article entitled *Study* Davis argued that students should have "information on the classification of books" and they should also be encouraged to "judge authors vigorously and for themselves" (*The Nation*, 8 February 1845). He suggested that a Review of books written by an impartial author would be a significant guide for readers to access knowledge on subjects. He warned against reviews of books which were "written for some party or interested purpose, and are not trustworthy". Referring to a *Literature of Europe* written by Hallam he insisted that Irish students

needed a similar guide to their history and literature; it would assist people to select knowledge with care and with a purpose in mind.

A major deficiency in TCD's teaching content was that the undergraduate curriculum focused students' attention on authors instead of subjects. In Junior Sophisters' year, the third year of the undergraduate course, the recommended reading in most subjects was confined to one author in many cases and occasionally to just two authors. For instance, in Logic two texts were recommended, Murray's *Logic* and Locke's *Essay*; in Astronomy, Brinkley's *Astronomy* was the only text; in Greek, *Demosthenes de Corona* and Stock's *Demosthenes* were the main texts; in Physics, Wood's *Mechanics* was the only text on the course and in Latin the writings of Cicero dominated (*Dublin University Calendar*, 1836, p19).

Davis would have concurred with Lardner, author of a grind book on Locke's *Essay*, who identified the exclusive study of one author as a major shortcoming in the teaching content. He stated that the consequence of studying one author's work provided students with a false perception that there was only one opinion or one doctrine because they were not made aware of another. Furthermore, a student could delude himself by thinking that his opinion, based on studying one author, was right and authoritative. Having failed to study other works on the same subject, "the student when his academical studies are completed, frequently goes forth into the world fully persuaded that the opinions which he has thus "committed to memory" are infallibly right, and the only doctrines, on these subjects held by rational creatures" (Lardner, 1845, vi – vii).

The study of one or two texts did not encourage students to develop a comprehensive understanding of a subject but rather facilitated the development of a very limited perspective. Moreover, it did not encourage students to develop their analytical skills. There was an inadequate emphasis on comparing, contrasting and combining ideas. Students were not encouraged to develop a spirit of inquiry and the practice of rote learning was encouraged. Given that some of the examination

questions related to one textbook, a student could purchase a grind book which summarised the main points of the lectures and learn them by rote. Though Lardner produced a grind book he complained that learning by rote was of little benefit to the student. He was convinced that it did not encourage students to develop their understanding. It was as effective as "reading a description of riding or walking to acquire the vigour derivable from those healthful exercises". In his grind book, Lardner refused "to stoop" to write a "mere contraction of Locke's essay". This was an inferior way of studying this subject which would not develop the intellect. By undertaking a comparative analysis of Locke's ideas with other philosophers, Lardner hoped to highlight contradictions in Locke's work; and it was his intention to emphasise different perspectives to encourage the student "to judge and reason for himself" (Lardner, 1845, vi - vii).

Davis concurred with Lardner's opinion on the futility of rote learning. He found it extremely frustrating that a recollection of definitions was sufficient to ensure success in the College examinations. This "debased standard" ensured that a student learned words and phrases without understanding their meaning; his "memory is crammed with phrases and rules of prosody" and the faculties of reasoning and understanding were not cultivated (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, pp10-11). An example of the questions students were obliged to answer in the degree examination for Moderatorships in Classics supports Davis's conclusion that a student's memory was exercised more than his ability to reason or to think. The examination on the ideas of Aristotle, Longinus and Cicero, consisted mainly of low order questions requiring the students to reveal their knowledge of the facts; for instance, "When did Aristotle die and where?"; "Why did he leave Athens after he had founded his school in the Lyceum, and taught there for many years?"; "What is the history of the preservation of the works of Aristotle?" (*The Dublin University Calendar*, 1837, lxi-lxv). These questions did not test the students' ability to think critically or to use their judgment. But a small number of questions were challenging for they required students to compare and contrast information; these were the exception rather than the rule; for example, "Cicero and Aristotle agree as to the

legitimate sources of the ridiculous?"; "Crassus and Anthony agree that the Stoic philosophy is unfavourable to oratory. What reasons do they assign?" (*The Dublin University Calendar*, 1837, lxi-lxv).

There were other problems with the examination system, identified by MacDonnell, a Junior Fellow, which militated against students because their academic excellence was not acknowledged. There was an unnecessary element of chance and a lack of consistency in grading associated with the examination. It would appear that some students benefited from favouritism: "It is frequently said (and a Fellow who is a tutor often hears it), I am quite safe: Mr A. is my examiner" while another says "I will stay out the remainder of the examination, there is no use going in, Mr B is my examiner" (MacDonnell, A letter concerning the undergraduate examinations, 1828). In addition, the oral exam was far from thorough. Though students had to wait a long time to be examined the exam only lasted a few minutes:

> The time in which any individual not a candidate for honours is occupied by either of the two examiners, cannot out of eight hours exceed ten minutes …The fact is that many of the students pass the time in conversation, drawing with their pencils or cutting the tables (MacDonnell, A letter concerning the undergraduate examinations, 1828).

Furthermore, a major weakness in the written exam was that compositions were often duplicated and it was difficult to verify that the work submitted was that of a particular student.

Davis did not suggest solutions to concerns about overcrowding or deficiencies in the examination process. However, the fact that students emerged from university with a superficial understanding of subjects and with an inferior methodology for learning inspired him to search for a practical solution - Lyceum teaching.

### 4.4.1 Lyceum Teaching

In his *Address* Davis stated that the Historical Society was a Lyceum "bearing a close resemblance in their mode of operation to the famous school of Athens; and

that Lyceums existed across Europe to "*compensate* [for] the evils of *Universities*" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p22). Though Davis did not refer to Aristotle in his analysis of Lyceums his concept of Lyceum teaching was undoubtedly influenced by Aristotle's scientific methodology.

The Lyceum school was situated outside the city of Athens and attached to its buildings was a gymnasium, with covered walks, known as a "peripatos" (ie. a place for walking) (Howie, 1968, p 11). Gymnasia were places of intellectual resort where men gathered to spend their leisure time as well as places of physical exercise. Aristotle could train the mind while the body was warming up (Rihll, 2003, p182). His habit of teaching students while they walked together led to his philosophy becoming known as the Peripatetic School.

A significant purpose of the Lyceum was to teach but the main work of the school was research, "or in the Greek word *historia*, which primarily means inquiry" (Barnes, 2000, p18). Aristotle received books as well as animal and plant specimens from his former student, Alexander the Great (Isle, 2006, p62); and he created a substantial library which contained knowledge on a range of subjects including a history about animals, a history of Greek poetry, a history about constitutions. These resources were useful material for analysis and research.

Aristotle's method of scientific research involved the exercise of perception, experience and comprehension (O'Dahl, 2009, p504). In his view, experience was a major source of human knowledge; in the Greek context experience was involvement in the situation and not disengaged perception or modern empiricist reduction of experience to sense perception. The Aristotelian word for "experience, *empeiria*, signifies that results from repeated practice and accumulated, common knowledge" (Papastephanou, 2010, p593). To have an experience of a thing was to have many connected memories of the same thing (Lord, O'Connor, 1991, p43). In *Prior Analytics,* he outlined the importance of experience to arrive at first principles:

> Thus the principles are provided by experience in each case. I mean for example, astronomical experience provides the principle of astronomical knowledge; for when the appearances had been grasped sufficiently, astronomical demonstrations were easily discovered. And it is likewise with any other art or science. So that if the predicates about each thing have been grasped we will be well-prepared to exhibit their demonstrations (Aristotle cited in Lennox, 2001, p101).

He believed that observation of particular phenomena was necessary to gain an understanding of reality, a science technique known as induction (Lawson, 2004, p22); induction provides the bridge between observation and knowledge; it brings us from immediate experience to the first principles of scientific knowledge (Groarke, 2009, p191). Once truth is known through induction, from the particular to the universal, one can engage in the process of deduction from the basis of the universal to arrive at other particular truths.

In *Analytics*, Aristotle suggested that one doesn't know a given truth in its fullest sense unless one knows not merely that it is true but also why it is true; and to know something is true is to have constructed an adequate syllogistic demonstration that establishes the position in question (Ferejohn, 2009, p66). He invented the syllogism which was an important contribution towards understanding the structure of reasoning and it consists of three parts: a major premise, a minor premise and a conclusion. By identifying valid modes of thought he provided "the tools necessary for sensible reasoning and astute systematic thinking" (Tanton, 2005, p27). A number of intellectual virtues were necessary to enable us to know the truth including the ability to make deductions or intuition, practical wisdom, which included "correct practical thinking", and contemplation (Hutchinson, 1995, pp206-207).

Aristotle's scientific method had a major influence on future generations. His method of deductive reasoning became influential during the middle ages and influenced Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas (Lawson, 2004, p25); it fed into the empirical methods of the Tudor/Stewart courts. Locke was the archetype of

modern empiricism in the Aristotelian tradition (Uttal, 2011, p183). Some of his principles reflect the study of Aristotle. Locke believed that all knowledge was based on the perception of the world through our senses and that philosophical argument requires strict scientific method (Faiella, 2006, p53). Hobbes was also influenced by Aristotle; Hobbes endorsed a form of traditional rhetoric in his translation of Aristotle's work, *Rhetoric* (1637) which sets out the power of argument in the public sphere (Uhr, 2011, p29; Stark, 2009, p30).

Davis acknowledged that Aristotle's method of research and analysis evident in the Lyceum was the most effective way to acquire knowledge and to promote critical thinking. He believed that the Historical Society was a Lyceum where students had the opportunity to develop a range of skills. Members had to prepare for debates by researching a range of subjects, information was analysed, speeches were written and delivered in an orator's style; issues raised were then debated. Davis praised the methods employed by the Society which facilitated members in learning history, "with a rapidity and an ease, a profundity in research, and sagacity in application not approached by any other mode of study" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p 25). To explain this point, he compared the methods employed by a debater with the methods used by a lawyer preparing a defence. The debater, like a good lawyer, uses criticism, challenges the authority of popular writers, tests the reasoning of his audience and displays both understanding and sensitivity of the circumstances of which he speaks. The essential resource of a debater is a good knowledge of the facts. Davis would have concurred with Newman's view that, "half the controversies which go on in the world arise from ignorance of the facts of the case" (Newman cited in Ker, 1988, lxvi).

By making comparisons between the Society and the legal bar and the senate, Davis emphasised the utility of the Society to prepare members for careers in those institutions. Members carefully selected facts and used them to persuade like a senator or lawyer; and they also acquired a style of speaking in the Society, which was, according to Davis, best suited to political assemblies. The fact that an Irish

parliament did not exist failed to deter Davis from instilling self-belief in his contemporaries about their suitability for the challenges of political power. He also suggested that deacons could benefit from a few campaigns in a debating society. It might give their public oratory "a flexibility and fairness", which was often absent (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p25).

Davis believed that Lyceum teaching was superior to all others because "invention and judgement were as *much demanded* and are *therefore as well supplied* as mere information" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p33). This method of teaching would promote and test thinking. He stressed that all subjects should be taught in an investigative analytical way. This would involve students separating knowledge into parts to promote understanding and new knowledge would emerge by associating and combining ideas. This method was similar to Bentham's "principle of association" which emphasised connections between knowledge stored in the memory and new knowledge (Bentham cited in Smith and Burston, 1993, p26).

Davis argued that analogy was the first law of thought. While Aristotle restricted the application of analogy by relating it to induction (Shelley, 2003, p142); it is likely that Davis's thinking on this concept was influenced by Locke. Locke argued that reasoning from analogy could lead to the discovery of truths which would otherwise lie concealed. He insisted that we see the effects of the works of nature, yet their causes are unknown and we do not perceive how they are produced. He suggested that we can only guess and conjecture how animals are generated, nourished and move; how the loadstone draws iron or how a candle gives us both light and heat:

> For these and the like, coming not within the scrutiny of human senses, cannot be examined by them or be attested by anybody, and therefore can appear more or less probable only as they more or less agree to truths that are established in our minds and as they hold proportion to other parts of our knowledge and observation. Analogy in these matters is the only help we have, and it is from that alone we draw all our grounds of probability (Locke cited in Yolton, pp393- 394).

Similar to Aristotle and Locke, Davis argued that analogy involved the learner exploring and making deductions based on existing knowledge. He stated that

> On the threshold of every art, and science, and subject of thought, men, either from its known uses and applications, from some knowledge of a particular detail of its exterior, or working, or of the materials used in constructing it; or from knowing the history of its formation; or from any or all of these; or from the analogy of the combinations of them, should try to judge of other parts, and their origin; or, if you will, guess at the whole from any part of it (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p32).

When these guesses or deductions were tested some may be proved correct and others incorrect; those proved to be incorrect could be amended or may lead to other ideas. This involved "testing and correcting our guesses and fancies by learning" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p32). Facts that were acquired by deliberate study become mixed with other information or familiar knowledge. Students then arrived at "*characteristic*, if not actual truths, and ultimately acquired the power of general analysis" which Davis believed was the main force of a great mind. The mind was at its most active and powerful when reason was exercised. Once reason was exercised, he believed that only then can the inventive faculties of fancy and imagination be trained; and once these faculties have been trained and the mind can anticipate, combine and compare information, the "use of knowledge has no imaginable limit" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, pp32-33).

Davis would have agreed with Locke's opinion on the importance of being able to reason, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, right and wrong and to have good judgement. But he would have differed from Locke's negative perception of the skills involved in debating, where reason was often compromised. Locke warned that pupils should not be educated in the art and formality of disputing, which could result in truth being disregarded in favour of contradicting others to guarantee success in disputes. It was disingenuous for rational creatures "not to yield to plain Reason, and the Conviction of clear Arguments" (Locke cited in Yolton, 1996, p241). Debate and discussion should advance the discovery of truth rather than

verbal wrangling for the sake of victory, which often results in the sacrifice of truth and reason. There is some merit in Locke's arguments that public debate could be used as an instrument of deceit, but Davis viewed the skills of speaking and reasoning as essential skills for future leaders to prepare them for the practical demands of the courtroom or a political assembly. He hoped that their judgement and understanding would be sufficiently developed to allow them to identify pretence or sophistry. In Davis's opinion the best place to develop the useful skills of research, analysis and oratory was in the Historical Society, which he described as a contemporary Lyceum school.

Members joined the Society for different reasons, some wanted to study eloquence, some wanted to acquire "facility and courage" and others wanted to study history, politics and the mind of man. But the Society's main objective, according to Davis, was the discussion of social topics; and as members of the Society they should be willing "to prepare, to make, to hear, to support, to answer speeches on historical, literary and political subjects" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, pp4-5).

Lyceum teaching would assist students to prepare for debates by engaging in research, learning the facts, using their judgement and developing their analytical skills. It would also facilitate students to learn useful knowledge. Davis provided a sample of the valuable subjects addressed by the Society. A range of political issues were addressed, which included: local and central government, disputes on doctrines of representation, democracy, the basis of free government, the influence of a free press, the value of a jury system and penal code – all of which helped to "lay a broad and deep foundation for political knowledge." He approved of the fact that the Society provided students with a political education – this was invaluable knowledge for those considering a career in politics. Another useful subject examined by the Society was political economy. He praised the Society for it provided students with an opportunity to learn about a range of issues including the Poor Laws and Corn Laws, on Absenteeism, Colonies, Finance, the doctrines of supply and demand, wages, capital, rent and taxation; and the accumulation, distribution and

consumption of wealth (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p24). Furthermore, the Society filled a young man's thoughts with worthwhile studies and it occupied time in a useful manner. Davis claimed that it did much more; it was "noble, indeed the only effective institute of the social sciences." This was an implicit reference to the university curriculum, which was ineffective in preparing citizens for the challenges of life.

The Society helped to create knowledgeable citizens who had developed useful skills which could be used in public life. Davis believed that the system of Lyceum teaching adopted by the Historical Society could be used in the Repeal reading rooms which were established to politicise the majority of the people and to educate them about Ireland.

### 4.5 Repeal Reading Rooms

In spite of the benefits of the national school's system referred to in Chapter 1 Davis argued that greater access to education was necessary to remove the people from ignorance and poverty. With frustration, he outlined the struggle involved in trying to get state schools opened for the people, "craving for knowledge as they are" (*The Nation*, 5 October 1844). There was a strong desire for education amongst the people in spite of the fact that a large number of them lived in poverty. The Poor Inquiry Commission of 1836 estimated that at least 585,000 people were out of work or in distress during thirty weeks of the year. Their dependents increased the number in poverty to approximately 2,385,000 (Third report of the Commission for Inquiring into the condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, 1836, xxx, p5). The condition of the people is reflected in their daily priorities. The 1841 census refers to the objects for which females laboured and it placed their priorities in the following order: a. Clothing b. Food c. Education d. Health. The desire for education depended on the people's ability to feed and clothe themselves. If the people could not meet these objectives, education was understandably sacrificed and for the majority of the people it was beyond their reach. Davis acknowledged that the people had made great efforts to set up Hedge Schools to educate themselves (*The Nation*, 5 October 1844). By the early 1800s there were over 7,000 hedge-schools

accommodating as many as 400,000 children. Many hedge schools were pay schools and only survived as long as they were financially viable. Those who could not pay fees were excluded; by 1824 at least 60% of school age children were not attending school due to poverty and the lack of schools (Daly, 1979, pp150–163). More schools were needed to remove ignorance and it was for this reason together with a desire to provide the people with a political education that he encouraged the establishment of repeal reading rooms.

In the 1840s the repeal reading rooms were established by the Repeal Association to promote political independence and to advance the education of the lower classes (Murphy, 2011, p222). T.M. Ray, secretary of the Repeal Association and one of the initiators of the reading room concept, stated that the purpose of the reading rooms was to inspire patriotism and to inculcate peace, order and perseverance in working out the regeneration of Ireland (Ray, 1845, p329). Davis and supporters of repeal hoped the reading rooms would encourage the people to learn about Ireland's condition, its history and culture and the reasons for its subservient position. This local knowledge was necessary to create patriots, to politicise the people so that they would act in Ireland's interest and demand liberty.

Davis's desire to educate the people is an example where he tried to translate theory into practice. He recommended a number of practical steps to promote popular education. Addressing the middle class readers of *The Nation* newspaper, he reminded them of their civic duty; they had an obligation to remove the straitjacket of ignorance by assisting their illiterate neighbours to access education. This would involve the shopkeeper, or lawyer, farmer or doctor in the direct process of teaching their neighbour. Davis stated:

> If you now know our meaning, you must feel that it is your duty to your family and to yourself, to your country and to God, to *act* upon it, to go and remove some of that ignorance which makes you and your neighbours weak, and therefore makes Ireland a poor province (*The Nation*, 5 October 1844).

Davis's thinking on the responsibility of citizens to educate the less fortunate resonates with Butlers opinion on educating the disadvantaged. He insisted that children had a right "to some proper education as to have their lives preserved". If it is not provided by parents all persons are responsible – "it becomes a duty of all, who are capable of contributing to it, and whose help is wanted" (Butler cited in Gladstone, 1995, p341).

Davis recommended that members of the middle class should give advice, provide resources for the reading rooms and ensure that these rooms were centres of study. He hoped their efforts would create educated, ambitious young men. In his words:

> They can give advice and facilities for improvement to young men of promise; and they can make their circle studious, refined, and ambitious, instead of being, like too many in Ireland – ignorant, coarse, or lazy (*The Nation*, 5 October 1844).

He urged his readers into action; he asked them, "Reader! cannot you do something to remedy this great, this disabling misery of Ireland". Davis advised them on the practicalities of establishing a reading room which were similar to the guidelines provided by the constitution of a Lyceum in America. This constitution proposed that people in a community should find suitable accommodation for the Lyceum and access resources including books and periodicals, town maps, historical artifacts and samples of local minerals which would aid the education process (Holbrook, 1829, p29, pp40 –42). Davis suggested that the reading rooms should get a suitable room, establish fixed rules and access suitable reading material. He recommended the Repeal Association reports as suitable political reading material and other books and maps would be provided by the Association. Over time a library would be formed which would be "the centre of knowledge and nursery of useful and strong minds". It frustrated him that readers had difficulty accessing textbooks. There were "*ten counties in Ireland without a single bookseller in them*" and this, according to Davis, was a national disgrace. Given that books were cheap, he stated that even Irish poverty was no excuse for Irish ignorance. He insisted that readers should ensure that the reading rooms were places of learning and not, as he feared many were, ill-

managed, with a lack of suitable reading material and were used as "mere gossiping-rooms". Such rooms were useless and were "a disgrace to its members and their educated neighbours" (*The Nation,* 5 October 1844). In his view each reading room should be a centre of "thought and power". He was cognisant of the fact that education could empower the people but first they would have to embrace it. All that was required was one active citizen in each parish to provide for his neighbourhood "a sanctuary for knowledge and patriotism" (*The Nation*, 27 July 1844). Instead of 300 reading rooms, Davis insisted there should be 3,000. Ray's report on the reading rooms stated that there were only 71 reading rooms in operation and not 300 as claimed by Davis. However, Ray's figure of 71 was a conservative one; it refers only to those reading rooms recognized by the Association because they collected repeal rent and conformed to repeal rules–for instance only registered repealers had access to the rooms. There were other reading rooms which had yet to receive the approval of the Repeal Association and Ray argued that the organizers must have the approval of repeal wardens and repeal clergy before formal recognition was given. Once recognition was received reading rooms could acquire funding and reading material from the Association. Organisers of reading rooms faced some difficulties which delayed formal recognition including unsuitable accommodation for the rooms such as public houses and the inability to collect the annual repeal rent of 1 shilling or the weekly cost of 1p (Ray, 1845, pp330-331). This was most likely a consequence of financial hardship and the poverty endured by many people at the beginning of the famine. Moreover, the pressure to pay repeal rent may have resulted in small numbers attending the reading rooms. The average attendance at the reading rooms was between 50 and 100 daily; if Ray's figure of 71 is correct between 3,500 and 7,100 attended the rooms each day. Davis did not comment on the use of reading rooms to collect repeal rent; but in a private correspondence to Smith O'Brien he did express his disappointment at malpractice and unaccounted funds in the repeal movement which was an implicit reference to repeal rent (Duffy, 1896, p220).

Davis hoped the reading rooms would advance the improvement of the people. They should become places of mutual cooperation for intellectual reasons. Similar to the Lyceum system in America, he hoped that local people would engage in research about a famous historical figure, a ruin, a battle site, a story or song. This knowledge would be studied and subsequently presented to members of the reading room and occasionally discussion would follow. Intellectual interaction of this kind facilitates learning. He reminded members of the reading rooms to ensure that a written record was maintained of discussions and debates and that this must be kept in a library. National knowledge should be collected and deposited in the library – the knowledge specified included manuscripts, old history books of the neighbourhood, prints of famous Irishmen, musical airs, maps. The reading rooms could also become the focal point for exhibitions of paintings, for meetings of musicians and artists (*The Nation*, 15 April 1843). The Lyceums of the people had the potential to educate members in national knowledge and to remove the ignorance which inhibited progress; their success depended on removing impediments to attendance, financial or otherwise.

## Conclusion

This chapter examined Davis's education theories on the home as a learning environment. He suggested that the home should be a place of practical learning, where local knowledge and skills are learned; it should encourage self-conduct and self reliance, characteristics, which Davis considered to be dormant in the Irish character as a result of centuries of English oppression. He also insisted that homes had a major role to play in the formation of moral character; they should be places where honour, respect, and justice are learned. Honest homes would educate young citizens who, as adults, would serve their communities and their country. These noble ideals are as relevant in Ireland today as they were in the 1840s.

This chapter also examined Davis's thinking on how best to create young men who could think critically. In his view a university had a duty to train students how to think. He feared that students who were not trained to think properly would be incompetent leaders–they would have difficulty making good decisions, they would

not be able to think for themselves and would be indecisive when faced with the challenges of public life. The social and political difficulties facing Ireland were significant and, as a consequence, competent, independent leaders were required to make good decisions and to fashion a better future. TCD, as the only university, had a national duty to ensure that future leaders were trained how to think – only then would young men be adequately prepared for the challenges ahead.

Davis's thoughts on training the intellect could inform the on-going discussion on pedagogical strategies and learning methodologies in Irish schools today. A major shortcoming in the education system at second level is the dominance of rote-learning as a learning method and the lack of emphasis on training students how to think critically. Recently the American Chamber of Commerce, which represents many U.S. multinationals, claimed that the Irish school system placed too much emphasis on rote-learning; U.S employers want more attention paid to problem solving skills (Bielenburg, *Irish Independent*, 13 January, 2010). Perhaps more thought needs to be given to providing students with the intellectual tools necessary to solve a problem. Davis suggested that subjects should be taught in an investigative analytical way and that the process of analogy is essential to cultivate thought. These ideas which emphasise the need to develop analytical skills are very relevant today and so need more consideration.

This chapter provided further evidence to support the claim that Davis was a moral teacher. He claimed that the middle classes had a duty to engage in the civic act of educating the less fortunate. While he had political reasons for educating the people his motives were also humanitarian. Education and the removal of ignorance would promote self-regeneration. Strengthening the intellect of man would ennoble him, according to Davis; it would allow the beneficiaries to realise their potential, inform them of their rights, raise their expectations and show them how to lead satisfying and happy lives. For Davis, education meant self-improvement which was synonymous with national progress.

Davis desired to educate citizens who would have a good understanding of Ireland, past and present. As outlined in the previous chapter some national knowledge was included in his proposed university curriculum; for instance students of oratory were encouraged to study the talents and ideas of Irish orators. Furthermore, Davis included history and especially Irish history in his university curriculum. He considered history to be essential knowledge for both leaders and ordinary citizens; therefore, he endeavoured to provide university students and the readers of *The Nation* with an education in this subject. The next chapter examines why he promoted the study of history and it also investigates his interpretation of Irish history.

# Chapter Five: Providing a National Education: History

## Introduction

Davis believed that nurture was central to the education process; proper nurture in the form of a nationalist education was the means through which nationalists and responsible citizens could be created. This chapter examines Davis's ambition to provide the people with a national education-an education about Ireland. He was concerned that the people were ignorant of their national history, of their unique culture and of the causes of their oppressed state. They were a defeated people who needed to be educated about what must be done to reclaim Ireland and to develop it.

He insisted Ireland had all the ingredients of nationhood and independence but without knowledge and resolve it would not realise its potential. The omission of national knowledge from both the national school's curriculum and the university curriculum motivated Davis and his contemporaries to undertake the challenge to provide the people with a national education. They selected knowledge to arouse a sense of national consciousness amongst the people and to generate an emotional attachment to Ireland. He hoped that if the people were aware of their national identity they would be prepared to serve their country and the principle of nationality could be realised.

Davis and the Young Irelanders developed a national curriculum which included literature, poetry, art and language–these subjects will be examined in Chapter 6. This chapter explores Davis's policy to educate the people about Irish history.

## 5.1 Anti-national education

In 1831 the National Board embarked on an ambitious challenge to put a national school infrastructure in place to provide Irish children with "moral and literary instruction" (Coolahan, 1983, p38). The work undertaken by the Board included the allocation of buildings, training teachers, establishing an inspectorate and selecting and disseminating schoolbooks. The elementary schoolbooks approved by the commissioners of national education taught basic literacy skills and, the more

advanced texts, communicated factual knowledge to children on a range of subjects including geography, natural history, biblical history, English grammar and science (Akenson, 1970, pp 232-233). There were references to Ireland as a geographical entity but as little else; Irish language, history and culture were omitted from the curriculum (Raftery, McDermid and Jones, 2007, p451; Coleman, 1998, p193). The schoolbooks were designed to give the impression that the people living in Ireland and England were culturally homogenous–claiming that they were united by a common language and shared a common national identity; for instance, *The Second Reading Book* stated that

> On the east of Ireland is England, where the queen lives, many people who live in Ireland are born in England, and we speak the same language and are called one nation (The Second Reading Book, 1858 ed., p135).

The national schools were active agents in the colonization process and were a major factor in cultivating cultural assimilation and political loyalty (Denvir, 1997, p47); they were designed to produce political subjects who supported the Act of Union (Hickman, 2006, p178). Irish children were taught to see themselves as English and to accept their place in society (Boyce, 1995, p160). Detailed knowledge about Ireland was deliberately omitted. The Board wanted to promote detachment between pupils and their language and culture. By promoting ignorance of things Irish the Board created the impression that Ireland was unimportant except as part of the empire (Coolahan, 1993). Moreover, the Board did not want to agitate impressionable young minds with material which might generate anti-English sentiment.

Davis insisted that the education received by most Irish in the national schools was "sufficient to unfit them for being good patriots or Irish citizens" (*The Nation*, 22 April 1843). Students knew more about Ancient Greece and Rome than they did about Ireland, past or present. The anti-national curriculum content was selected by members of the National Board who, according to Davis, were chosen, "for their want of Irish feeling or character"; he stated that they were –

> dry, ungenial men, ignorant of our history, in love with English literature and character, imperialists to the core. Naturally, therefore, its books, though models of general information and literary finish, are empty of Irish statistics, history and hopes (*The Nation*, 27 July 1844).

The anglo-centric curriculum engaged in the colonial moulding of the Irish character and it undermined the self-image and cultural identity of the people (Woods, 2011, p20). Davis tried to reverse this trend; he insisted that a national education would promote a positive self-image and encourage people to know their country and to serve it; it would also help to prevent the spread of English culture, which he insisted had already been embraced by the Irish upper classes. In an article entitled *A Year's Work* he described them as "anti-national" for they allied themselves with the English government and "oppressed the People by excessive rents, jobbed taxes, corrupt law, and foul bigotry" and they also had no sympathy with "the creed, tongue, history, or manners of the People" (*The Nation*, 1 October 1843). He desired to educate the upper classes about their country and their responsibilities towards their fellow countrymen. Ireland needed their loyalty. He hoped that a national education would develop their sense of patriotism. They would have to be reminded that their ancestors had sometimes "stood for Ireland". The Historical Society provided him with an opportunity to communicate his thoughts to his contemporaries from this class. He also used *The Nation* to reach members of the Protestant religion. In a number of articles in *The Nation* entitled *Letters by a Protestant on Repeal*, under the pseudonym, "A Protestant", Davis addressed his Protestant countrymen. These letters were designed to dispel Protestant fears of a Catholic ascendancy, to encourage unity between Protestants and Catholics, to prove that Ireland had the resources which made her fit for absolute independence, to enlist their support for repeal and to educate them about nationality. He wrote: "I have been told more than once, that my argument was a proof of Ireland's fitness for absolute independence, and was a reason for separation" (*The Nation*, 23 December 1843).

The anti-national curriculum contributed to the anti-national mindset of the middle classes. They were guilty of aping the manners of the coloniser, according to Davis. They professed the creed of a "foreign knave" and practicing the politics of a "foreign tyrant" (*The Nation*, 1 October 1843). In uncompromising language he described their anti-national behaviour:

> Often, without independence or originality, despised by the high, spiteful to the poor, retailers of English lies, and mean suppliants for English patronage, they impeded local union, and sneered at national virtue (*The Nation*, 1 October 1843).

Since the majority of the people could neither read nor write, Davis suggested that leaders of society must come from the middle classes. He urged them to contribute to the national cause especially in the area of education. In an article entitled *The Middle Classes*, Davis complained that members of this class were not doing enough; too many of them were inactive and indifferent. He suggested that Irish citizenship carried a range of duties and he set out their national responsibilities as political agents and educators with unambiguous clarity:

> They should act as Repeal Wardens. They should organise their neighbours, encourage them by their counsel and their presence. They should spread among them books, tracts, newspapers. They should not be shameful to disabuse them of prejudice. They should busy themselves to instruct them in past history, and teach them to make that of the future (*The Nation*, 25 January 1844).

Davis encouraged this class to be self-reliant. In an article entitled *Educate that You May Be Free*, he insisted that a pro-active middle class should assist in the education of the majority of the people by demanding that more schools be established in their area and encourage better attendance of the children at them; they should also ensure that the rules of the National Board were adhered to. Nevertheless, there was one rule he encouraged them to break; they should be prepared to circumvent the deficiencies in the Board's curriculum by providing an education in national history and statistics (*The Nation*, 5 October 1844). Davis approved of nationally minded

teachers who endeavoured to educate pupils about British misrule and encouraged them to reject the inferior badge of the colonial stereotype (Coolahan, 1993, p57; Boyce, 1995, p160).

Davis's criticism of the middle classes overlooked the pragmatic nature of their decision to embrace the English language and culture to improve their career prospects. In spite of their role as disseminators of a "Catholic and national spirit" educators like the Christian Brothers acknowledged the need to prepare young men for the English speaking world (Jenkins, 2006, p123); they assisted students to succeed in public examinations which led to positions in the British civil service; for example Pearse's sister, Mary Brigid, noted that many of his school-fellows entered the civil service after leaving school (Sisson, 2004, p33). However, Davis accused members of the middle class of looking to London for career advancement rather than serving their country; Ireland should benefit from their talents and should be the focus of their efforts.

In spite of the anti-national curriculum, Davis praised the national schools for providing the people, which he labeled "the poor", with the rudiments of education. He did not support the uncompromising position taken by MacHale, Archbishop of Tuam, who opposed the establishment of any national school in his area because there was no provision of Irish and everything was taught through the medium of English (Daly, 1979, p151). Davis also wanted to preserve the Irish language but, unlike MacHale, he did not oppose the national schools because of their anti-national content; he appreciated that these schools were imperfect but they would help to replace the widespread ignorance that existed amongst the population; they would help to create a literate population who could access knowledge about Ireland in *The Nation* and in the repeal reading rooms. Ironically, by spreading literacy the national schools contributed to the development of mass democracy and to the challenge to British imperialism in the early twentieth century (Walsh, 2011, p660).

Davis argued that the poor understood the methods of the oppressor and had limited knowledge of their rights and of their capacity for change. He had an idealized perception of the poor; in his view these dormant patriots were uncontaminated by English culture and were inactive because they were ignorant of their national history, of their unique culture and of their political rights. They were an oppressed people who needed to be educated to empower them as citizens and nationalists:

> The people may be and are honest, brave, and intelligent; but a man could as well dig with his hands, as govern, or teach, or lead, without the elements of knowledge (*The Nation*, 5 October 1844).

He suggested that an education in national knowledge would give the people a vision of an independent Ireland. In his own words: "But, to be able to keep it, and use it, and govern it the men of Ireland must know what it is, what it was and what it can be made" (*The Nation*, 5 April 1845). Davis and his colleagues embraced the challenge to fill the void of national knowledge evident in the national curriculum by providing the Irish people with knowledge about Ireland. For this reason he advocated the study of history for all because he considered that history would advance the idea of nationhood. He stated that "we must know Ireland from its history to its minerals, from its tillage to its antiquities, before we shall be an Irish nation" (*The Nation*, 15 June, 1844). But national history would have to be written to make Davis's concept of the nation a reality. The next section explores his theories on historiography and it assesses his interpretation of three historical subjects to illustrate how he used history to create a national mentality.

### 5.2 Why study history? Davis's response

When Davis was at TCD history was not on the formal curriculum; nevertheless, he used the library to learn the story of Ireland. He learnt that Ireland had the "capacity and resources for self-government" (Duffy, 1896, p9). He studied history with a clear purpose: that it would provide him with the knowledge and understanding required to serve his country. According to Duffy, Davis "resolved to be the servant of his country, as the great men of old who touched his heart had been". He studied

historical romance and drama, reflected on codes and annals so "that he might not be an unprofitable servant" (Duffy, 1896, p8).

The desire to serve his country was influenced by knowledge of political and social problems and by his understanding of how and why those problems originated and evolved. Knowledge of history was central to his political thinking. Francis Bacon, who regularly used examples from history to support his political arguments, influenced Davis to develop a utilitarian view of history. Bacon believed that history should be useful; he stated that it should provide "a storehouse of examples that could be used in argument as models of imitation or avoidance" (Tinkler, 1996, p236). He categorized history as natural, civil, ecclesiastical and literary and he claimed that a "just story of learning" had yet to be written. Bacon believed that a history of this kind would "make learned men wise in the use and administration of learning" (Bacon cited in Kitchin, 1861, p70). In his *Address* Davis referred to Bacon's positive thinking about possessing knowledge of Greece and Rome to inform one's judgement of current issues. Like Bacon, Davis appreciated that knowledge gained from contrasting contemporary society and the ancient world was both instructive and invaluable (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, pp 13-14).

Davis believed that knowledge of history was invaluable to future leaders of society. In his *Address* he encouraged his Trinity audience to study the subject. He asked them "will you tell me that history is no teacher of the head and heart?" It is, he answered. He understood that students would benefit from knowledge of the motives, experiences and actions of men from the past. Knowledge of history gives "impulse and vitality to principles"; it shields us from faults which can have devastating consequences. "Is it nothing to warn us against the brilliant vices of an aristocracy? Is it nothing that its beacons gleam to keep the people from *beginning* to shed blood?" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p25).

Lord Bolingbroke (1678–1751), an Enlightenment historian, influenced Davis's thinking on how knowledge of history could promote patriotic endeavour.

Bolingbroke argued that knowledge should be advanced because it was useful to society and because it promoted the happiness of mankind. His *Letters on History* addressed to his friend, Vicount Clonbury, Tory M.P., were designed to cultivate a sense of "public spirit" that was evident in the age of Clarendon (Hicks, 1987, p455); and letters written in France to his aristocratic allies in England urged them to revive the spirit of patriotism. He argued that the proper application of study was to train people in private and in public virtue; it frustrated him that knowledge acquired by most men who studied history was nothing more than a "creditable kind of ignorance". He stated that:

> An application to any study that tends neither directly nor indirectly to make us better men and better citizens, is at best by a specious and ingenious sort of idleness (Bolingbroke cited in Kelley, 1991, p451)

Bolingbroke suggested that by adding the historical experience of other men to their own citizens could be more knowledgeable and wise.

He claimed "history is philosophy teaching by examples how to conduct ourselves in all the situations of private and public life" (Bolingbroke, 1779, p48). The examples of men and events history presents should be interpreted as valuable lessons in philosophy. By beginning to study history at an early age, Bolingbroke suggested that a student would get a greater appreciation of the causes and effects of events and a more "extended knowledge of mankind". Similar to Davis, he had no interest in accumulating knowledge as an end in itself. The study of history should prepare citizens for action and it would improve their judgement of present challenges. In Bolingbroke's words: "by knowing the things that have been, we become better able to judge of the things that are" (Bolingbroke cited in Kelley, 1991, p453).

Bolingbroke insisted that knowledge of history was necessary to create active citizens. This was an opinion that Davis also held. He was cognisant of the positive effects good historical examples presented to people. The study of history had the capacity to inspire citizens into action so that they too could create great deeds like

Ireland's dead patriots. This thinking echoed Thomas Carlyle's praise of heroes who inspire "worship and loyalty"; he stated "That man, in some sense or other, worships Heroes; that we all of us reverence and must ever reverence Great men" (Stern, 1970, p104). But for that to occur Davis believed that history must be interpreted in a manner that was favourable to Ireland and its people. The people could look to examples of past heroes to provide them with hope and to strengthen their resolve as they faced difficult challenges. Davis invoked the military images of a number of folk heroes who tried to defeat the English enemy such as Patrick Sarsfield and Hugh O'Neill. These role models displayed characteristics including courage, self-reliance and patriotism that Davis hoped to inculcate in citizens. He informed his Trinity audience that they were the inheritors of a proud history and it was their duty to study it, to learn from it and to honour it by serving their country. Davis expressed his thoughts in a typical eloquent flourish:

> Tis a glorious world, historic memory. As we gaze we long to resemble. Our mental bulk extends as each shade passes in visioned pomp or purity. From the grave the sage warns; from the mound the hero, from the temple the orator-patriot, inspires; and the poet sings in his shroud. The field of fame, the forum of power, the death-bed or scaffold of the patriots, "who died in righteousness"-you look–you pause–you "swear like them to live, like them to die" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p26).

Davis's thoughts on how the study of history could develop one's judgement and understanding may have been influenced by David Hume (1711-1776), an Enlightenment thinker. Davis would have been familiar with Hume's argument that the study of history provided three distinct advantages "as it amuses the fancy, as it improves the understanding and as it strengthens virtue" (Hume, 1904, p569). Davis undoubtedly believed that history could be a source of entertainment but this was not its optimum use; of greater significance was the fact that it could inform the people how the condition of contemporary society evolved and it could help them to understand why they had no parliament, why their culture was denigrated and why they were in an oppressed state. It would provide the people with knowledge and understanding of who they were, of their rights and responsibilities. According to

Davis, a person who was ignorant of modern history "knows not of what materials the people around him are composed; he knows not the origin of their thoughts and feelings; he therefore knows not themselves" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p13). Davis would have concurred with Hume's comment on those who were not acquainted with the history of their own country as "an unpardonable ignorance" (Hume, 1904, pp560- 561). In spite of these similarities Davis was unimpressed by Hume's style of historical writing; in his opinion it was unimaginative and colourless (*The Nation*, 25 November 1843).

Davis views on history were influenced by French romantic historians Jules Michelet (1798-1874) and Augustin Thierry (1795-1856). Under the influence of romanticism history was interpreted in manner that was "artistic, picturesque and evocative; it sought to make the men and the ages of the past live again" (Bourgeois, 1910, p523). Michelet's histories encouraged a generation of writers and historians to think of the French Revolution in "positive, romantic terms, as the embodiment of the French nation and its people" (Forrest, 2009, p178). He viewed the process of constructing the nation as the main objective of political life and of his historical project (Kogan, 2006, p39). And although he acknowledged that the French were ethnically diverse comprising of ethnic groups such as the Celts and the Gauls he insisted on their cultural homogeneity (Oscherwitz, 2010, p19).

Davis approved of French progress towards liberty; he stated that "France was the first of the large states to sweep away feudal despotism"; and he also declared that France was "the apostle of liberty" (*The Nation*, 22 April 1843). Nonetheless, he distanced himself from the apparent godlessness of some French apostles – "our people are Christians and that their leaders were infidels" (*The Nation*, 8 February 1845; Dwan, 2008, p32).

Davis was influenced by Michelet's thinking on creating a nation. He believed that the Irish nation was a pluralist one comprising of a diverse mix of races. The rebels of 1798 were "for the most part English and Welsh though mixed with the Danish

and Gael, yet they are Irish in thought and feeling". He asked all Irishmen to "combine regardless of their blood".

Davis regularly used romantic sentiments to persuade his Trinity audience to share in his enthusiasm on the merits of historical knowledge; for instance, he indulged in idealistic rhetoric to reflect the priceless nature of valuable historical thoughts:

> They are more enriching than mines of gold, or ten thousand fields of corn, or the cattle of a thousand hills, more enobling than palaced cities stored with the triumphs of war or art, more supporting in danger's hour than colonies or fleets, or armies (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p29).

History provides a nation with credibility and integrity; it confers on the people a sense of who they are; it is essential to the formation of national identity. In Davis's words: It is the birthright of her sons – who strips them of that takes "that which not enriches him, but makes them poor indeed" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p29). He imagined that if Ireland was in "national health" that her people would possess knowledge of her resources and her history would be familiar in every workshop and cabin by "books, pictures, statuary, and music" (Duffy, 1896, p83). He insisted that national histories must be written to provide people with knowledge to face contemporary challenges and to build a free, strong nation–they should know "what the country and people were, how they fell, how they suffered, and how they rose again" (*The Nation*, 5 April 1845).

### 5.3 Historiography

Historians write with a purpose or agenda in mind; they have the capacity to educate the reader, to instruct and inform but also to create public opinion. Historians can also assume the role of propagandists. They approach their subject matter with the intention of telling a particular story and their political assumptions and biases are reflected in their work. Their judgement of the past is influenced by modern value-judgements and contemporary events (Ellis, 1991, p290). A historian can reconstruct the thoughts behind an historical event, but the present presuppositions of the historian are not ignored (Boyce and O' Day, 1996, p11).

In his essay on, *The Writing of History in Ireland 1800-30,* McCartney argued that historians were influenced by contemporary political events including the Act of Union and Catholic emancipation. There was a definite relationship between history and politics. He suggested that supporters of emancipation, opponents and moderates were in agreement that "the purpose of history was to teach political lessons" (McCartney, 1956, p352). Of course the motives of the historian shaped the content of the lesson; for instance Francis Plowden's *Historical Review of the State of Ireland* (1803) tried to cultivate political unity while Richard Musgrave' *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* (1801) provided a sectarian interpretation of the 1798 rebellion; he claimed that Catholic descendants of those involved in the 1641 rebellion could never be trusted (Dickinson, 2007, p48). MacCartney stated that the popularization of historical ideas acted as "a germinating force on Irish politics" (McCartney, 1956, p362).

Historians had the potential to influence how the Irish perceived themselves; their interpretation of events was important for cultural transmission and the formation of national identity (Phillips, 2000, p14). If this was successful they could assume the role of nation builders (Berger and Lorenz, 2010). Their interpretation of historical events or personalities could help to strengthen and ennoble the Irish people or it had the capacity to weaken and degrade them. In Davis's opinion there was too much of the latter type of history and not enough of the former. He was critical of how history was written because there was a shortage of historical works that did "dramatic justice" to Ireland's past. In his view, evidence of poor scholarship was commonplace; some works were permeated with bias and prejudice while others were not properly researched.

He believed that Ireland needed historians to tell its story from a nationalist perspective. It was a challenge that Davis was willing to embrace. In 1844 he wrote to Duffy, editor of *The Nation*, to apply for a short sabbatical from his duties as a journalist to write a history of Ireland. Davis had undertaken some preparation by

compiling a list of sources and by providing a brief outline of chapter headings. He also corresponded with a number of people about the project including his friend Madden and a leading scholar of Irish antiquities, John O' Donovan (1809-1861), a teacher, antiquarian and editor of *The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, who offered to show Davis notes on facts connected with the English invasion of Ireland. Though Duffy had no doubt that Davis possessed the necessary qualities to write a history of Ireland, he discouraged Davis from abandoning journalism and his commitments to the Repeal Association. Whether this advice was decisive in encouraging Davis to abandon his plan is unclear; but we do know that he had to give up his aspirations of life as a scholar because of work commitments. However, in order to circumvent these difficulties, he proposed that a history of Ireland should be written by a number of authors, each one specialising on a particular historical period. The history of the Pale would be written by Duffy and Davis planned to research and to write a history of The Civil wars, from the end of the Pale to Cromwell and the Acts of Parliament, the Patriot Parliament, 1689 to 1792, and from 1792 to 1800; and Daniel Owen Madden would undertake to write the history of the period 1800-1844 (Davis cited in Duffy, 1890, p158).

While Davis praised the works of contemporary writers including L'Abbé MacGeoghegan's *History of Ireland* dedicated to the Irish Brigade and Madden's *The United Irishmen – Their Lives and Times* he argued that a national history of Ireland had yet to be written which would be suitable to educate and inspire the people. He stressed that some of the histories available were damaging to the struggle for Irish liberty. History written by English colonisers provided the perspective of "hostile strangers". "With rare exceptions *national history* does dramatic justice, alien history is the inspiration of a traitor" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p26). In this "alien history" facts were distorted and worse still the Irish were represented in a negative manner; for instance he claimed that Cambrensis's *The English Conquest of Ireland 1166-1185* was "wonderful in calumniating" the Irish (Molony, 1995, p29). Cambrensis characterised the Irish as degenerates who engaged in cannibalism and were a "people living off beasts and

like beasts" (Nelson, 2012, p20). Davis was very much aware that biased history would provide the Irish with another negative image of themselves. It would serve to exacerbate the sense of inferiority which was endemic in the Irish psyche rather than providing the people with a positive self-image that would inspire hope, self-belief and self-reliance. He insisted that history written by the stranger "should be refuted, and then forgotten" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p26).

Davis praised historians who wrote history not as a revelation of dry facts but in a dramatic style where descriptions of events and personalities fired the imagination. In a review of an article entitled "*The State of Historical Science in France*" contained in *The British and Foreign Review*, he clearly identified the historians whom he believed did justice to their subject matter and those who did not:

> The Historical article overrates, we think, Vico, Herder and Comte, the metaphysical historians - men, neither artists, like the Thierrys, Barante, Michelet and Carlyle who make you see the kings, priests, and peasants of the time dress, talk, dig and fight, as they actually did, and still more unlike the cold encyclopediasts of events – the colourless, inhuman, and unartistic writers of historical ledgers, Hume, Robertson, Lingard and Voltaire (*The Nation*, 25 November, 1843).

Davis criticised the historical methods employed by the Swiss historian, Sismondi (1773-1842). While Davis praised *The Italian Republics* as the "the finest history of its class ever written", he highlighted a weakness in Sismondi's work - it was "not graphic enough". Reflecting his romantic influences Davis expected a more convincing, life like representation of events from historians.

> We want to understand the time of which we read; and the best way to do so is to sympathise with it, to try to look on its modes of life, to see its costumes fluttering and its arms glancing before, to test its rude or gentle speech, to hear its own motives; and he is the best historian who gives you these most faithfully (*The Nation*, 2 September 1843).

Davis insisted that conclusions should be based on an assessment of original sources rather than excessive reliance on observation and comment. Sismondi,

according to Davis, was a "commenting historian" because he did not place sufficient emphasis on original research and the interrogation of primary sources as part of his work. In contrast to Sismondi, Davis praised Thierry for combining his analysis of primary documents with a style that was "accurate, profound and life-like" (*The Nation*, 2 September 1843). Davis's thinking on using original sources echoed Thierry rather than the ideas of Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), the German historian, who pioneered modern historical science. Von Ranke aimed to turn history into an exact science by methodical evaluation; he advocated using primary sources combined with an avoidance of value judgements (Lawrence, 2005, p 21).

Davis recommended the methodology used by Thierry as professional and superior. Thierry, like Davis, was a political activist who acknowledged that history could be used as a "weapon in political struggles" (Gossman, 1976, p4). Davis praised him for using original sources in his work and for endeavouring to provide an accurate, life-like account of historical events (*The Nation*, 26 November 1843; 3 December 1843). The fact that Davis concurred with Thierry's political philosophy was an additional reason for promoting his writings. They both advocated liberty over despotism, patriotic duty above self-interest and personal ambition; they favoured historical interpretations that promoted unity over division and both agreed that the dissemination of a particular brand of history could help the spread of patriotism. Thierry believed that

> our patriotism would gain a great deal both in selflessness and in steadfastness if the knowledge of history, and particularly of French history, were more widely diffused among us (Thierry cited in Stern, 1970, p67).

Inspiration to continue the struggle for liberty could be gained by focusing on the difficult journey faced by previous generations. Thierry argued that the people of France should look to the example of their forefathers who understood the meaning of liberty, desired it, and who overcame many obstacles to achieve it: "our confidence in the future would be strengthened if we all realised that even in the

most difficult times this country never lacked champions of justice and liberty" (Thierry cited in Stern, 1970, p68). These sentiments were directly applicable to the Irish context. Davis argued that Irish citizens should also look to historical examples to gain inspiration on the road to liberty – for instance knowledge of the Irish Parliament of James II, 1689, could provide impetus for the repeal campaign.

Thierry's positive interest in Ireland was an additional incentive for Davis to study his ideas. In his famous work entitled *History of the Conquest of England, By the Normans*, Thierry expressed a favourable view of Irish history. He praised the "unyielding patriotism of the native Irish" and claimed that they possessed

> this indomitable pertinacy, this facility of preserving through centuries of misery the remembrance of their lost liberty, and of never despairing of a cause always defeated, always fatal to those who have dared to defend it, is perhaps the strangest and the noblest example ever given by any nation (Thierry, 1847, p198).

In *Sur l'esprit national des irlandais*, Thierry presented another "very romantic picture of Ireland and how she had preserved her love of independence" (Buckley, unpublished thesis, 1980, p278). This favourable view of Irish history from a foreign historian was undoubtedly welcomed by Davis.

Davis would have supported Thierry's view that the object of historians should be to promote reconciliation between the victor and the vanquished. Given the division that existed between the oppressed Catholic majority and the dominant Protestant minority reconciliation was necessary to promote unity; both Davis and Thierry believed that history had a significant role to play in overcoming division and promoting greater understanding and harmony. However, in spite of these similarities, Davis was critical of Thierry's "exclusive notice of the distinctions arising from race", and occasionally of attributing to lineage in blood, differences arising from legal or personal incidents (*The Nation*, 26 November 1842; Malik, 1996, p81). Distinction based on blood or race was anathema to Davis's principle of nationality which promoted unity between Irishmen whose ancestors were the

"Milesian, the Dane, the Norman, the Welshman, the Scotchman, and the Saxon". Unity, in Davis's opinion, was an essential step towards attaining independence.

Davis supported the Repeal Association's plan to offer a prize for a new history of Ireland. On 5 April 1845, in an article for *The Nation* entitled *History of Ireland*, he set out guidelines that a historian should follow when writing a scholarly work. He insisted that it should "be written from the original authorities" and he provided competitors with a list of sources which should be consulted. The authorities were categorised into two historical periods, the first described as "Ancient Irish Times", which focused on Ireland prior to the Medieval period, and the second focused on "English Invasion and the Pale". He provided advice about books that should be consulted and where necessary Davis cautioned historians about shortcomings evident in particular sources. For instance, he described Walter Harris, an eighteenth century Anglo-Irish historian, who edited the works of Sir James Ware, as valuable; but he cautioned the reader that Harris was "enormously, prejudiced against the native Irish and against the later Catholic writers" (*The Nation*, 5 April 1845).

Davis reflected on how Irish history should be written; it should be "an original and highly finished work". The historian must have a good understanding of social and political history – he should understand the condition of each social group from the peasantry to the nobility in each historical period – this understanding should extend to "how they fed, dressed, armed, and housed themselves"; he must exhibit an understanding of "the nature of the government, the manners, the administration of law, the state of useful and fine arts, of commerce, of foreign relations (*The Nation*, 5 April 1845). In summary, Davis stressed that the historian should present an authentic, colourful, life-like view of history: "The arms must clash and shine with genuine, not romantic likeness". Despite his claims that a historian should not engage in a romantic view of history his quest for vividness and imaginative representation is quintessentially romantic; examples later in this chapter will show that Davis included romantic representation in his own work.

A proper history of Ireland should not advocate or represent bigotry, according to Davis. He warned that the greatest vice was "bigotry of race or creed" and a "religious bigot" was described as being "incurably unfit" for the task of writing a history. A historian that would advance the Catholic or Protestant position in a biased manner would damage the culture of nationality that he was trying to promote. He set out the qualities that his ideal historian must possess:

> the writer of such an Irish history must feel a love for all sects, a philosophical eye to the merits and demerits of all, and a solemn and haughty impartiality in speaking for all (*The Nation*, 5 April 1845).

Davis's argued that history should be written from original sources; historians should display a mature understanding of their subject and should be prepared to capture the reader by providing an authentic, "life-like view of history"; but an unbiased, impartial interpretation of events was the key factor which would distinguish between good historical writing and a substandard account of events. The next section explores how Davis translated his theories on writing history into practice; given his political agenda would he be able to write "impartial" history?

### 5.4 Davis's interpretation of Irish history

Davis endeavoured to educate the people about their history and this motivated him to interpret historical events and historical personalities for his audience. He did not conceal the fact that his role as an amateur historian was to write national history. His busy work schedule as a political journalist did not allow him to write a comprehensive history. Nevertheless, throughout his career he provided his interpretation of a number of historical events and personalities; in the *Dublin Monthly Magazine* he examined the English East India Company and the conquest of India; he included a biographical sketch of John Philpot Curran as a preface to his speeches; he gave a lecture on *The Insurrection of 1641, its causes, character and fate* and he wrote a series of essays on the parliament of James II for the *Citizen* newspaper which were reprinted by Duffy as *The Patriot Parliament of 1689*. Davis also wrote a number of essays on a range of historical subjects for *The Nation* newspaper some of which appeared in *The Voice of the Nation*.

Davis understood the challenge of writing impartial history. Interpreting recent historical events in an objective manner was and still is a difficult challenge for historians; and it is also a challenge for historians not to fall into the trap of imposing contemporary values and priorities on the past (Ferriter, 2005, p4; Keogh, 2005, xxii). Davis was certainly conscious of the danger of manipulating historical facts for contemporary political gain and for ideological dominance. He stated with honesty that he was unwilling to touch the very late history of Ireland because "I could not be impartial"; with regard to contemporary history, he acknowledged that truth could be perceived as treason (Davis Papers, Ms 3199, National Library of Ireland). The challenges associated with interpreting history encouraged him to examine aspects of Irish history which he considered were less controversial; for instance, seventeenth century Ireland, in his view, contained fewer disputes, with the exception of religious matters and sources were available. In the next section some examplars of Davis's style of historiography indicate that he struggled to write objective history. His nationalist political agenda is evident in the topics he selected for analysis and in the manner he interpreted them.

### 5.4.1 The Irish Parliament of James II, 1689

Davis's main scholarly work of history was his analysis of the Parliament of James II. Following the arrival of William of Orange to England, James II fled to France. Louis XIV encouraged James to return to Ireland to make a last stand; and in May 1689 he established a parliament which operated until July of that year when it was suppressed following the victory of William. Davis decided to analyse the circumstances surrounding the establishment of this parliament, its composition and the acts of parliament. The publication of his finding in the *Citizen* provided him with an opportunity to provide his contemporaries with a political education on the benefits of an independent parliament and to convince them that an Irish parliament could be successful again if given the opportunity.

His analysis of the 1689 parliament was influenced by current political circumstances. It was intended to dispel Protestant concerns about the possibility of

a successful repeal campaign resulting in the establishment of a national parliament dominated by Catholics, where Protestants feared they would be victims of religious discrimination. The 1689 parliament was comprised mainly of Catholics, most of whom represented the Old English or Anglo-Norman Catholic interest, and a handful of Protestants. James II viewed Ireland as a stepping stone to the recovery of England which was under Williams control and he was reluctant to do anything that would alienate English opinion (Simms, 1986, p80). This motivated him to promote religious equality and to introduce acts of parliament which were marked by temperance and equality.

Davis approved of the acts which were intended to promote Irish trade; to establish schools in every parish in Ireland; to found an Irish Inns of Court and to provide for a navy and for shipping (Davis cited in Rolleston, 1914, pp37, 71). A major concern for the parliament was the distribution of land or the restoration of estates plundered by Cromwell and his supporters. The parliament decided that the Old Irish had a right to reclaim their properties and that those who had rebelled against James in support of William would forfeit their land. Repeal of the Act of Settlement would ensure that the Irish who had been transported to Connaught "would generally come in for their old holdings in the other provinces" (Davis cited in Rolleston, 1914, pp 45-46). Davis endeavoured to be fair in his judgement. He argued that repeal of this act was just; but he lamented the fact that there were no provisions for families of adventurers:

> who, however guilty when they came into the country, had been in it for from thirty to forty years, and had time and some citizenship in their favour (Davis cited in Rolleston, 1914, pp46-47).

He suggested that those who were eager to censure the parliament on this account should read over the facts that led to it, namely conquest and settlement by the English. This, he believed, would encourage critics to be "moderate in censuring" this parliament.

While Davis correctly praised the parliament for enforcing liberty of conscience which allowed Catholics and Protestants the right to worship as they pleased, but his claim that it established religious equality was an exaggeration (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843). The position of the Church of Ireland and its endowments remained unchanged and James II opposed legislation that would restore the Catholic Church to pre-Elizabeth status (Gillespie, 2006, p287); and though the income of Protestant clergy was reduced to the tithes paid by their own flock, they were left in possession of church lands (Foster, 1988, p144). The acts of religious liberty were suppressed when William claimed power.

The 1689 parliament became part of Catholic and Protestant mythology; various interpretations of the workings of this parliament existed to serve the political needs of the day; and like Grattan's parliament its true significance was exaggerated (Farrell, 1973, p126). Davis examined the facts in a scholarly fashion. His methodology was praised by Lecky, an eminent historian, who stated that the evidence relating to the acts of Repeal and of Attainer was "collected and sifted with an industry and a skill that leave little to be desired" (Lecky, 1906, p120). However, throughout his career as a political journalist, when Davis encountered a distorted representation of the composition or ethos of the parliament he often responded for propaganda purposes. In an article in *The Nation*, entitled *The Protestants of Ulster*, Davis rejected the anti-repeal argument propagated by Protestants that the "acts of the Englishman, James II, are referred to as proofs that the Roman Catholics of that time –154 years ago–were bigots" . In an emphatic manner, Davis defended the reputation of James's parliament:

> But the story is false. It is a gross lie to say that JAMES the Second's Parliament persecuted men for their creed, or established a Catholic ascendancy, or tried to establish it (*The Nation*, 29 July 1843).

He emphasised to the Protestants of Ulster that the aim of the parliament was to make Ireland independent and strong and free; and to "make men of all creeds equal as citizens". In order to address contemporary Protestant fears about the repeal

movement's alleged ambition to establish a Catholic ascendancy, Davis insisted that "now or then the Catholics did not, and do not, and will not seek ascendancy". Despite his hopes he could not guarantee that Catholics would not establish an ascendancy if the Act of Union was repealed; in this instance he used the past to promote unity and to "legitimise present aspirations and values" (Mustafa, 1998, p43).

Another reason why Davis was quick to defend the 1689 parliament was that he wanted a parliamentary model for Irishmen to follow. He also wanted to inform the English that the Irish were more than capable of making an independent parliament work. He stated that he was happy to rescue the achievements of those who established the parliament from the exaggerations and distortions of a section of English political opinion known as the Old Whigs. He believed that

> calumnies which were founded on the ignorance and falsehoods of the Old Whigs, who never felt secure until they had destroyed the character as well as the liberty of Ireland (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843).

Referring to the insidious methods employed by the English to keep Ireland in an oppressed state, Davis stated that they promoted division among the Irish by circulating extravagant stories of misdemeanors and crimes "in order to poison the wells of brotherly love and patriotism in our hearts". He highlighted how historical misrepresentation of facts informed the English mindset and encouraged them to view the Irish as lazy, rebellious and politically incompetent (Leerssen, 1986, pp65-67). Davis argued that any time the Irish made political progress through O' Connell's campaign for Catholic emancipation or the debate on repeal, the English prophets of doom predicted that folly, disorder and disgrace would follow. He accused the English government of discrediting the work and achievements of Irishmen, whether soldiers or statesmen. In his words:

> Never has any great deed been done here that the alien Government did not, as soon as the facts became historical, endeavour to blacken the honor of the

> statesman, the wisdom of the legislators, or the valour of the soldiers who achieved it (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843).

This negative stereotype of the Irish recycled by the English was also applied to the idea of an Irish parliament. Davis argued that the English claimed it would be "unruly, rash, rapacious and bloody". He rejected this prejudice and asserted that this parliament was similar to the Corporation where repeal and other issues of Irish concern were examined with considerable ability in a calm and dignified manner.

Davis admired the parliament's devotion to Ireland and this is reflected in the fact that he called it the patriot parliament. The level of patriotism attributed to the members of parliament by Davis is tempered by the fact that many of them were sons of proprietors who had lost land since 1641 and they sought retribution. They were "animated by the resentment of the bitterest wrong" (Lecky, 1906, p117). Despite this motivation the members introduced a number of measures to benefit Ireland. Notably they declared that the English parliament did not have a right to legislate for Ireland; that was the right of an Irish parliament. Given that Davis was an active participant in the repeal movement and believed that many of Ireland's problems would be solved if it possessed an independent legislature it is unsurprising that the brief existence of this parliament made him proud and hopeful for Ireland's future. The past provided a more glorious background to a present that didn't have much to celebrate (Hobsbaum, 1998, p6).

In summary, Davis's examination of the parliament of 1689 indicates that he interpreted the past to advance his political agenda. He tried to educate the people about this parliament to convince Catholics and Protestants that they had a shared historical identity and a shared political destiny but that they must unite to bring about political independence (Rodgers, 2012). He also wanted to convince them that the establishment of an independent parliament was not unattainable because Ireland was independent before and could be again. "The pedigree of our freedom is a century older than we thought, and Ireland has another parliament to be proud of " (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843). By emphasising the continuity between past and present

Davis legitimised the contemporary struggle for independence; this was another episode in the unfolding of the nation's destiny (Mays, 2005, p125).

### 5.4.2 Dispelling the myths about the Irish rebellion of 1641

The rebellion of 1641 was a controversial historical event which Davis interpreted for the readers of *The Nation*. The reasons he explored this subject are that he wanted to provide his readers with an education on the facts as he understood them and he wanted to correct what he considered to be false myths about the rebellion. These myths, he believed, had the potential to generate further distrust between Catholics and Protestants and damage the contemporary movement for independence.

The Old Irish who initiated the 1641 rebellion did so as a consequence of English plantation policy in Ireland. They felt aggrieved at having lost their land to Protestant settlers. Some of the Old Irish retained part of their land and they had mortgaged it to new settlers and were "close to destitution" (Corish, 1976, p289). In addition, the Irish paid tithes to a foreign church to which they had no allegiance. They demanded an end to the policy of plantation and some of the Irish nobility were dissatisfied with their peripheral political position and their delay in the confirmation of land titles (Perceval - Maxwell, 1994, pp286 – 287). Tension between King Charles I, who had the support of Catholics, and the English parliament contributed to the uncertainty. The new English settlers were conspiring with the parliament to persecute Irish Catholics. The rebels insisted that they had "been forced to betake ourselves to our Armes, to defend our Religion and Liberty" (Jones, 2012, p71). Encouraged by the example of Scottish defiance of the English government the disaffected Irish seized a number of poorly defended forts in Ulster; the resentment felt by the Ulster Irish against the settlers soon erupted into violence and approximately 2,000 settlers were killed (Foster, 1988, p85).

This rebellion was a sensitive subject and interpretations of events varied depending on the political biases or interests of the interpreter. In particular, the propaganda value of this event was used to great effect by Protestants and by the English

government to justify discriminatory policy against Catholics including Cromwell's conquest and the Penal Laws. Leerssen stated that "1641" served as an example of the "untrustworthiness and blood thirst of Catholics, and, hence a cornerstone in the political thought of which the penal laws were the juridical expression" (Leerssen, 1986, p385).

Historians, both professional and amateur, differed significantly over the scale of the casualties during the rebellion. Commenting on *The Spectator's* review of O' Connell's *Memoir of Ireland, Native and Saxon,* Davis claimed that the newspaper was incorrect and dishonest to insinuate that it accepted the account of the massacre from three contemporaries–Clarendon, Temple and Milton. The fact that each one differed widely in their opinion of the number of deaths was described by Davis as "gross ignorance or great dishonesty". The substantial discrepancy in the figures presented by each supports this view. "Milton stated the deaths by murder at more than 616,000, Temple at 150,000, Clarendon at 50,000 (*The Nation,* 4 March 1843). Davis insisted that the commission established to inquire into the facts, claimed that "2,109 had been massacred, and 1,900 more reported to have been massacred". The historian, Lecky argued that "wholesale massacre of Protestants was planned as part of the rising" and his assessment of the numbers killed included "4,000 murdered with 8,000 dead from hardship and privation" (Corish, 1976, p291). Davis identified the key difficulty: the evidence was unreliable; in his view, it was "full of ghost stories and physical impossibilities" (*The Nation,* 4 March 1843).

He informed students of history of the dangers associated with misinterpreting historical events. Sensational representations of the massacre had devastating effects on Irish Catholics because it helped to inform an uncompromising English policy towards Ireland. Davis was disappointed at Hume's interpretation of the rebellion. Hume perceived the rebellion primarily in terms of a religious conflict and "against the weaker Catholic element he levelled the greatest charge" (Berman, 1976, pp101-113). He believed the exaggerated depiction of events and was intemperate especially in his depiction of Catholics as "barbarous savages" (Buckley,

unpublished thesis, 1980, p341). Amongst those who tried to persuade Hume to retract his biased interpretation was Charles O'Conor (1710-1791), antiquarian, who noted the damaging impact that biased history could have on the living. O'Conner stated that "he [Hume] may possibly hurt the Living, by the odium cast on the Dead, Humanity as well as Justice will arrest his Hand from offering more of such an Injury, than historical truth will strictly warrant" (Stewart, 2005, p19). The *Spectator* called Hume "one of their greatest historians". However, Davis argued that if that was the case English history was even more contemptible than he thought, for Hume was found guilty of "repeated and continuous mis-statements". In Davis's view, Hume had lost credibility as an objective historian and his moral judgement was also highly questionable (*The Nation*, 4 March 1843).

Unlike Hume, Davis was careful not to interpret the rebellion in religious terms. This would have reopened old historical wounds that existed between Catholics and Protestants at a time when Davis wanted them to unite in order to facilitate political change. Focusing on the causes of the rebellion, Davis claimed that the English carried out "savage and treacherous assaults" on the native Irish (Davis Papers, MS 3199, National Library of Ireland). He was convinced that the Irish were justified in their actions during the rebellion to reclaim their property, to resist religious oppression and to resist the threat of decimation:

> The insurrection was a just, and not impolitic attempt by the Irish, to resume their property plundered during thirty five years before, their religious rights oppressed by a penal code, their civil liberties then subject to constant invasion, and their persona threatened with "*extermination*" (*The Nation*, 4 March 1843).

In a direct challenge to exaggerated accounts of the number of atrocities Davis understated the number and created the impression that given the circumstances it was a proportionate response. He was adamant that the "few deeds of murder" were "lamentable" incidents which were caused by a "reaction to an intolerable burden"(*The Nation*, 4 March 1843).

He used the 1641 rebellion to inform readers of anti-Irish sentiment contained in contemporary English newspapers: the *Spectator* was representative of the English mindset, according to Davis–a mindset that too easily constructed falsehoods and lies to justify an invasion of Ireland. The English were involved in sowing dissent and division amongst Irishmen. In the past they were successful but, he believed, now they would not succeed; labeling the newspaper as foul and insolent, he insisted that, "Formerly the English hated us because we had property, and calumniated us as an excuse for seizing it. Now they insult us because they can hold our chains no longer" (*The Nation*, 4 March 1843). He reminded the people that they should have no fear of England or its malice ridden newspapers; their fate was in their hands. He encouraged all Irish men to cease internal dissention and to "unlock the gram of hate, and, stand together in native ranks".

Davis's analysis of the 1641 rebellion provided him with an opportunity to educate the people about the destructive behaviour associated with religious intolerance. The people, in his view, would have to display greater understanding and a willingness to reconcile if the struggle for independence was to succeed. Although he encouraged both religious creeds to forgive historical wrongs he was engaged in

> the process of remembering and forgetting: remembering a history that needed to be clarified; forgetting, by arguing for a combination of all Irishmen of whatever stock to make Ireland a nation (Mulvey, 2003, p210).

His analysis of the Historical Monuments of Ireland is another example where he interpreted history to promote unity, tolerance and to generate national pride.

### 5.4.3 Historical Monuments of Ireland

Davis wrote a number of articles in *The Nation* to remind the people of their duty to restore and protect national monuments. For him it was an indication of their willingness to create a nation. Contemporaries of Davis were also concerned about collecting and preserving features of antiquity and they engaged in fieldwork and scholarly analysis; for instance George Petrie (1790-1866), historian and member of the Royal Irish Academy, wrote an *Essay on the Round Towers* and a *History and*

*Antiquities of Tara Hill*; John O' Donovan and Eugene O'Curry (1796-1862), a leading Irish scholar who also worked on the Ordnance Survey, was a collector of artefacts (Koch, 2006, p107). Davis did not engage in a scholarly study of national monuments but his treatment of this subject was designed to increase people's understanding of their ancestors and the society they lived in. "Public interest was enlightened" by his articles in *The Nation* (Herity and Eoghan, 1977, p11).

Davis introduced readers of *The Nation* to uncontroversial examples of Ireland's past to remind them that they also had a past worthy of preservation and to generate national pride. Each example he cited presented Ireland in a romantic, glorious manner. He believed that the Irish truly distinguished themselves in the era before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans; in Davis's words -"Reckoning back from Clontarf, our history grows ennobled (like that of a decaying house)" (*The Nation*, 6 July 1844). Characteristics that impressed him from this period included the European centres of learning at Armagh and Lismore and missionaries spreading Christianity and learning throughout Europe.

He asked readers why national monuments were neglected and ignored as though they did not exist; as though Ireland's past was irrelevant to the present and future. Davis implored the people to display the same sense of nationhood as other European countries, to shelter and study the remains of their nation's past. He insisted that Ireland was a nation and the protection of her historical monuments was a test of that nationhood. He personalised the significance of these monuments by encouraging people to respect and safeguard them "even as one guards the tomb of a parent" (*The Nation*, 28 October 1843).

It frustrated him to witness how monuments were neglected. Monuments from ancient civilisation were desecrated because of gross ignorance and a "vagabond spirit". With vivid agricultural imagery, Davis highlighted the prevalent destruction of Ireland's heritage:

> We have seen pigs housed in the piled friezes of a broken church, cows stabled in the palaces of the Desmonds, and corn threshed on the floors of abbeys, and the sheep and the tearing wind tenant the corridors of the Aileach (*The Nation*, 28 October 1843).

In the early 1840s, a controversy raged over a proposal to run a road right through the "Temple of Grange". Davis considered this monument to be of unique historical value. He introduced a quote from *The Athenoeum Journal of Literature, Science and Art,* which described it as the "Irish pyramid". This monument was a legacy from "a forgotten ancestor, to prove that he too, had art and religion". Davis elevated the importance of this monument in the minds of his readers by surmising that it may have marked the tomb of a hero or "an invader who subdued–a Brian or a Strongbow" (*The Nation*, 6 July 1844). He did not know who persisted in "this brutal outrage" to build a road through Newgrange and he called on the people to prevent this from occurring. They may be liberals or tories, Protestants or Catholics; but he had no doubt they were:

> tasteless blockheads – poor devils without reference or education–men, who as Wordsworth says –
> "Would peep and botanise
> Upon their mothers' graves" (*The Nation*, 6 July 1844).

Careful not to charge any one group or class with this indiscriminate destruction, he stated that "all classes, creeds and politics are to blame for this". He stressed the need for unity amongst Catholics and Protestants to remedy this national problem; and consequently blame was apportioned equally between peasants and farmers working on the land and between the esteemed religious of both creeds. "The peasant lugs down a pillar for his sty, the farmer for his gate, the priest for his chapel, the minister for his glebe"(*The Nation*, 28 October 1843). In Davis's opinion it did not make sense to write histories or build museums or study the habits of the dead when their castles, their temples, their colleges, their courts and their graves were "foully neglected". The destruction of Ireland's historical monuments continued into the Twentieth Century and it occurred "from ignorance rather than malice" (Evans, 1966, pp1–2).

Davis insisted that by examining the relics and ruins of the past, people would learn more about the lives of the nobles and the gentry than from a library of books. As outlined in Chapter 4, he understood the value of learning by observation and he encouraged people to increase their knowledge and understanding of Ireland's past by undertaking field research. His travel notes indicate that he recorded interesting facts about his visit to Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Galway; he commented on the topography and scenery, included rough sketch maps of towns such as Ballinskelligs and he noted large estates, castles, land use and the condition of the people (Charles Gavan Duffy papers, 12P19, 12P20, Royal Irish Academy). He used this knowledge to educate the people about their heritage and to highlight what needed to be done to develop resources or to protect a monument. For instance, he argued that a visit to a castle or a monastery provided meaningful evidence about the life of a Norman lord or the daily activities of a monk during Early Christian Ireland–evidence collected by the visual sense would leave a lasting impression on the memory. Davis argued that Ware's *Antiquities* did not reveal "so clearly the tastes, the habits, the everyday customs of the monks", as a visit to Adare Monastery. He insisted that more evidence of historical settlement could be gained from a visit to the Museum of the Irish Academy or from an examination of raths, keeps and old coastal towns than from "all the prints and historical novels we have" (*The Nation*, 28 October 1843).

Davis exploited the national monuments question as an opportunity to advance his political agenda. He argued that a national government would keep these monuments safe. He called on the clergy, Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter to nominate men of good character, education and taste who could examine and describe these monuments in a scholarly fashion; but above all to nominate those who would save and protect these features. He chose to ignore that many of the monuments were relics from a history of conflict because it did not serve his political agenda to do so; he tried to represent them as symbols of a common heritage, symbols of unity; they would contribute to the construction of a unified national identity (Reid, 2005, p206). He claimed that the preservation of monuments was an opportunity for

Catholic and Protestant clergymen to co-operate for the protection of Ireland's heritage. He posed a question which was aspirational in tone and content but it set out Davis's hope that they would unite and take responsibility for their common heritage. He asked:

> Is it extravagant to speculate on the possibility of the Episcopalian, Catholic and Presbyterian clergy joining in an Antiquarian Society to preserve our ecclesiastical remains–our churches, our abbeys, our crosses, and our fathers' tombs, from fellows like the Meath road-makers? (*The Nation*, 6 July 1844).

Davis recommended that an Antiquarian Society could follow the model established by the Archaeological Society. This was a national society which boasted a multi-denominational, apolitical membership of 400. He insisted that an Antiquarian Society could also have a varied membership and should be established with or without the aid of an Irish parliament. It could ensure that derelict buildings were refurbished and many of them, in Davis's opinion, should be used for civil purposes – as almhouses, schools, lecture-rooms and town halls.

Through his writings Davis introduced a larger audience to the history of Ancient Ireland. It was his intention to stimulate popular interest in features of antiquity so that instead of desecrating them the people would protect them, study them, and learn about them. He understood that the past could serve the present. By restoring features of antiquity to their former glory, he argued that it was an opportunity for Irish people to prove that they were a civilised, imaginative people who appreciated art, architecture and learning. It was an opportunity not only to restore derelict monuments but also to restore Ireland's self-image. It would help to undermine England's negative image of the Irish and enhance their demands for self-government.

Davis understood that the upper and middle classes could access his ideas about history and Irish culture by reading his weekly prose in *The Nation*. This newspaper had weekly sales of approx 10,000; its influence through the medium of public

readings and reading rooms was estimated at over 250,000 (O'Tuathaigh, 1972, p188). However, in order to reach the illiterate another technique would have to be devised; group readings were common but only a limited number could benefit from this medium. A significant proportion of the illiterate population had inherited a Gaelic oral culture and both Davis and Duffy understood the effectiveness of the ballad genre as a medium of education to reach this group.

### 5.4.4 A Ballad History of Ireland

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century nationalists used the ballad medium to remember past glories or defeats and to inspire patriotic action. In her article *A kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition*, Boland argued that songs and ballads from these centuries "propose for a nation an impossible task: to be at once an archive of defeat and a diagram of victory" (Boland, 1994, p77). There is some accuracy in this observation: many of the Irish ballads and songs evoke the memory of defeat and refer to historical wrongs perpetrated against the Irish; they also encourage patriotic sentiment and stimulate hope in the reader which is essential if victory is to be realised sometime in the future. The archive of defeat is evident in the patriotic songs contained in Thomas Moore's *The Irish Melodies*; following the defeat of the United Irishmen, 1798, and the death of his friend, Robert Emmett, 1803, Moore expressed "frustration, death or despair; the only consolation is to remember long-faded glories" (Zimmermann, 1967, p77). Moore's *Remember the Glories of Brian the Brave*, laments the loss of Brian Boru to his people; nevertheless, it promises better days; Boru's star may "light us to victory yet" (Moore, 1852, p3). Moore's songs were written for the nobility and the gentry and were not directed at the uneducated mass audience (Moore, Lake, 1829). However, his songs contributed to the spread and intensification of Irish national feeling (English, 2003, p125). In an article titled *Irish Songs* Davis challenged this view. He described Moore as "our greatest poet, and the greatest lyricist" whose lyrics were directed at the gentry class; but he criticised Moore for not giving songs to the middle and poor classes. Moore's songs were too subtle and refined, lacked passion and were destroyed by pretty images, according to Davis; he also insisted that the

songs would not inspire the people with a sense of nationhood–they were unsuited for the street and the field (*The Nation*, 21 December 1844, 4 January 1845).

Other contemporaries of Davis who contributed to the nationalist ballad tradition included the poet Clarence Mangan who had written a number of ballads for the *Dublin Magazine*. Davis urged Clarence Mangan to continue to write ballads that "were racy of the soil" and Davis tried to recruit his talents to compile a history of Ireland recounted in a series of national ballads. Samuel Ferguson published a few ballads in the *University Magazine*, which Davis considered to be of the highest class (*The Nation* 16 November 1844). Once again, he tried to encourage Ferguson to write more ballads which would "eminently serve the magazine and aid his country".

Davis set out his thoughts on a proposed ballad history project in an article entitled, *A Ballad History of Ireland*, which appeared in *The Nation* on 16 November 1844 and was completed in the 30 November edition. In this article he stated that it was their intention:

> to make Irish History familiar to the minds, pleasant to the ears, dear to the passions, and powerful over the taste and conduct of the Irish people in times to come (*The Nation*, 30 November 1844).

Davis argued that an education in national history had a clear purpose to inflame the imagination and to arouse the passions with dramatic images of past glories and the achievements of great men. Ballads were an excellent medium for teaching this brand of history. In his words:

> To hallow and accurse the scenes of glory and honour, or of shame and sorrow; to give to the imagination the arms, and homes, and senates of other days; to rouse and soften and strengthen, and enlarge us with the passions of great periods; to lead us into love of self-denial, of justice, of beauty, of valour, of generous life and proud death; and to set up in our souls the memory of great men, who shall then be as models and judges of

> our actions – these are the highest duties of history, and these are best taught by a Ballad History (*The Nation*, 30 November 1844).

He had no interest in creating educated armchair patriots. Ballad history would invoke role models to inspire patriotic behaviour that would at least equal if not surpass the achievements of the great men the ballads spoke of. Davis believed that preparation for action was the purpose of the ballad medium. He encouraged self-sacrifice on the battlefield. Learning would be in vain unless the people "learn also to imitate" those who brought glory on their own soil and for their country's glory (*The Nation*, 1 October 1843). Moreover, by encouraging people to imitate, Davis contradicted a key aspect of his education thinking which was to encourage citizens to think for themselves. He did not encourage the ballad audience to critically evaluate historical figures depicted as national heroes; it did not serve his purpose to highlight their deficiencies. The audience was encouraged to accept the sentiments contained in ballads as accurate and to follow blindly the patriotic deeds of these heroes.

Davis studied the form and structure of ballads to enhance their effectiveness. His main priority was to provide an education through ballad history but of significant importance was the medium; great effort was invested in educating his audience in the skills required to write a good ballad - one that would be sufficiently memorable to educate and inspire. True to his educational methodology he argued that a ballad should appeal to the senses and the imagination of the people. It should possess a spiritual quality:

> A hymn of exultation – a call to council, an army, or a people–a prophecy – a lamen[t]–for a dramatic scene… may give as much of event, costume, character, and even scenery, as a mere narration (*The Nation*, 30 November 1844).

Another essential quality of a good historical ballad, he insisted, was accuracy. Balladeers must ensure that they possess "the main facts of the time"; he warned against distorting history to make a ballad that sounds good. The facts should be

examined in their context and how they connect to other relevant historical events. Each ballad should be distinctive and true to the event being described and he warned against writing general ballads that do not do justice to the hero, that do not reveal "the voice, colour, stature, passions, and peculiar faculties of his hero". Davis suggested where balladeers should get their information–where possible they should try and access the original sources such as journals, letters, state papers, statutes, contemporary fiction and narratives.

He insisted that Ireland's geography and topography must be known to the ballad historians – they must study maps, topographical and scenic descriptions. They must undertake field research to acquaint themselves with the Irish landscape so that they can set a scene in a place with accuracy and force. He reminded his audience of the essential ingredients of a good ballad – structure, truth and colouring; but above all, a ballad must have force which he described as "strong passions, daring inventions and vivid sympathy for great acts". In order to develop the skills of a poet, he directed ballad historians to study the poetry of Emerson. Emerson's work *The Poet* describes what imprisons us and details how the poet "the beholder of ideas, and the utterer of the necessary and casual"–can liberate us (Cameron, 2010, p28); *The Poet* also emphasised how nature provides unique insight into the truths of the world (Schenk, 2008, p13).

As editor of *The Nation*, Duffy introduced the ballad medium into the newspaper and he encouraged Davis to write ballads. Within two weeks he had written *The Death of Owen Roe* and week after week, according to Duffy, he "poured out songs as spontaneously as a bird" (Duffy, 1892, p69). Despite Davis's busy political schedule he produced nearly fifty poems in three years and a substantial number of these were historical ballads. Ballads were written, often to a journalist's deadline, when the flash of inspiration came and, according to Duffy, were scrawled on a sheet of post paper, with unfinished lines and blanks for epithets:

> If there was time it was revised later and copied once more with pen and ink, and last touches added before it was dispatched to the printer; but if occasion demanded, it went at once (Duffy, 1896, pp95-96).

The majority of the poems and songs were initially written for *The Nation* and subsequently appeared in *The Spirit of the Nation* which was part of *The Library of Ireland* series. Davis decided to write ballads because there was a deficit of national ballads to inspire a people involved in building a nation. He identified weaknesses in Irish songs composed in the eighteenth century: "their grief slavish and despairing, their joy reckless and bombastic, their religion bitter and sectarian, their politics Jacobite, and concealed by extravagant and tiresome allegory" (*The Nation,* 4 January 1845). He wrote ballads with a clear objective-to awaken nationalist sentiment (Pilar Pulido, 1995, p51). The themes addressed in his ballads include resistance against English tyranny, glorification of military action, defiance, unity, self-reliance and a call to patriotic action. They contained nationalist propaganda and provided the people with an unsophisticated, superficial education about contemporary and historical wrongs perpetrated against Ireland. He wrote ballads for the cabin, the fair and the street; they contained strong imagery, lyrics to stir the emotions and a narrative that would be easily understood (McCarthy, 2012).

Davis exploited the post-Clontarf period of political uncertainty to develop the idea of nationality with greater urgency; he devoted considerable intellectual energy to developing projects on Irish culture–these will be examined in the next chapter. While his prose writing called on the people to display order, discipline, organisation and to continue their efforts to develop national projects his military ballads reveal the thinking of a revolutionary. He believed that either a display of military might or rebellion was necessary to win liberty. It was time for "mind making" and the ballad was a key instrument in that process. Post Clontarf he emphasised the need to write more ballads and this is reflected in a letter he wrote to John Pigot in April 1844; in the letter he rebuked John O'Hagan and John Kelly Ingram for not writing more poems–their inactivity was inexcusable. Davis stated that "one poem now is worth twenty to be brought out in five years time" (Molony, 1995, p219).

Davis's article *The Morality of War* provides a context for an analysis of his militant ballads. In this article he addressed the contentious issue – when was war justified? He provided direction to his audience on this matter by asserting that war was a noble undertaking by those who had justice on their side and by those who were willing to endure suffering in a righteous cause. He glorified war by asserting that war conferred greatness and that heroism was more evident in war than in any other human action. In his view the end justified the means; and he left his readers in no doubt which cause they should support. Those who "rob or oppress" with a tyrant or invader and who "fight against liberty" should be allowed to "rot in eternal infamy" whereas those who "fight for truth, country and freedom" should enjoy "wealth, strength, and honor" and if they fall in achieving it, may glory "sit upon their tombs" (*The Nation*, 10 June 1843). Though he stated that he had "no wish to encourage the occasion of war" it is clear from his definition of a just cause that he hoped Irishmen would accept that war was a duty and when the occasion arose he hoped that "sagacious and informed souls, bold hearts and strong arms be found to plan, lead and fight" (*The Nation,* 10 June 1843).

The ballad *The West Asleep* which was written prior to the Clontarf event typifies the content of his political ballads which Davis wrote to inspire political action and to glorify the use of violence. This ballad is well known today and it is testimony to its enduring quality that it remains popular. In the ballad, Davis encouraged the people of Connaught to awaken from their "slumber deep" to claim liberty. In the first stanza, sleep was an effective metaphor for inactivity; he stated that it was no surprise that Erin was sad and tearful because the people of the West were politically inactive. Nature was invoked in the second stanza both as a symbol of liberty and as a metaphor for English oppression. He urged the people to learn liberty as protection from the inclement political climate.

> There lake and plain smile fair and free,
> 'Mid rocks – their guardian chivalry –
> Sing oh ! let man learn liberty

From crashing wind and lashing sea

That chainless wave and lovely land
Freedom and Nationhood demand -
Be sure, the great God never planned,
For slumbering slaves, a home so grand.
And, long a brave and haughty race
Honoured and sentinelled the place –
Sing oh! Not even their sons' disgrace
Can quite destroy their glory's trace (*The Nation*, 22 July 1843).

Davis urged the people to honour this "lovely land" which demanded freedom and nationhood; he summoned God to support his argument that this land was created not for slaves but freemen. In a robust and uncompromising manner he stated that the glorious achievements of past heroes could not be destroyed by "their sons' disgrace" which was a reference to the political and military inaction of the current generation; in contrast, he conferred special praise on those who resisted the invader. This is an example where he glorified the past and patriotic sacrifice to jolt the people into action. He praised O' Connor for defending his land against Norman attack:

And glory guards Clanricarde's grave –
Sing oh ! they died their land to save,
At Aughrim's slopes and Shannon's wave (*The Nation*, 22 July 1843).

The story of this ballad reaches its climax in the final stanza where Davis sounds a note of optimism – "The West's awake". The English were warned to be fearful that the people of the West were now in a position to resist oppression and would continue "till death for Erin's sake." Nonetheless, the people and their repeal representatives were prepared to resist tyranny by political means but militarily they were unprepared. But the perception that Davis wanted to convey was that the people of "The West" were ready to act to resist English oppression. This stanza signaled hope for the future.

But –Hark ! – some voice like thunder spake:

The West's awake, the West's awake"-
Sing oh ! hurra: let England quake,
"We'll watch till death for Erin's sake" (*The Nation*, 22 July 1843).

In spite of Davis's call for unity amongst all Irishmen in his prose writing and his attempt to create an "us versus them mentality" the demonization of England and the threat of physical force against the oppressor would have alienated some members of the Protestant Ascendancy who valued their Britishness and the security offered by the Act of Union (Parker, 2011, p4; Foster, 1989, p162). Perhaps he hoped that members of his Protestant community had selected to view themselves as Irishmen and had committed themselves to the restoration of Ireland as he had. It was a calculated gamble which would only pay off if the majority joined the struggle for liberty.

Following the missed opportunity of Clontarf, Davis returned with a renewed sense of purpose to the theme of military action. Politics had not succeeded in delivering liberty; and Davis called on the people to prepare to duplicate the heroic deeds of patriots on the battlefield. One militant ballad which captures Davis's discontentment post Clontarf is *A Song for the Irish militia*. In this ballad he outlined his frustration that moral force had not succeeded as a method of agitation to free Ireland. He stated that the words of a tribune, which was an explicit reference to O'Connell, or poet's pen, which was a reference to the literary efforts of Young Ireland, can sow the seed of liberty but a soldier's sacrifice was required to deliver it.

The tribune's tongue and poet's pen
May sow the seed in prostrate men,
But tis the soldier's sword alone
Can reap the crop so bravely sown;
No more I'll sing or idly pine,
But train my soul to lead a line -
A soldier's life's the life for me-
A soldier's death, so Ireland free (*The Nation*, 2 February 1845).

The three brigade poems, *Fontenoy*, *Battle Eve of the Brigade* and *Clare's Dragoon* glorified the "Wild Geese" and the thousands of Irishmen who fled to Europe to fight in the Irish regiments under foreign banners. In the poem *Fontenoy*, he celebrated the success of the Irish brigade who joined the French forces to defeat the English. He identified key characteristics displayed by the Irish exiles which helped them to victory including pride, courage, military order and a desire for vengence. If called upon he hoped that one day the current generation of Irishmen would display these "noble" qualities.

The Irish exiles were motivated by the "treasured wrongs of fifty years"; they sought revenge on Fontenoy: "Revenge, remember Limerick! Dash down the Sacsanach!" (*The Nation*, 3 February 1844). In the final stanza the exiles defeated the English with animal fury in a bloody battle:

> Like Lions leaping at a fold when mad with hunger's pang,
> Right up against the English line the Irish exiles sprang:
> Bright was their steel, `tis bloody now, their guns are filled with gore;
> Through shattered ranks and severed files the trampled flags they tore;

In the conclusion of the poem Davis glorified the victory of the exiles:

> On Fontenoy, on Fontenoy, like eagles in the sun,
> With bloody plumes, the Irish stand – the field is fought
> and won! (*The Nation*, 3 February 1844).

The themes of vengeance, military success and honour were repeated in the other brigade poems. In his opinion, to fight the enemy on foreign soil was considered more honourable than to live under the English yoke at home. This association with foreign success also held out the promise that the Irish could duplicate that success on Irish soil.

In the years after Davis's untimely death in 1845 a split occurred between Young Ireland and O'Connell over the issue of the use of violence; O'Connell argued that no political objective justified the use of force whereas Young Ireland led by John Mitchell insisted that force should be used as a final resort (Boyce, 2005, p90). It is

difficult to say if Davis's war-like ballads influenced a small group, including Smith O'Brien and Doheny, who engaged in a small, unsuccessful rebellion near Ballingarry in 1848; but what is clear is that those seeking inspiration for a rebellion could find it in Davis's militant ballads.

In Davis's view the events at Clontarf had raised questions about O'Connell's leadership methods to deliver repeal (Duffy, 1896, p144). Ireland needed new leaders; and Davis used the ballad medium to celebrate the patriotic efforts of Irish heroes including Wolfe Tone, Sarsfield and Owen Roe O' Neill to inspire a new generation to duplicate their patriotic deeds. From Davis's perspective, Wolfe Tone was a national hero whose political philosophy of unity and equality should act as a guide to all Irishmen.

In the ballad *Tone's Grave* there is an absence of historical detail; and the most significant aspect of this ballad is the atmosphere which is one of regret and melancholy. Davis was clearly inspired by Tone's qualities as a patriot and a martyr. Reminding his audience of their duty to honour Tone's memory and of their duty to educate themselves about this martyr's achievements, Davis stated:

> A martyr for Ireland – his grave has no stone-
> His name seldom nam'd, and his virtues unknown (*The Nation*, 25 November 1843).

Central to the ballad is the speaker, who mourns at Tone's grave, wakes from a dream to find a band of students and peasants and an old man–all of whom have come to mourn Tone and to commemorate him with a monument, "A plain one, yet fit for the simple and true". Romantic imagery is invoked with the peasants described as "wise and brave" and the old man was a former comrade of Tone. The speaker's response to this gesture is emotional and filled with gratitude that both Tone's memory, so often "tarnished and slain", and the cause he advocated are to be honoured.

In the final stanza the winter wind is used as a metaphor to create the atmosphere of regret and gloom. It presents a challenge to the present generation that the inclement climate would continue until Ireland becomes a nation; when this is realised only then should it honour him with a tomb.

> In Bodenstown Churchyard there is a green grave,
> And freely around it let winter winds rave-
> Far better they suit him, the ruin and the gloom,
> Till Ireland, a nation, can build him a tomb (*The Nation*, 25 November 1843).

Davis also used the ballad medium to promote unity and cooperation between Irishmen. In *The Penal Days*, he rejoiced that the penal days were gone and stated aspirationally that "All creeds are equal in our isle" which was a false claim; but, perhaps by stating it he hoped that some would believe that it was a reality or that it was an aspiration worth attaining (Davis cited in Duffy, 1862, p198). God was invoked to help reconcile ancient feuds and everyone was encouraged to "drown our griefs in Freedom's song" and unite for Ireland's right. The poem *Celts and Saxons* repeated this message of unity and patriotic devotion amongst those born in Ireland; and it also identified Irishness as a birthright rather than something that was defined by race or creed:

> Yet start not, Irish born man,
> If you're to Ireland true,
> We heed not blood, nor creed nor clan –
> We've hearts and hands for you (*The Nation*, 13 April 1844).

A number of Davis's ballads such as *The West Asleep*, *A Nation Once Again* and *Fontenoy* were included in the education curriculum of the Free State. During the language revival of the 1940s Liam Redmond, a school inspector, reminded teachers of the importance of teaching nationalist ballads: "these old ballads, written in English, kept the national spirit intact through dark and hopeless years" (Mc Carthy, 1999, p119). In the words of Hone, Davis's ballads were

> educative in inspiration and in aim, and directed towards an upliftment of the national spirit and the association of the Irish patriotic sentiment with moral enthusiasm and high idealism (Hone, 1934, p75).

As part of the nationalist curriculum these ballads were to remind people of their nationalist heritage and to promote a sense of nationhood in an independent Ireland; they built a foundation that had lasting effects on modern Irish identity from the Gaelic Revival through to Sinn Fein politics in the Twentieth Century (Parker, 2011, p4). They are in many cases remarkable for their rhetorical and political content and for their enduring quality.

## Conclusion

This chapter investigated why Davis considered an education in Irish history to be essential knowledge for nationalists who were struggling for liberty and prosperity. Walker suggested that Davis and the Young Irelanders were alchemists attempting to transform the present by distilling the past (Walker, 1990 p203). It is true that Davis interpreted the past and used it as a means to advance his political agenda. His version of history would act as a counterbalance to the anti-national content of the school's curriculum and challenge biased histories. Moreover, it would give the people national heroes to inspire them and it would "fan their national ardour and their national self-awareness" (Leerssen, 1996, p148). He selected episodes and personalities from history to nurture a new generation of nationalists; and he explained their contemporary relevance to the people - religious intolerance would weaken and divide; a united people could claim parliamentary success and make Ireland prosperous again; future greatness could be achieved by patriotic endeavour and above all a new generation of leaders and active citizens of the calibre of dead patriots like Hugh O'Neill, Wolfe Tone and Henry Grattan were required to regenerate their country.

This chapter explored the significance of the ballad medium in Davis's history curriculum. Although his ballads tried to inculcate qualities of character including self-reliance, patriotism, and courage they were also written to glorify martyrdom. The militant content of the ballads reflects the thinking of a revolutionary Davis –

examples of this type of ballad were more common following the retreat of Clontarf. His mobilizing rhetoric had a lasting legacy; it influenced the consciousness of republicanism and was interpreted by future leaders to justify violent action. John O' Leary, a Fenian activist, and Padraig Pearse were inspired by his thoughts on civic duty and revolutionary action.

This chapter also explored Davis's prescribed principles for the historians of Ireland which have lost nothing in their significance and are a reminder to historians of their responsibility to engage in scholarly research. Their work should be based on original research; it should be a comprehensive survey - due account must be taken of the main social and economic forces of the time as well as events and personalities and, above all, historians must be impartial in their analysis. Although Davis displayed the ability to apply these principles in his research of the parliament of 1689 and in his edition of Curran's speeches the interests of scholarship were subservient to his political faith (Moody, 1945, p32). For Davis the use of propaganda was necessary not only to construct the Irish nation but to defend and justify it. His use of history as propaganda undermines his position as a historian of merit (Alvey, 1996). This does not mean that scholars should disregard his work; but they should approach his writings with caution; they should possess a good understanding of the context and knowledge of his motives and aspirations. Then it may be possible to critically evaluate his ideas.

Davis used history to construct heroes and myths but he also suggested informative insights on the value of historical knowledge which could inform the on-going discussion on whether history has utilitarian value or intellectual merit for Irish citizens in the twenty first century. He feared that ignorance of historical knowledge led to intolerance, division and poor decision making. He prioritised this subject for political reasons–history was knowledge which citizens should know; and some of his observations on the importance of historical knowledge are still meaningful and relevant today. He suggested that historical knowledge is necessary to illuminate and explain national identity; it provides greater understanding of the human condition

and human motivation; it provides examples of historical personalities to guide and enlighten citizens; it gives impulse and vitality to principles; it provides guidance and example on how to use power; and in spite of his claims on ballad history to justify conflict he also acknowledged that knowledge of history could "keep the people from beginning to shed blood" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1890, p23). His thoughts on the value of historical knowledge may prove beneficial to a new generation – knowledge of the past may provide solutions to recurrent problems.

The next chapter will examine his efforts to provide the people with an education on aspects of Irish culture. It begins with his definition of culture and examines his motives behind encouraging the people to get involved in cultural projects; it also explores his ideas on a number of cultural issues including the Irish language, Irish art and literature.

# Chapter Six: Providing a national education: Irish Culture

## Introduction

This chapter explores his policy to provide the people with a national education; in particular it explores his desire to educate the people about Irish culture so that they would possess a strong Irish character rather than one that was dominated by English culture. By interpreting and developing aspects of Irish culture he hoped to generate national sentiment and ultimately to politicise the people. He believed that an education in Irish culture would help to create self-reliant, ambitious nationalists who would serve their country. It would also explain the principle of nationality and promote it. This chapter examines the content of his cultural education in Irish art, Irish literature and the Irish language.

## 6.1 Cultural Nationalism and Education

Anderson has defined the "nation" as an "imagined political community"; it is imagined because members of the community will never know or meet their fellow members, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1991, p6). Nations must have a "measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas" (Smith, 1991, p11). Davis's vision of the Irish nation was an inclusive community which promoted tolerance, patriotic action, emphasised a common culture and political liberty. He hoped that greater cultural awareness would increase support for political independence and that it would be a catalyst for national regeneration. He "preached the gospel of independence through cultural unity" (Mays, 2005, p128). Culture could become a defining feature of national identity; "it would engender emotional attachment to the nation" (English, 2006, p143). Davis's desire to create a cultural nation was influenced by a number of factors including his disillusionment following the banned Clontarf monster meeting, a reaction against O'Connell's sectarian nationalism and his claims that "Protestantism would not survive the Repeal by ten years", the possibility of a Catholic ascendancy replacing the Protestant variety and English rule in Ireland (Boyce, 2005, pp84- 85). Davis's fear of a Catholic ascendancy encouraged him to look outside politics alone to find a solution to Ireland's problems. He hoped that the redemptive idea of culture would

mask the tensions created by religious sectarianism, class conflict and race; it would promote patriotic action and create a nation.

As outlined in Chapter 1 his views on cultural nationalism and the provision of a cultural education were influenced by German romanticism and especially by the ideas of Fichte and Herder. Like the German romantics Davis believed that a cultural awakening was necessary to create a nation which could be a stepping stone towards political independence. Every aspect of the Irish cultural experience was employed by him to support the conviction that Ireland was a separate nation (Buckley, 1980, p125). Similar to Herder he argued that the Irish nation was a spiritual essence embodied in its language, literature, customs, arts (Mays, 2005, p129); it was not defined by race, class or creed. He encouraged the people to demonstrate their unique talents through cultural projects. He considered the promotion of Irish culture and the advancement of nationality to be the same – both would create Irishmen of "intensely Irish character" and nationality would be advanced and developed by cultural expression. The preface of *The Voice of the Nation,* a successful publication which contained a number of the more national articles in *The Nation,* clearly outlines Davis's view that nationality and the promotion of Irish culture were inextricably linked:

> Nationality is no longer an unmeaning or despised name. It is welcomed by the highest ranks, it is the inspiration of the bold, and the hope of the people. It is the summary name for many things. It seeks a literature made by Irishmen, and coloured by our scenery, manners and character. It desires to see art applied to express Irish thoughts and belief. It would make our music sound in every parish at twilight, our pictures sprinkle the walls of every house, and our poetry and history sit at every hearth (Davis, 1844, preface).

Similar to Herder, Davis's concept of cultural nationalism promoted civic values and moral integrity. Irish virtue stood opposed to English materialism; and he deplored English progress "of a sordid, unspiritual type". He believed that there was a threat to Irish heritage from mechanical civilisation. In an article entitled *The Commercial History of Ireland,* he claimed that the factory system was "a poison to virtue and

happiness" (*The Nation*, 2 December 1843). He presented a romantic image of Irish peasants–they possessed "the natural elements of the highest moral and intellectual character" (Davis cited in Duffy, 1896, p83); they were generous, faithful, possessed of a pure and noble spirit; but he feared that they would fall victim to "the creed" which promoted greed and self-interest (Boyce, 1995).

He hoped that by focusing on cultural differences between the superior Gaelic culture and the inferior English that he would unite the Irish people. His view of English culture was influenced by England's historical record of oppression in Ireland; he associated Englishness with oppression, avarice and bigotry (*The Nation*, 15 July 1843). However, those with strong English allegiances would have viewed a cultural barrier between the Irish and the English as provocative; Conservatives and Unionists who favoured both the political and cultural connection with England would have felt isolated by Davis's negative representation of English culture rather than attracted to the principle of nationality which promoted reconciliation.

Davis appreciated that an education in Irish culture could form "national mentalities" (Baycroft, 2004); and it is likely that his reading of Herder and Fichte influenced his thinking on how a cultural education could create a nation. Herder believed that if nations were to be self-governed that education "would be the anchor of their identity" (Eggel, Liebich, Mancini-Griffoli, 2007, p69). Education was a vehicle to effect the transmission of a cultural heritage from one generation to the next; it was the means of ensuring the transfer of historical consciousness of the people in question (Wiborg, 2000, p240). He placed greater emphasis on developing the character of a person rather than developing the intellect; and he suggested that the content of the curriculum should underpin and support "existing national sentiments in a person" (Wiborg, 2000, p240; Stöter, 1998, p174). Fichte also appealed to the German people to build a new nation through a national education. He suggested that education must develop moral citizens who would work to promote the good of the whole community; it should also generate a "spirit" which was patriotic in nature:

> That spirit which is to be produced includes the higher love of fatherland…. and from that love there spring of themselves the courageous defender of his country and the peaceful and honest citizen (Fichte cited in Kelly, 1968, p134).

Similar to both Herder and Fichte, Davis asserted the necessity of promoting and rediscovering national character which emphasised a nation's unique way of "thinking, acting and communicating" (Smith, 1991, p75). In a more revealing phrase he outlined how he hoped an education in Irish culture would impact on the people: "it would thus create a race of men full of a more intensely Irish character and knowledge, and to that race it would give Ireland" (Davis, 1844, preface).

Davis believed that a cultural education was necessary to create self-reliant, knowledgeable Irishmen who would be good patriots. If the people engaged in cultural projects it would be further evidence that "the spirit of improvement" was widely diffused throughout the nation, that the intellect of the people was aroused and that they had developed the principle of self-reliance (*The Nation*, 27 May 1843). He insisted that each individual must contribute to ensure that cultural projects were a success; each had a role to play in creating a nation and in securing liberty. In an article entitled *A Years Work*, Davis highlighted the significance of the smallest patriotic deed:

> he who saves an air, a relic of antiquity, a tradition, an old custom from loss – he who makes a temperance band play or a friend sing an Irish, instead of a foreign tune – who gives or teaches a book on Ireland, or its literature, or history, instead of on England or the English … or helps in the least our knowledge, commerce and respectability, does an act which tends to prepare and secure self-government and prosperity–does his duty. And does what half of us must do, or Ireland cannot be a nation (*The Nation*, 14 October 1843).

Davis would not only encourage individuals to educate themselves but he embraced the role of teacher of the nation. He was conscious of the need to inculcate national ideals through a public education system (Smith, 1991). Together with his Young

Ireland colleagues, Davis developed a curriculum in cultural education in the columns of *The Nation* and in the *Library of Ireland*, a series of books on national subjects. The next section examines the key elements of that curriculum.

## 6.2 Davis's Cultural Education

### 6.2.1 National Art

National art is art which is distinctive to a particular nation or region. In early nineteenth century there was a dearth of national art primarily because national art was not in demand (Barrett, 1975, pp407-408); in order to make a living many artists were attracted to more profitable fields of activity especially in London. Davis's views on the purpose of national art were similar to Herder's analysis of the *Volk*, that "art should be the expression and celebration of a nation's aspirations, the product and protector of its identity" (Sheehan, 1989, p173). Davis believed that nationalistic art was capable of arousing national sentiment. Since the Irish possessed little knowledge of their history he claimed that a national art must be development to educate the people about their past and their unique identity. In an article in *The Nation* entitled *National Art*, 2 December 1843, he outlined his thoughts on the subject. He perceived painting as a means of educating the young about national heroes who had distinguished themselves as leaders of men. It would also record national history and provide a snapshot of society from another time.

> It would preserve for us faces we worshipped, and the forms of men who led and instructed us. It would remind us, and teach our children, not only how these men looked, but, to some extent, what they were… It would carry down a pictorial history of our houses, arts, costume, and manners to other times… (*The Nation*, 2 December 1843).

Davis considered painting to be an excellent register of facts; it was, in his view, superior to writing. He was conscious of the powerful visual impact that a work of art had on the mind and described the education process as visual learning: "as a depicter of actual scenery, art is biography, history, and topography, taught through the eye" (*The Nation*, 2 December 1843). In frustration he questioned why this effective medium of instruction was underutilised and neglected. He blamed the

scarcity of "faithful artists" which was a reference to the number of Irish born artists who emigrated to develop their talents in England. It is a fact that many of Ireland's greatest artists emigrated including James Barry[3] and Samuel Forde[4] and some contemporary names included–Maclise[5], Hogan[6] and Mulready[7]. Davis lamented the fact that their works were seldom done for Ireland and were not known in it. During the 1840s there were few patrons of the art in Ireland so artists were obliged to emigrate to find work (Boylan, 1988, p160). Davis claimed that it was a national tragedy that Irish painters paint foreign men and scenes and that the Irish people "do not see, possess, nor receive knowledge from their works". It was with regret that he acknowledged that the works of Barry were mostly abroad and those of Forde were unseen and unknown (*The Nation,* 2 December 1843).

He considered it a national imperative that the works of Ireland's greatest artists, living and dead, should be collected and published and he insisted that the people should be educated about them. If the people had access to national art it would elevate the national mind as well as the national character:

> To create a mass of great pictures, statues, and buildings, is of the same sort of enoblement to a people as to create great poems or histories, or make great codes or win great battles… (*The Nation,* 2 December 1843).

[3] James Barry (1741 – 1806); born in Cork; lived in Italy and England ; professor of painting to the Royal Academy in London; expelled from this position in 1799; famous works of art include "St Patrick Baptising the King of Cashel", "Adam and Eve" and "The Culture and Progress of Human Knowledge".

[4] Samuel Forde (1805 – 1828); born in Cork; a neo-classical painter who lived and worked in London for most of his career; famous works of art include "The Vision of Tragedy" "The Fall of the Rebel Angels".

[5] Daniel Maclise (1806 – 1870); born in Cork; portrait artist; he treated Irish subjects such as "Snap Apple" and provided book illustrations of Irish subjects; developed a form of history painting; works include "Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife" and two giant murals for the Houses of Parliament, London – "The Death of Nelson" and "The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher".

[6] John Hogan (1800 – 1858); born in Tallow, Co Waterford; sculptor; carved twenty seven statues of saints for the North Chapel Cork; lived in Rome from 1825 -1849; returned to Ireland to deal with clients; works include the memorial to Bishop James Warren Doyle and full length figures of William Crawford, Thomas Drummond, Daniel O' Connell and Thomas Davis.

[7] William Mulready (1786 -1863); artist and illustrator; born in Ennis, Co Clare; trained at the Royal Academy School, London; "The Butterfly's Ball and Grasshopper's Feast" and "The Peacock's At Home" were based on Mulready's drawings.

Therefore, the foundation of a National Art was, he believed, "essential to our civilisation and renown". Another way to promote the high distinction of the nation through its art was by educating students and by rewarding artists. A new generation of artists should be educated as illustrators and composers so that they would represent the life of the Irish nation; he hoped that through their work a national spirit would be created. He acknowledged that there were art schools in Dublin and Cork but he questioned why other schools had not developed in regional towns and why there was no gallery of Irish pictures in Ireland.

He advised painters on how to develop their talents and on the method they should apply to their work. According to Davis, painters should undertake years of study to cultivate their talents; they should study "men's character, dress, and deeds, to make them and their acts come as in a vision" before them. When the design was mastered only then should they attempt to realise the vision on canvas. Davis stated that great attention should be paid to accuracy in artists' drawing, shading and colouring. In an article entitled *National Art – Gallery of Casts*, 23 December 1843, Davis suggested that students should never draw from a flat surface; they would learn nothing from copying the lines of another man and their individual style would benefit from drawing inanimate objects such as tables, chairs, cabins etc. True to his Romantic influences including Wordsworth, Davis encouraged students to look to nature for material; at the first stage of learning they should practise drawing the sea, sky and the earth. They should study works of art to develop a mature style and each stage should be examined from "the first sketches to the finished picture" (*The Nation*, 23 December 1843). He encouraged students to develop an individual style.

Davis described art as a creation; it has resources beyond the actual. In a tone of appreciation of how art represents the actual in an idealistic way, he stated that art was "indefinitely powerful. The Apollo is more than noble, and the Hercules mightier than man" (*The Nation*, 2 December 1843). Works of art are creations of the artist and are true to "their laws of being"; they possess their own artistic consistency and do not "require consistency to the nature of us". Davis understood

that art, like dramatic history, has an effect on the audience which is both uplifting and enduring - "the observer feels his whole frame enlarged".

Davis appreciated the good work of the Art-Union, an education institute which supported artists and promoted their work. It had dispersed a fine print of Irish pictures through the countryside and he prompted them to pursue this method with more effort. He praised the Art-Union for arousing the interest of the people and for instructing thousands and he also credited it for trying to support native artists who would otherwise have starved or emigrated. Nonetheless, he believed that it could do more. The Union should establish corresponding committees in the regional towns to preserve, refurbish old schools of art and to establish new ones as well as developing art and historical libraries in these locations. He hoped that with increased support for the Union a school of eminent Irish artists would be created "to illustrate their country's history and character and to associate their fame with hers" (*The Nation*, 27 April 1844).

The fact that there was a lack of resources devoted to developing art especially in Dublin also concerned Davis. An art student who wanted to learn about anatomy could only do so at the same expense as a surgical student. The absence of a gallery or a museum or works of art, suitable for drawing and sketching was also a disadvantage. In response to this assertion a member of the Royal Hibernian Academy, George Mulvany, wrote to the editor of *The Nation* on 30 December 1843 claiming that Davis's statement was inaccurate. The Royal Hibernian Society was in existence for twenty years and its purpose was to educate students in the arts of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. Mulvany considered Davis's claims about a lack of resources to be overly pessimistic. The Society, he insisted, possessed a living model school and a library and some instruction was provided in anatomy. However, he acknowledged that there was a lack of funding which limited the Society's capacity to extend its lecture course; and he believed that, though the annual exhibitions were useful to promote its work, more needed to be done (*The Nation*, 30 December 1843). Mulvany also criticised Davis for underestimating the

role of the Schools of Art in the Royal Dublin Society which was in existence for over sixty years. He reminded Davis that "most of the distinguished artists of Ireland acquired at least the rudiments of their art" in these schools (*The Nation*, 30 December 1843).

On 6 January 1844, an article in *The Nation* most likely by Davis, who adopted the pseudonym Cormegen, tried to undermine Mulvany's assertion that the Royal Hibernian Academy was a School of Art. In an attempt to outwit Mulvany, Cormegen introduced a second meaning of the term School of Art which was not referred to in Davis's 23rd December article; Cormagen shifted the focus from resources and questioned whether a national artistic style existed. He also argued that the Royal Hibernian Academy was not a School of Art because it failed to provide "a complete artistic education" (*The Nation*, 6 January 1844). The argument surrounding the term was a pedantic one but it served to highlight some of the deficiencies of the Academy: lectures were not provided on subjects connected to the arts including history, anatomy, antiques and perspective; the library was only open for three hours one day each week; and Davis advised the Academy to address these shortcomings and to ensure that academic posts were filled in a fair and impartial way.

He hoped that a national art gallery would be established to house the artistic works of Irishmen. It pleased him that a society for the formation of a gallery of casts had been founded in Dublin, and that its members were from every rank, class, creed and politics. He believed that when the casts were collected and a gallery procured the public should be admitted to view the pieces and artists could study them without charge. But in order to promote national art he argued that other galleries and museums must be founded. He suggested that TCD could establish a gallery and a museum "containing casts of all the ancient statues, models of their buildings, civil and military, and a collection of their implements of art, trade, and domestic life" (*The Nation*, 23 December 1843).

He also noted that the Repeal Association was offering prizes for pictures and sculptures of Irish historical subjects. The Association had, in his view, "taken its proper place as the patron of nationality in art" (*The Nation*, 2 December 1843). Davis tried to encourage artists to enter the competition; he advised them to note that if they entered the competition their art pieces would remain their property and he appealed to their desire for success and status by encouraging them not to "be indifferent to the popularity and fame of success on national subjects". He invited non-repealers to enter the competition and he urged repealers to apply principles of justice and conciliation to all art entries. If that occurred it would give the impression that developing Irish art or contributing to any national project should not be overlooked because of political differences.

In the 29 July 1843 edition of *The Nation*, Davis wrote a short article entitled, *Hints for Irish Historical Paintings*, which set out a list of national subjects together with the sources that should be researched by the artists to familiarise themselves with the subject to ensure that representations of costume, arms, posture and appearance were exact. Through this article he wanted to influence and inspire national artists to paint national subjects. He recommended seventy six subjects taken from Irish history and they ranged from the landing of the Milesians in Ancient Ireland down through the ages to O'Connell's Ireland of the 1840s. Davis's list was selective and, in general, excluded controversial subjects such as the 1641 rebellion and the 1798 rebellion. He endeavoured to transform historical personalities into national heroes and to reinterpret historical events as significant events in the history of the nation. Some examples from his list of "Hints" include: St Patrick brought before the druids at Tara, The first landing of the Danes, Hugh O'Neill victor in single combat at Beal an Atha Buidhe, Fontenoy, Tone's first Society, O'Connell speaking in a Munster Chapel, Conciliation–Orange and Green. A number of artists who were sympathetic to Davis's ideals created some of the paintings suggested by him; Joseph Partick Haverty painted "Father Matthew receiving a repentant Pledge Breaker", and "O'Connell and his contemporaries: the Clare Election of 1828"; Maclise's final painting "The Earls of Ormond and Desmond" was most likely based on Davis's

suggestion "Kildare on the necks of the Butlers" and Henry MacManus painted "Reading *The Nation*" (Turpin, 1990, p240). The fact that some of Davis's contemporaries were willing to act on his suggestion to create national art is an indication of how his national vision was respected by his fellow Irishmen.

### 6.2.2 Irish Literature

Another aspect of Irish culture which Davis and his colleagues invested a considerable amount of effort trying both to create and to promote was Irish literature; it was another effective means of educating the people about creating a nation. Literature is suitable for the "evocation of national phenomena and the expression of national consciousness" (Duddy, 2003, p15). Writing about the German nation, Seeba argued that literature had to merely evoke, rather than reflect, the "happy and significant unity" of the nation (Seeba, 1994, p362). Fichte believed that the existence of a German literature was essential to the preservation of the German nation. He claimed that Germany was "held together as a common whole almost solely by the instrumentality of the man of letters, by speech and writing" (Fichte cited in Kelly, 1968, p185). Without language and literature the nation would not survive. Davis would have concurred with these sentiments. He believed that a national literature was a means of expressing national identity and it would encourage the people to imagine that they were part of a nation. In his view, a national literature should define the unique qualities of the Irish character and the Irish way of life; it should also help to restore the cultural self confidence of the people (Kiberd, 1996). Just as the development of Irish history and national art helped to de-anglicise the Irish mind the creation of a national literature would further this process. Davis and Young Ireland "sought to make Irish literature subordinate to Irish nationalism" (Boyce, 1995, p160).

> A national literature should be stamped with the popular idiom, inspired by patriotism, breathing of the climate and scenery, and informed of the history and manners of the people *(The Nation*, 1 October 1843).

There was a lack of literature on national subjects available to the public and Davis feared that the appetite for information that existed amongst the middle classes

would be filled by poor quality English literature which was anti-national. That which was available was of a poor condescending quality. In an article entitled *The Library of Ireland* which appeared in *The Nation* on 28 June 1845, Davis set out his thoughts on the type of literature available to the Irish. He considered the biography of *Redmond O' Hanlon, the Raparee* to be partial; he was also unimpressed by the *Battle of Aughrim* whose author he described in a racist, condescending manner as "some Alsatian Williamite"; *Moll Flanders* was too imperial, and he believed that some European literature - *Don Belianis,* and *The Seven Champions* were "classics of tipsy Ireland" (*The Nation*, 28 June 1845). Davis insisted that during the Catholic Emancipation campaign this "indecent trash" dried up and the quality of literature became more human and serious. He was particularly impressed by the biographies of popular heroes including those of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Robert Emmet and he welcomed the quality of songs that were written during the period of Catholic agitation including "the Granu Wails, and Shan-van-Vochts" (*The Nation*, 28 June 1845).

Despite the influence of utilitarianism on his mindset he questioned whether British utilitarian literature would benefit the Irish mind. Recent improvements in communication with England, the development of steam ships and railways led to a situation where tracts, periodicals and "the whole horde of Benthamy rushed in". He found it difficult to comprehend the motives behind dissemination of useless information that emerged from the "Useful Knowledge Society". There was a preoccupation with statistics and mathematics compiled for the English industrial economy which did not have a meaningful application in Ireland. In his opinion the utility of this knowledge was questionable and this was especially true of a moral series which was issued "to teach people how they should converse at meals–how to choose their wives, masters and servants by phrenological developments, and how to live happily" (*The Nation*, 28 June 1845).

Davis detailed some of the insidious effects of this foreign literature: he believed that some of the Irish were converts to utilitarianism; the Irish press was becoming

more imperial in tone; nationality was called a vulgar superstition and the books in national schools were merely functional and anti-national. He feared that these influences would undermine the intellectual potential of the Irish people and they would accelerate the Anglicisation of the Irish mind. Davis suggested that the superior Irish mindset would be compromised by the negative influences of foreign literature and especially English literature. The manner in which he described the region of Lancashire reflected his racist assumptions - he stated: "Between all these influences, Ireland promised to become a farm for Lancashire, with the wisdom and moral rank of that district, without its wealth" (*The Nation*, 28 June 1845). This view was motivated by a desire to promote Irish culture at the expense of English culture. The revival of the repeal campaign, he argued, delivered Ireland from this threatening reality and central to its deliverance was the rapid development of a national literature. With relief, Davis argued that the press was now "Irish in subjects, style and purpose"; and he stated that a national poetry had developed and the National Schools had prepared their students for study of national politics and history (*The Nation*, 28 June 1845). The latter assertion was an acknowledgement that students' literacy levels had improved, thus providing them with the skills necessary to read literature on these subjects.

Despite Davis's criticisms of anti-national literature much of the literary work of the early nineteenth century "shows a distinctively Irish character" (Beckett, 1981, p102). The Irish middle classes responded to the loss of Irish political identity which resulted from the Act of Union; a number of writers made a conscious effort to give literary expression to Irish cultural identity including Thomas Moore, Gerald Griffin, John Banim and Lady Morgan. Anglo-Irish fiction was written primarily for an English audience "to whom Ireland is an exotic place, an abroad" (Leerssen, 1990, p256). There was an effort to "make Irish characters attractive, authentic and understandable" to win over the audience (Fegan, 2004, p38). Authors sought to explain the realities of Irish life to an English audience and they used non-Irish characters to do this – examples include Lady Morgan's *Wild Irish Girl* and

Maturin's *Wild Irish Boy*. It would be reasonable to assume that Davis would have welcomed this literature which was, in general, sympathetic to the Irish.

Davis acknowledged that a national literature was developing which was "admirable and costly"; referring to the literature available to the wealthy Davis stated that they were receiving a literature from George Petrie, John O' Donovan, Samuel Ferguson, Joseph Lefanu and the *University Magazine*. Ferguson contributed poems and articles to leading periodicals including *The Penny Journal* and the *Dublin University Magazine* where he "turned the attention of students to national subjects" despite the fact that the Magazine's audience was almost exclusively among the gentry and the Protestant clergy (Duffy, 1884, p27). Duffy claimed that conservative Protestants like Ferguson, Le Fanu and Isaac Butt were influenced by the new nationalist sentiment which Davis and *The Nation* had awakened; both Le Fanu and Butt wrote historical romances which presented "the hereditary feuds of Catholics and Protestants in a juster light to their posterity"(Duffy, 1884, p185). The powerful poem written by Ferguson on the death of Davis lends credibility to Duffy's claim that Ferguson was impressed by Davis's devotion to his country:

> Oh brave young men, my love my pride, my promise,
> `Tis on you my hopes are set,
> In manliness, in kindliness, in justice,
> To make Ireland a nation yet.
> Self-respecting, self-relying, self-advancing
> In union, or in severance, free and strong –
> And if God grant this, then under God, to Thomas Davis
> Let the greater praise belong! (Ferguson, *Dublin University Magazine*, 1847, pp190–99)

The literate people of moderate means were reliant on newspapers and the occasional serial to provide them with an education in national literature. Davis was concerned that members of this class who had "a taste for higher studies" had only "a few scattered works within their reach"; and it was also regrettable that those who were not content with this material were "driven to foreign studies and exposed to alien influence"(*The Nation* 28 June 1845). He hoped that a native literature would

focus their minds on Ireland; it would "teach truth where falsehood was the daily food". Any literature that was pro-Irish fitted into his definition of truth whereas a falsehood referred to literature which damaged the national self-image. A national literature would also give people noble thoughts about themselves and their country; after all, it was not just literature the people wanted–it was the literature of Ireland (*The Nation*, 15 March 1845).

For too long the Irish people looked to England for an estimate of themselves and they discovered a negative self-image in English literature and print media. Elements of the British press espoused a negative stereotype of the Irish. *The Times* newspaper claimed that the Irish were responsible for "their poverty and lack of capital" because of deficiencies in their character including ignorance, adherence to superstition, laziness, dependence on alcohol and a tendency to engage in violent behaviour. According to *Punch* the Irish were "the missing link between the gorilla and the negro" (Lebow, 1976, pp39-40). Another negative image of the Irish was the stage Irishmen depicted by authors such as Charles Lever; he received "contemptuous criticism" in *The Nation* for the Young Irelanders rejected "his drunken squires and riotous dragoons as types of Irish character (Duffy, 1884, p185). Stage Irishmen were, according to Carleton, "the invention….. of a man who had sold himself and his nation's repute to English taste for English gold" (Brown, 1972, p66). Davis was concerned by the depiction of the Irish as "an inferior people incapable of self-help and therefore incapable of governing themselves" (Curtis, 1997, p15). In his prose writing he constantly encouraged the people to obey the law and to display their suitability for self-government. He advised his readers not to depend on the English for self-understanding or accurate national knowledge but to "think for ourselves, and of ourselves, in a less ignominious way".

Davis's article, 28 June 1845, on the creation of a national literature to educate the people about nationality ended with a famous quotation which was designed to encourage the people to engage in great deeds and to take inspiration from the past.

His readers were reminded of the authenticity of Irish identity, of Ireland's contribution to European civilisation and of Ireland's historical pedigree:

> This country of ours is no sand bank, thrown up by some recent caprice of earth. It is an ancient land, honoured in the archives of civilisation, traceable into antiquity by its piety, its valour, and its suffering. Every great European race has sent its streams to the river of Irish mind. Long wars, vast organisations, subtle codes, beacon crimes, leading virtues, and self-mighty men were here. If we live influenced by wind, and sun, and tree, and not by the passions and deeds of the past, we are a thriftless and a hopeless people (*The Nation*, 28 June 1845).

Only a national literature would help to shape a national mentality which was necessary for the creation of patriotic Irish citizens. Therefore, it was essential that the people had access to quality Irish literature at an affordable price. The Irish were lacking a worthwhile native literature and Dillon, one of the founding members of *The Nation*, had no doubt who was to blame for this scandal–the barbarity of England. He suggested that those who wanted to create a literature should look to a people "whose feelings, character and passions, approach most nearly to our own and adopt their literature" (*The Nation*, 22 October 1842). But just in case they selected an unworthy literature, Dillon nominated French literature as being best adopted to the character of the Irish people for, in his view, the French shared with the Irish sufficient prejudices and passions. Fearing negative influences, Davis was cautious about recommending non-national literature to the people. He believed that there was no substitute for a national literature written by Irishmen for Irishmen.

In summary, Davis insisted that a national literature would counteract the negative influences of prejudiced literature containing anti-Irish sentiment; it would improve the self-esteem and confidence of the people; it would give them role models to imitate; it would remind them of their historical traditions and of their unique culture. Effectively it would help to restore national pride and provide the people with a sense of what they were capable of. These factors motivated Davis and Duffy to develop the *Library of Ireland* series.

### 6.2.3 The Library of Ireland

*The Library of Ireland* series was another medium exploited by the Young Irelanders to educate the people about their country. The historical personalities and national events examined in this series were carefully selected to arouse national sentiment. This series was written with the intention of creating a canon of Irish literature – a literature which Irishmen should read to claim their identity; to be a true Irishman was to espouse the values and principles represented in these "sacred" national texts. Davis outlined his expectations for the *Library of Ireland*:

> To give to the country a National Library, exact enough for the wisest, high enough for the purest, and cheap enough for all readers, appears the object of "The Library of Ireland" (*The Nation*, 28 June 1845).

Davis set out the subjects that he hoped would be researched and written for this series. *A History of the Volunteers* was the first volume written by Mac Nevin. Davis suggested that work should begin on a number of historical personalities including Memoirs of Hugh O'Neill, a biography of Wolfe Tone, of Owen Roe and of Grattan. He also suggested work should begin on collections of Irish ballads and songs. The members of Young Ireland took up this project. Duffy compiled the second volume entitled, *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland*; Father Meehan wrote the *Confederation of Kilkenny*; Davis edited *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Philpot Curran* and *The Spirit of the Nation* was a selection of poems and songs from *The Nation.* An additional volume was issued every month for a period of two years. These books helped to educate the average Irishman about his national history, heritage and culture; they were also designed to inspire future generations to continue on the path of research. While some of the books contained "hasty generalisations and ill-digested facts" the writers, in the words of Duffy, "opened a mine shut up for two centuries and a half, and taught their successors where the precious ore might be found" (Duffy, 1892, p245).

Davis made a significant contribution to the *Library of Ireland* series. *The Spirit of the Nation* contained many of his ballads and poems originally published in *The*

*Nation* – some of these were examined in the previous chapter; a number of his political articles from *The Nation* were published in *The Voice of the Nation* and *The Speeches of Right Honourable Philpot Curran* was a collection of Curran's speeches edited by Davis.

In the preface to *The Voice of the Nation*, Davis outlined the unambiguous purpose of *The Nation* newspaper as being "less as a paper of news than of education" (Davis, 1844, preface). The aim of this volume was to continue the process of an education on national issues and to preach "the gospel of nationality". In Davis's words: "In domestic and foreign policy, in agitation and trade, in art and literature, in season and out of season, we urged it, explained it, guarded it". He readily acknowledged that the literary merits of this volume were moderate but he was certain that it contained "an honest assertion of those national principles" which he believed would eventually be received by all, and "end in making Ireland a Nation" (Davis, 1844, preface).

*The Voice of the Nation* contains sixty articles: Duffy wrote eighteen articles which addressed a variety of issues including the right of the landlord, a critique of street ballads, reading rooms and popular education and public monuments. O'Neill Daunt penned two articles on repeal and Mac Nevin wrote on matters of Protestant interest. But the majority of articles, twenty six in all, were written by Davis; most of them were designed to provide a political education to the Irish people - the majority focused on Ireland's negative experience as a British colony and especially on the depressing effects of the Union on the Irish character, Irish imagination and Irish trade. He presented arguments in favour of repeal and outlined the potential benefits of independence.

Five articles focused on foreign policy issues encouraging Ireland to maintain good relations with former allies France and Spain, to cultivate support for repeal in America and to educate the people on how other countries won liberty. In an article entitled *A Year's Work* he sent a strong message to the Liberal press about the

misinformation propagated to the Irish people on matters of foreign policy. He accused the press of poaching and summarising the foreign politics of the London Press and presenting it as Irish news. This was not suitable intellectual material for his chosen people who were striving for independence. He warned that the Irish would not be satisfied with "second-hand knowledge or servile sentiments" (*The Nation*, 1 October 1843).

Davis assumed the role of polemicist on foreign policy matters; the fact that the material was national and relevant to Ireland's future was sufficient reason to include it as national literature. He argued that Ireland should pursue an independent foreign policy from that of England. It was wrong that Ireland endorsed every "villainy perpetrated by England" and howled over "every licking she got"; it was, in his view, "miserable stupidity… that we were ready to fight all England's battles, no matter against whom, or in what cause". Old friends of Ireland including France and America were mocked and insulted; this practice was anti-national and misrepresented the Irish position. He suggested that Irish nationalists should have a foreign policy based on support of all struggling nationalities including the Afghans and the Indians (*The Nation* 7 January 1843; Lynch, 2007, p90). Davis insisted that the Irish must hear from sound sources and news about France, America, India, Germany and Norway must be presented in an Irish tone and not an English tone. The people must find "that the language of independence suited to this country's dignity is observed" (*The Nation*, 1 October 1843).

In the *The Voice from America,* Davis encouraged the Irish to look to Canada for inspiration and guidance. He provided readers with a short history of the Canadian revolution with the intention of instructing them on the struggle endured by that country to win independence. He informed readers that "England's strength is Canada's ruin–England's weakness is Canada's victory" (*The Nation*, 12 November 1842). Davis hoped that Irish nationalists would learn from the Canadian experience and act when England was weakest. He urged Irishmen to "mark, learn and digest it!". In another article entitled *Foreign Policy and Foreign Information* he asked

Irishmen to note how states like Belgium and Holland contained different sects and were capable of granting "full liberty of conscience"; he held up America, Hungary and Switzerland as examples of countries where different languages, creeds, and races flourish side by side – while he acknowledged that England was the "real well of the bitter woes of Ireland" he insisted that Irish people could learn from these countries (*The Nation*, 22 April 1843).

On the 4 January 1845, *The Nation* contained reviews of the *Voice of the Nation*. Some newspapers acknowledged its role in providing a political education others emphasised the nationalistic content of the articles. The *London Morning Advertiser* review of the collection focused on the articles relating to repeal; it stated that the demand for self-government was not to separate Ireland from England but to make "the union of the two countries solid and secure" (*The Nation* 4 January 1845). This was an optimistic interpretation of the effects of repeal but it did acknowledge that the establishment of an Irish parliament might improve relations between the two countries. The *Drogheda Argus* acknowledged that the articles provided a political education: they "contain good practical teaching – forming, in fact, a book of political lessons plainly and earnestly conveyed". The *Southern Reporter* concurred with this view by insisting that readers of this collection would be imbued with "sound political knowledge" (*The Nation*, 4 January 1845). Additional reviews were contained in *The Nation* on the 27 April 1844. The *Leeds Times* insisted that *The Nation's* efforts to "make the youth of Ireland a reading and a thinking race" cannot fail to be beneficial whether "the result be 'nationality' or not". The *Waterford Chronicle* insisted that the national articles emphasised that *The Nation* was a paper of instruction because it provided "a comprehensive introduction to Irish books–Irish science–Irish literature–Irish art" (*The Nation*, 27 April 1844).

Davis made another significant contribution to the *Library of Ireland* series by editing and publishing *The Speeches of The Right Honourable John Philpot Curran*. It contained six of Curran's bar speeches and thirty three parliamentary speeches. In the preface to the 1865 edition, Davis outlined why he declined to write a biography

and instead chose to present a selection of Curran's speeches. He hoped "to communicate to the reader some of the minute interest felt by a contemporary, and to supply a better illustration of Curran's march through life, than could be given in a short memoir" (Davis, 1865, xv). He also noted a weakness in earlier biographies which placed an excessive emphasis on the "pleasant puerilities" of Curran's style especially his liberal use of puns and epigrams. For those, like Davis, who looked to Curran for intellectual guidance, brotherly spirit and instruction "the puns are rubbish and the jokes chaff" (Davis, 1865, xv).

Davis edited Curran's speeches with the clear aim of providing the people with a political education. Occasionally, in the memoir, Davis directed the reader to study the arguments presented in a particular speech because they concurred with his own political beliefs. Davis used the speeches as an instrument of propaganda to politicise his readers; he outlined Curran's opinion on a range of political issues: his opposition to the act of Union, his support for religious tolerance, his desire for unity, his desire for political independence and his support for the freedom of the press. Davis understood that by introducing his readers to the views of an eminent Irishman it would serve to add support to his political ideas.

Davis wanted his readers to see Curran as a national role model. By reminding readers that Curran was self-taught, Davis hoped to inspire his readers to be self-reliant and to engage in self-education. Like Curran he hoped that readers would display a willingness to study, to reflect on knowledge and to develop their own thoughts. Davis was impressed by the manner in which Curran used knowledge to advocate justice and equality and especially by his judicious selection of knowledge when constructing a legal argument. When Curran was called to the bar, in Davis's opinion, he was an earnest and self-reliant man, able to judge character and use knowledge astutely.

Davis considered Curran's speeches suitable material for training the moral character of citizens. He emphasised Curran's virtues including an unflinching

desire for justice and equality. Davis revealed the details of a case where Curran appeared as voluntary counsel for a Catholic priest, Father Neale, against Lord Doneraile, a Protestant nobleman. The latter favoured a girl whose brother was censured by the bishop. When Doneraile requested that the censure be withdrawn the local priest refused and was subsequently intimidated and beaten by the Lord and his men. Davis explained that no one would touch the case and that Curran "did all that a mortal could do, and more than any lawyer now or then would" (Davis, 1865, xvii). He highlighted the baseness of Lord Doneraile and he exposed the weaknesses in the story provided by Doneraile's witnesses. Furthermore, Curran appealed to the jury "as virtuous men" and they gave a verdict for Father Neale.

Davis admired Curran's sense of patriotism and in particular his role as advocate for the leaders of the United Irishmen. Curran spent his best years serving his country (Moore, 1959, p57); and Davis presented him as the personification of justice and liberty against English oppression. In the collection, he included the speeches that Curran made to defend the reputations of William Orr, Henry Sheares, Oliver Bond and Napper Tandy. Davis argued that Curran approached his task "inspired by love, mercy, justice, and genius" (Davis, 1865, xxiv). These men were offered his support in a time of danger; and Davis insisted that though many of those he pleaded for were slaughtered his efforts were not in vain; "Did he not convert many a shaken conscience– sustain many a frightened soul? Did he not keep the life of genius if not of hope in the country?" Davis praised Curran's speeches less for their eloquence than "as examples of patriotism and undying exhortations to justice and liberty" (Davis, 1865, xxv). He identified Curran with the nation; as a national hero Curran became the embodiment of the "spirit of the nation" (Ryder, 1993).

In the view of one commentator the *Library of Ireland* series provided the people with a literature about Ireland which emphasised patriotic endeavour, civic duty and a "homogenised representation of national identity" (Ryder, 1993, p70). Davis and the Young Irelanders were conscious of using different methods of transmission to assist the audience to internalise or comprehend the national ideology (Shalan,

2002). While his poetry in *The Spirit of the Nation* appealed to the emotions, Davis used rhetorical language combined with reasoned arguments to appeal to readers of *The Voice of the Nation* and *The Speeches of The Right Honourable John Philpot Curran*.

In summary, with the exception of *The Speeches of The Right Honourable John Philpot Curran* Davis's contribution to the *Library of Ireland* series reflects the work of Davis the political journalist. Most of songs in *The Spirit of the Nation* and the articles in the *Voice of the Nation* were written to a journalist's deadline for *The Nation*; and this might help to explain why his prose style was direct, occasionally rushed, though generally persuasive. Nevertheless, he wrote for the purpose of providing the Irish people with a political education. In his role as teacher and guide of the nation he urged them to engage in a process of self-improvement - to educate themselves about the resources and potential of their country, to unite for political progress and to display the characteristics of freemen - temperance, organisation, patience and perseverance. Some of his articles contained propaganda to elevate the Irish character and to demonise things English and others engaged in polemics to advance the cause of repeal and an independent foreign policy. The output of Davis the journalist was included as national literature to imbue the reader with patriotic sentiment, to explain repeal policy, to ennoble the Irish character and to inform the people of what must be done to achieve liberty.

### 6.2.4 The Irish Language

In 1847, two years after the death of Davis, Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian nationalist, denied that the Irish possessed a national language which he considered to be an essential element of nationhood (Jenkins, 2006, p48). Davis would have rejected this argument. He viewed the Irish language as the ultimate characteristic of Irishness and as an essential barrier against the process of Anglicisation. His aim to build a nation on a language that was in decline was highly ambitious, if not unrealistic, given that the people were rejecting it in large numbers. The Irish language was spoken by less than half the people but was still the dominant language in the economically poor western half of the country where the majority of tenant farmers

and labourers lived. The main factors which contributed to the decline of the language include: the Great Famine, the education system which taught exclusively in English and the growth of literacy in English (Denvir, 1997, p45). The language was associated with poverty and oppression whereas English was the language of politics, of the court, of the market and of the future. Many of the poor knew that the Irish language had limited value and was not a gateway language to finding work at home or abroad and consequently the majority of them encouraged their children to learn English because of economic necessity. The Irish peasant abandoned his native language because it would not "sell the cow" (Shannon, 1989, p16). The decline in Gaelic speakers from 50% at the beginning of the nineteenth century to 0.5% at the end of the century reflected this new reality. Their political leader, O'Connell encouraged them to abandon Irish in favour of English for its utilitarian value. He acknowledged that the Irish language was

> connected with many recollections that twine around the hearts of Irishmen, yet the superior utility of the English tongue, as the medium of all modern communication, is so great, that I can witness without a sigh the gradual disuse of Irish (O'Connell cited in Mac Donagh, 1991, p11).

Despite Davis's utilitarian approach to selecting knowledge which was examined in Chapter 2, he did not consider the question of advancing the Irish language from an economic viewpoint but from a national perspective. The Irish language made the Irish people who spoke it culturally unique and he tried to promote it in order to revive the Irish nation and ultimately to promote the principle of nationality.

As outlined earlier, Davis's thinking on the significance of the language to his concept of the nation was influenced by Herder and Fichte. Herder argued that each nation has its own culture and its own way of interpreting the world through its language. For him the language "enabled the distinct expression of every nation's individual soul" (Penet, 2007, p435); it provides the "ultimate horizon of all meaning and understanding for people within a community (White, 2005, p171). Like Herder, Davis believed that the spiritual essence of the nation was embodied in

its language. Similarities also exist between Davis and Fichte on language and nation. Fichte insisted that wherever "a separate language is found, there a separate nation exists" (Vincent, 2002, p40). Davis would have agreed with Fichte's opinion that a common language was a significant unifying factor – "those who speak the same language are bound to each other by a number of invisible bonds, by nature herself " (Vincent, 2002, p40).

Irish nationalists, like Davis, would have disagreed with Fichte's view that a conquered people should abandon their language and coalesce with their conquerors, in order that there may be unity and internal peace. This argument has a certain practical logic and the English establishment would have concurred with these sentiments. However, for Irish people other factors such as economic necessity and social advancement were primary considerations which encouraged them to give priority to the English language. Davis argued that the imposition of a foreign language, manners and constitution on a country "instantly stunt and distort the whole mind" of the people. Rather than abandoning the indigenous language, Davis believed a language revival was another instrument that could be used to create a national consciousness. It was an integral part of his education plan for citizens to learn and use their national language. But first he had to convince the people that it was a language worth learning.

In an article in *The Nation*, 1 April 1843, entitled *Our National Language*, Davis directed his thoughts to the middle class and set out why they should embrace the Irish language by learning it, promoting it and using it in their daily lives. He began by arguing that a language reflected the unique characteristics of a people and its loss meant severing people from their historical roots:

> The language that grows up with a people, is conformed to their organs, descriptive of their climate, constitution, and manners, mingled inseparably with their history and their soil, fitted beyond any other language to express their prevalent thoughts in the most natural and efficient way (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843).

His insistence that an indigenous language is descriptive of the thoughts of a people whether those thoughts are contemporary or historical seems reasonable. But his claim that for its speakers a language "is conformed to their organs" implies that languages are in some sense biologically connected to them and suggests that for particular groups a language will be "unnatural, or non-organic, or biologically alien" (Crowley, 2005, p107). Davis continued to develop this point - questioning whether it was befitting the

> fiery, delicate-organed Celt to abandon his beautiful tongue… this wild liquid speech for the mongrel of a hundred breeds called English, which powerful though it be, creaks and bangs about the Celt who tries to use it? (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843).

Davis viewed language as suitable ground for a unified national identity capable of integrating different traditions in to "a coherent national political force" (Mays, 2005, p129). His argument that the Irish language was biologically suited to the descendants of the Celts would have appealed to three quarters of the people; however, descendants of the Anglo-Normans would have felt excluded from this definition. He then broadened his argument to include the people who were not of Celtic origin but considered themselves to be part of the Irish nation. For centuries, he reminded them that, "Irish was spoken by men of all bloods in Ireland, and English was unknown, save to a few citizens and nobles in the Pale" (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843). There was no reason why the "mongrel" Irish could not learn and use the language as their forefathers had done.

Language was an important barrier against foreign influence. The Germans had resisted the progress of French and Davis implied that the Irish people should resist the creeping spread of English. If they did not he stated that they could only claim to be half a nation:

> A people without a language of its own is only half a nation. A nation should guard its language more than its territories- 'tis a surer barrier, and more important frontier, than fortress or river (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843).

The Irish language was in the process of being supplanted by English as the dominant language. For Davis this was a national tragedy; a cultural barrier against England had been breached. His sense of trauma at the loss of the language is evident in the following quote:

> To lose your native tongue, and learn that of an alien, is the worst badge of conquest–it is the chain on the soul. To have lost entirely the national language is death; the fetter has worn through (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843).

The use of English was a hindrance to Ireland's cultural revival and helped to reinforce England's powerful domination; it also forced the Irish to think and speak in a foreign tongue (Penet, 2007, p437). Davis expressed doubt about the efforts employed by both himself and his contemporaries to awaken the Irish nation through the medium of the English language. His use of the word "death" refers to the death of a nation through its lost language; he associated the good health of the language with a strong culture and ultimately as a crucial step towards liberty. A national language in decline was another act of surrendering liberty or the prospect of attaining it. There was hope for a nation with its own language but without it hope was fast diminishing.

He looked forward to the day when the green flag would wave on public buildings and "the sweet old language be heard once more in college, mart and senate". But he had his doubts and insisted that if the effort to revive Irish as a national language should fail, the least acceptable option was that "its old literature" should be preserved for posterity. In an effort to goad his readers into action he tugged at the strings of national shame by stating that future generations would be aware that "we had a language as fit for love, and war and business, and pleasure, as the world ever knew, and that we had not the spirit and nationality to preserve it!" (*The Nation*, 1 April 1843).

Davis understood that there was reluctance amongst the middle class to promote the Irish language. He had first hand experience of this because members of his peer group opposed his proposals to study the language and to replace English place names with the Irish version in their poems and other contributions to *The Nation*. Duffy declared that Davis's efforts to form a class to study the Irish language and to revive the ancient names of historical men and places were met with "vehement resistance" (Duffy, 1892, p207). Davis insisted that in order to understand history, topography or romance it was necessary to study the local nomenclature; he procured the assistance of the Irish scholars O' Donovan and Curry to correct the proper place names in a new edition of the *Spirit of the Nation*. This initiative certainly caused consternation amongst some of the authors - Duffy complained that as a result of the changes he feared an "insurrection of the Bards" and recommended that the Irish names be put in notes leaving the text as it was written and that this method should continue until legislation made it compulsory for Irish to be used in official documents and national schoolbooks.

Davis also tried to learn the language. He understood that a practical dimension of learning language was to learn from native speakers. According to Douglas Hyde, Davis went to stay with John Blake Dillon's family at Ballyhadereen to learn Irish from Mrs Duffy, a native Irish speaker (De. Híde, 1937, p27). In spite of Davis's endeavours his grasp of the language did not progress beyond a superficial level.

In a second article for *The Nation* entitled *The Irish Language*, 30 December 1843, Davis outlined his ideas on how the language should be restored. The argument that it was too late to revive the language because it had no modern literature or modern science was, in Davis's view, a shallow one. He placed the responsibility for creating a modern literature on the shoulders of the present generation; they would need to approach this challenge with energy and passion. In his view it would be preferable to experiment by writing original songs, histories, and essays than by repeating aspects of old Irish literature. He appreciated that knowledge of the old

literature was sufficient to give "impulse and character" to a new literature (*The Nation*, 30 December 1843).

Davis acknowledged the difficulties of reviving the Irish language. He believed that any attempts to introduce it either through the National Schools or the courts of law would certainly fail; and he feared that a negative reaction to such a proposal might extinguish the language altogether. He favoured a more gradual approach. Just as he depended on the upper classes to educate their neighbours through the repeal reading rooms, he suggested that the middle classes should have their children taught Irish rather than a European language. The author of the article on *The Irish Language* which appeared in the *Nation* on 20 January 1844, under the pseudonym E, argued that the study of the Irish language was as educationally valid as that of any other language. Davis believed that the national language was superior to any other for the Irish people. He would have concurred with E's view that the Irish lacked self-respect and this was reflected in the fact that they "undervalue their own language".

The middle classes, he correctly noted, thought it a "sign of vulgarity to speak Irish". Davis tried to convince them that the Irish language was "more useful in life" than the European languages. He argued that it was a repository of Irish heritage - it "explains our names of persons or places, our older history, and our music" and was spoken in the majority of counties rather than Italian, German, or French. It is true that knowledge of the language was necessary to provide the people with an understanding of their Gaelic past and culture. But the Irish language had an image problem. The middle classes did not consider it fashionable or modern; it was not perceived as a language which had economic or social status in contemporary Ireland. Nevertheless, Davis tried to convince young people to prioritise Irish instead of French. He insisted that the Irish language would be "more serviceable to the taste and genius of young people" and he appealed to their sense of patriotism by stating that it would be "a more flexible accomplishment for an Irish man or woman to speak, sing, and write Irish than French" (*The Nation*, 30 December 1843).

Nonetheless, for the majority English was the language of the present and was the most useful medium of communication.

Davis focused on the positives; half the people west of a line drawn between Derry and Waterford spoke Irish habitually and in some of the upland areas east of that line it was also common. In these areas, he suggested that the language could be guarded by requiring the national teachers to know Irish and by supplying them with Irish translations of school books. The difficulty with this suggestion was that knowledge of Irish was not a necessary requirement for teaching in national schools and some of those who knew Irish were discouraged from using it by parents. Teachers and parents would need to be convinced of its practical use before engaging in efforts to promote it.

Despite these difficulties Davis advanced a practical policy to show how languages co-exist. He suggested that a newspaper, either bilingual or wholly Irish, should be established; it would "be the most rapid and sure way of serving the language". The success of *The Nation* newspaper had convinced Davis of the effectiveness of this medium to inform and educate large numbers of people. He outlined how an Irish newspaper would promote the language amongst Irish speakers and English speakers:

> The Irish-speaking man would find, in his native tongue, the political news and general information he has now to seek in English; and the English-speaking man, having Irish frequently brought before him in so attractive a form would be tempted to learn its characters, and by and by its meaning (*The Nation*, 30 December 1843).

He lamented that newspapers in many languages were to be found everywhere but in Ireland; in South America, newspapers were to be found in Spanish and English and in North America both French and English newspapers were available. While many countries use English as a medium of commerce, he insisted that, other countries cherish the indigenous or minority language "as the vehicle of history, the wings of

song, the soil of their genius, and a mark and guard of nationality" (*The Nation*, 30 December 1843).

## Conclusion

While Davis was a nationalist and a political journalist this chapter provided evidence to show that Davis was also an educationalist in a political sense; he looked at social fabric and evaluated it from the perspective of nationhood. Together with his Young Ireland colleagues he developed a nationalist curriculum to elevate the national mind as well as the national character. He considered education to be the most important "agency of freedom"; it would raise the people from poverty and assist them to realise their potential. It would "enable an enslaved, darkened, and starving people to become free, enlightened and prosperous" (Duffy, 1896, p84).

As this chapter demonstrated Davis did not only theorise about the merits of a national education he made a significant contribution towards creating a national literature suitable to educate Irishmen. His curriculum in Irish culture consisted of local knowledge which Irish citizens should know; it would liberate the Irish imagination from degrading anti-national sentiment and provide the people with a positive self-image; it would restore their cultural self-confidence and encourage them to assert their national identity which transcended race or creed; and it would awaken them to the possibilities of liberty. Davis also used his curriculum to inculcate civic values including justice, equality and tolerance and he held up national role models like Curran to inspire a new generation to serve their fellow countrymen.

Given the low numbers who had access to education Davis believed that another generation would pass before the political movement would reap the rewards of national education. He insisted that the process of educating the Irish mind must begin immediately; and with a sense of urgency he encouraged ordinary citizens to participate in the advancement of their country by engaging in cultural projects. "We want, in one word, the evidence of a thousand intellects, being alive and active for the present and future welfare of our country" (*The Nation*, 9 September 1843). He

was very dependent on the literate to reconstruct the Irish nation; he invited the middle classes to create a national literature and a national art which would reveal that the Irish were not English philistines consumed by commercialism but a creative, imaginative, talented people (Regan, 2004, xxvii). And he encouraged the middle classes to take ownership of the Irish language, to use it and promote it. A strong national language was an important expression of nationhood and his desire to revive it was an indication that Davis wanted the custodians of this language including tenant farmers and labourers to feel part of the nation (De Paor, *The Irish Times*, 14 March 1973). He believed that participation in this cultural revival was an indication that the people were willing to take charge of their own affairs.

Davis's full contribution to a cultural renaissance was cut off due to his untimely death in 1845. However, had he lived a longer life it is likely that "the Famine and the Fenians would probably have obscured his contribution" (Kiberd, 1996, p22). Nonetheless, he inspired a future generation of nationalists including Douglas Hyde, Padraig Pearse, W.B. Yeats and Arthur Griffith. He provided them with crucial ideas about the contribution a cultural revival could make to political independence and also about the importance of education to that process.

## Conclusion

I began this thesis by asking the question whether Davis was an educationalist. I noted that his biographers acknowledged his educational contribution to Irish nationalism but their primary objective was not to demonstrate that Davis was an educationalist but to explore Davis's contribution to Irish nationalist politics. Therefore no in-depth study of Davis the educator exists. This thesis fills this academic void and provides conclusive evidence to show that he was an educationalist. He fully realised the power of education; it was the means by which he would realise his vision of transforming Ireland from a dependent, impoverished English colony, to a prosperous, independent Irish nation. Together with the founding members of *The Nation* he wanted "to raise up Ireland morally, socially, and politically, and put the sceptre of self-government in her hands" (Kelly, 1998, p16). In order to realise his vision of a New Ireland, nationalists, active citizens, and especially civic leaders were needed. He identified education as "the apostle of progress"; it was the means by which these agents of change could be created (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p42). As already shown he claimed that the type of education provided by TCD and the national school system was not only anti-national but also failed to meet the needs of an evolving nation. Davis's programme of education reform was political in orientation; it was ambitious and radical and directed people's attention towards serving Ireland.

This thesis revealed his policies on the role of university education in Irish life. He argued that the principal function of a university was to serve the needs of society and to act as an agent of progress and modernisation; its primary function, according to Davis, was to provide professional training to future leaders and citizens. He argued that Ireland needed leaders to win liberty and to use their talents and knowledge to regenerate their country. Curriculum reform was necessary to ensure that a university education was useful and relevant – similar to Locke and Bentham he emphasised the utilitarian value of knowledge. He chose knowledge to prepare the ruling class to exercise power responsibly; members of this class must become "learned, determined, just and wise" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p2). In

reaction to the deficiencies of the TCD curriculum, Davis designed a curriculum to provide students with knowledge about Ireland, to develop a social conscience and to encourage leaders to serve the common good, to facilitate effective communication and to prepare men for the challenges of public life.

This thesis has shown that Davis believed a university education had a duty to train students how to think. He argued that future leaders should display independence of mind in the struggle for liberty and as law makers and civic leaders. Thinking men were needed to build the Irish nation; he stated that future leaders would have "to found their own institutes and conduct their own affairs" (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p2). He provided practical advice about developing reason and imagination rather than memory and he encouraged students to make deductions based on analogy. He also provided students with advice on how best to acquire knowledge; they should study subjects not authors. This method of comparative analysis facilitates critical thinking and it promotes a comprehensive understanding of subjects rather than a narrow perspective based on the findings of one author. It is also important to recognise his scholarly approach to research. Nonetheless, commentators could point to his disregard for independent thought when the subject was Irish nationalism - he used propaganda and high flown rhetoric to convince his audience of his nationalist ideology.

Like Herbart, Davis argued that proper nurture was an integral part of the education process; it was necessary for the development of citizens who possessed a strong ethical character. Davis developed a curriculum to facilitate a study of morality in political leadership in an effort to prevent the abuse of power and to challenge injustices evident in Irish society (O'Donoghue, 1914). Leaders must be of sound moral character and be capable of resisting temptation; and he warned them that selfishness and physical comfort were major threats to democracy (Davis 1840 cited in Rolleston, 1889, p38). However, Davis's desire to train moral character extended beyond politics to other areas of Irish life. He addressed prominent members in society who could direct change – he reminded landlords of their duty to treat their

tenants with humanity and he urged the middle classes to educate the uneducated. He advised parents to develop their children's sense of curiosity and to teach them truth, piety and justice. Yeats described Davis as "the foremost moral influence of our politics" (Yeats cited in Johnson, 2000, p140). He was impressed by Davis's magnanimity – the fact that he gave up party advantage to affirm national right. Yeats believed that if more movements during his lifetime had copied Davis's magnanimity they might have changed their generation. Yeats's observation was both accurate and astute. Davis's sense of magnanimity and his ideas on civic duty could have prepared the ground for conflict resolution between Catholics and Protestants in this country; he insisted that young people from the different traditions should be educated together to promote greater understanding of difference; he urged Irishmen of different creeds to work together for common national goals. Recently we have witnessed the marvellous benefits of compromise which continue to flow from the peace process in Northern Ireland. If the principles of tolerance and reconciliation were taught to all citizens it is possible that the different traditions would have cooperated and brought peace to this island at an earlier stage. Nevertheless, despite his theories on civic principles, racial inflections were evident in some of Davis's opinions on the English oppressor; but in general, his ideas on shaping moral character could inform citizenship education today. They could help to prevent the rise of racism and sectarianism; they could help to create an inclusive, tolerant, multi-cultural society; and at a time when the moral influence of the Catholic Church is in decline they would focus people's minds on civic values including justice, fairness and equality.

This thesis also explored a number of progressive methods of pedagogy employed by Davis to promote learning. He appreciated that student's interest and curiosity must be engaged to promote effective learning. Consequently he exploited a range of learning methods to stimulate the senses: art could educate through the eye; ballads could appeal to the emotions through the ear and prose writings would appeal to the faculties of reason and imagination (Leerssen, 1996). Moreover, he recommended other progressive ways to promote learning in the school environment. It should

include visual learning aids, maps and globes, a reference library, a garden and a small farming area where pupils could learn practical skills about efficient farming. His suggestions that translations should be used to learn languages and that a bilingual newspaper should be established to facilitate learning Irish are further examples of his forward looking approach to learning. There is little doubt that Davis was ahead of his time in his efforts to promote learning. If educators had embraced some of his methods, the learning experience of generations of pupils could have been more interesting and intellectually stimulating.

Davis's reputation as an educationalist is enhanced by his proposals to develop university education in Ireland. Despite O'Connell's political resistance to the "godless colleges", Davis displayed courage and foresight in his argument in support of multi-denominational education. He claimed that the Queen's Colleges should be centres of reconciliation and promote tolerance and understanding between Catholics and Protestants; and that this shared education experience would make it possible for them to unite and cooperate for Ireland's benefit. During the debate he showed that he was a man of conviction who was prepared to compromise to ensure that mixed education became a reality. In his contribution to the debate he tried to win the support of O'Connell and Catholic Ireland but O'Connell was suspicious of British intentions and was unwilling to compromise on a Bill that threatened to disconnect students from their religion (Geoghegan, 2010). Furthermore, O'Connell used the dispute over the Bill to assert his control over the Repeal Association and this is another motive which may have clouded his judgement on the benefits of mixed education. While O'Connell approached the Bill with an intransigent mindset Davis explored the arguments to find a compromise on a range of issues including religious instruction, the appointment of dual Professors, the religious management of universities and the future role of TCD – all of them were overshadowed by his public dispute with O'Connell. It was with great disappointment that Davis had to accept that an opportunity to promote reconciliation was lost. The rejection of the Bill by Catholic Ireland was a backward step on the road to nationhood (Rolleston, 1910, viii). However, the fact that he was prepared to challenge the undisputed

political heavyweight of his time in a public forum shows his commitment to inclusive education.

This thesis also found that Davis's policies to provide the people with a national education were radical and progressive. His political education was designed to develop a sense of national identity, a necessary prerequisite for the creation of nationalists and active citizens. Inspired by German romanticism his national curriculum would create a national consciousness, or in Mitchel's words "a strong national feeling" which could be channelled towards the regeneration of Ireland (Mitchel, 1914, xxii). This was a daunting challenge to accept and Davis invested considerable intellectual effort and energy to provide an education through the columns of *The Nation* and *The Library of Ireland* series. The challenges he faced were significant including the growing influence of English culture, anti-national content in the national schools, a dearth of national literature, high levels of illiteracy and a despondent people. The absence of national spirit resulted in second rate institutions, a depressed economy and an unremarkable literary and artistic environment (Lynch, 2007, p87). However, despite these obstacles he developed a national curriculum to provide the people with an education in local knowledge and to develop their sense of national consciousness. He formulated a curriculum in Irish culture to define what it meant to be Irish and to impress on the people to embrace his inclusive concept of nationhood. He encouraged the people to see themselves as Irish regardless of their race or creed; their service to Ireland marked them out as Irish; and he encouraged them to express their national identity through literature and art and through their support for repeal. They were engaged in making a nation– differences including racial or religious were subservient to that objective. Davis's inclusive national identity was challenged by O'Connell's Catholic nationalism, by the Irish Irelanders during the Gaelic Revival and during the early decades of the Free State by an inward-looking, exclusive definition of Irishness–to be Irish one had to be Gaelic, Catholic and nationalist. In modern Ireland the meaning of national identity is more open and inclusive. Though Davis's nationalism could inform our self-image the struggle for independence and the

romantic image of rural arcadia which underpinned his nationalism are no longer relevant today. His attempt to define a sense of Irishness through a common culture is also out of date because it is not sufficiently inclusive. Our identity includes many elements – it may include a county dimension, a European one and an international one, a sense of loyalty to an English football club and a sense of belonging to Ireland. The editorial of the *Irish Times* on St Patrick's Day 2007 outlined the diverse nature of Irish identity; it stated that:

> We are all the speckled people today. Confident, wealthy, forward looking, internationalist, we can afford to define our identity in terms that celebrate our overlapping multiplicity of allegiances and diversity. The new Ireland is a state of mind as much as a sense of place (Kennedy, ed., *The Irish Times*, 17 March 2007).

The Irish are a hybrid people. We need an image of ourselves that is inclusive – one that includes the immigrant community, members of the Irish diaspora, as well as those who live here. It must be an image we can take pride in; and it must represent the talents and abilities, the diverse cultures and aspirations of the people. Some aspects of Davis's inclusive, pluralist national identity could guide us as we strive to formulate an identity in a new century. Rather than emphasising differences Davis tried to regenerate Ireland by directing the national mind towards achieving common goals and objectives. Perhaps, his attempt to define national identity through patriotic service rather than through race or religion is still relevant. Davis suggested that his generation would have to display resilience, self-reliance, intelligence and organisation to overcome contemporary challenges. We could learn from this guidance. Just as he formulated an identity to overcome challenges in the 1840s a new national identity based on patriotic endeavour would give a focus and purpose to a new generation.

There are aspects of Davis's national curriculum which could help us to understand the meaning and purpose of national identity and to promote self-understanding. Davis argued that knowledge of history was essential to provide us with an understanding of the forces that made us the way we are. He invoked historical

examples to validate his definition of Irishness and to encourage people to learn the lessons of history - that greed, intolerance and division contributed to national degradation. He also used history to give the people national heroes to inspire them and to encourage them to look beyond self-interest and to serve their country. Davis interpreted the past to define an emerging nation. Today our demands on history may be different but historical knowledge is still necessary to promote greater understanding of who we are as Irish citizens, Europeans and Internationalists. Knowledge of history is essential for cultural transmission and the formation of national identity (Phillips, 2000, p14). Recent historical research has helped to define who we are and to understand the forces that shaped us; it has broadened our understanding of the Irish experience–social histories have been written to include groups that were overlooked in many political historical narratives; for example women's contribution to Irish life, the working class, the poor and the emigrant. Research in those subjects has increased our understanding of the past and it has also highlighted aspects of Ireland's hidden history and the impact of government policy on people's lives. The benefits of historical knowledge should not be overlooked; an understanding of history is a vital component of citizenship which provides the skills to help understand and analyse, social, cultural, political and economic trends in the modern world (Keogh, 2005, xxv). History should not be used as a political weapon to stir old grievances but to help us understand who we are and how we can do things better. Knowledge of history can provide perspectives on the present that contribute to the solutions of problems (Donnelly, Norton, 2011, p11); and it can provide models on how to lead a better life (Southgate, 2005, p8). Davis hoped that lessons might be learned from the past; however, a number of factors militated against that occurring, including a lack of good scholarly histories combined with a deficit of good historical understanding in the decision making process in politics (Lee, 1989).

The fact that Davis inspired future generations with his nationalist ideals has been his greatest legacy as an educationalist. In Chapter 1 we noted his influence on Griffith and De Valera. Moreover, Kiberd stated that Davis provided "later leaders

of the Irish renaissance with many of their crucial ideas" (Kiberd, 1996, p22). For instance his ideas on cultural nationalism and in particular on the national language influenced Douglas Hyde and Eoin Mac Neill. One of the founding principles of the Gaelic League was that the restoration of the soul of a nation depended on the recovery of its language (Pinter, 2010, pp 239 -240). Effectively this movement had adopted a key principle of Davis's: that "a nation without a language is a nation without a soul" (Dunleavy and Dunleavy, 1991, p265). Hyde sought to restore self-respect to the Irish people by reminding them that the language should be spoken with pride. His lecture titled *The Necessity for Deanglicizing Ireland* focused on encouraging self-belief rather than cultivating hatred of England. Many aspects of it resonate with Davis's thinking on the negative fashion of copying English culture at the expense of promoting Irish character. Encouraging the use of Anglo-Irish books, Hyde cautioned against "the garbage of vulgar" English newspapers and books which should be replaced by national material. Hyde agreed with Duffy's view that Davis was an educator of the national mind; and he recommended that "Every house should have a copy of Moore and Davis" to provide a national education and to inspire imaginative works like the *Spirit of the Nation*.

Davis was accurate in his claim that independence was the best teacher, implying that once independence was won, the process of providing the people with a national education could be institutionalised and would have a greater chance of success. The establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 saw key aspects of Davis's vision slowly realised: Libraries were established in major towns and cities; national art has been housed in Art Galleries; new histories of Ireland have been written; Museums like the National Museum of Ireland display artefacts from Irelands past. Furthermore, Davis would have approved of the way the national curriculum was reformed to provide the children with a new image of what it meant to be Irish in an independent Ireland. Schools were considered to be "the prime agents in the revival of the Irish language and native traditions" and there was a strong Irish emphasis in courses in history, geography and music (Coolahan, 1981, p38). National schools which had been used as agents of denationalisation in the nineteenth century were

now perceived as essential to reversing the process. Subjects like Irish and history were included in the curriculum of the Free State to create a national character.

However, Irish government initiatives to promote the language failed to capture the public imagination. Since the foundation of the State compulsory Irish was introduced in the national schools not only as a separate subject but also as the medium through which other subjects, including history and geography, should be learned. Davis's advice about adopting a cautious approach to promoting the language was ignored by policy makers who made it obligatory to teach Irish in national, vocational and secondary schools (Walsh, 2007). Compulsory Irish aroused resentment and this was exacerbated by the "grim and stern manner" in which it was presented (Ferriter, 2005, p351). This inordinate emphasis on the national language did little to prepare pupils for economic opportunities at home or abroad. Another shortcoming in the state's approach to the language was the fact that it was not spoken frequently at government level. De Valera was certainly in favour of its revival but "could not induce even his own cabinet to speak it regularly" (Lee, 1989, p333). He understood that the revival of the language depended on the attitudes of the people but he failed to devise a workable plan that would effect a revival.

Davis's role in educating nationalists continued into the twentieth century. Some of his poems were prescribed reading in the English syllabus until the 1970s including "Fontenoy", "The West Asleep" and "A Nation Once Again". These poems introduced a new generation to Davis's nationalist sentiment. While his poems are no longer in the English syllabus, recent interpretations of them in the ballad genre by The Clancy Brothers, The Wolfe Tones and The Irish Tenors have kept Davis's nationalist spirit alive in the popular imagination. In 2002 the popularity of "A Nation Once Again" was confirmed by a BBC World Service global poll of listeners which voted it the world's most popular song ahead of "Vande Mataram" the national song of India (www.Irishmusicforever.com; www.bbc.co.uk/ worldservice /us/features/ topten); in this poll 7,000 song titles were voted on and 150,000 votes were cast. Regardless of the accuracy of this poll it is significant that many regard

"A Nation Once Again" as Ireland's national song. The success of this ballad demonstrates that Davis's ideas continue to resonate with a new generation.

Since 1957, his reputation as an educationalist was reinvented through the *Thomas Davis Lectures* which were broadcast on RTE radio one. This series, which was suggested and developed by Francis Mac Manus with the assistance of Professor T.W. Moody, wanted to make Irish scholarship accessible at a popular level (Martin, 1967, p276). The lectures explored a broad range of Irish topics both contemporary and historical; some topics examined included the Great Famine, the 1916 Rising and the development of public libraries; historical personalities such as St Patrick, Wolfe Tone, O'Connell and Yeats were also explored. It is likely that Davis would have endorsed the methodology employed by the producer of this series. The subject matter is national; each subject is examined in a scholarly fashion; the public audience can listen and learn and experts occasionally address questions from the public. This lecture series is Lyceum teaching through a contemporary medium. The series is aptly described as the "University of the People" (www.radio1.ie/evening/thomasdavis). In an effort to revive the *Library of Ireland* series some of the lectures were published; between 1953 and 1967 sixteen books, two pamphlets and forty articles were published, thus increasing popular access to the best in Irish scholarship (Martin, 1967, p279).

Davis's educational thought has much to offer contemporary society. His ideas should be studied and analysed by a new generation not only to ennoble individuals but also to prepare them for society. His ideas on training moral character and citizenship could form more engaged citizens and better leaders (Alvey 1996). His suggestions on teaching students how to think and on improving the learning process could inform the ongoing debate on teaching methodology and pedagogy.

As previous leaders realised Davis's ideas are too important to be lost in time. These ideas have the capacity to inspire and guide a new generation of Irish people. One can only hope that they will emulate Davis's nobility and virtues:

It was a brief life nobly lived, dedicated to a better future for all his countrymen. It has been, outside political life, a moving memory which has never been forgotten (Mulvey, 2005, p241).

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