

Learning to be a Lord, a friend, 'a human': Lord Snooty as a comic strip representation of John Macmurray's philosophies of social and emotional learning

'[F]riendship is a type of relationship in which people enter as persons with the whole of themselves'. John Macmurray (MacAllister & Thorburn, 2014, p. 146)



Figure 1: Anon,¹ heading banner from 'Lord Snooty and His Pals' in *Beano*, No. 1 July 30th 1938. Image courtesy of The British Library, copyright of DC Thomson & Co Ltd.

When in 1938 a new British comic for children introduced the upper class child character of Lord Snooty, it not only confronted the norms of social division by representing a child breaking out of the confines of his class; the title 'Lord Snooty and His Pals' recognises the extent to which the strip would also present a challenge to the increasingly individualistic ideas about childhood at the time. Creator Dudley Dexter Watkins idealised the importance of social connection, and showed children fighting for a sense of community and belonging. The characters pitched friendship as fundamental to the pleasure of this comic strip, a tone which was established in the first edition, published by D C Thomson on the 30th July 1938, through the strap line 'A real little lord who's always pally - with the Beezer Kids of Ash-Can Alley'. Despite his upper-class social status, it was the relationships with the gang members that guided, defined and motivated his actions. His 'real pals', as he introduces them right from the start, teach him how to make social and moral choices, how, in a complex world, to live socially.

This paper will use some typical strips from the first year of 'Lord Snooty and His Pals', to explore the ways in which the characters illustrate and negotiate ideas of friendship, and the extent to which this influences the considerate social behaviours that the characters demonstrate, in short how they learn through their connection with other; it will further scrutinize how integral these relationships are to the nature of the strips. This analysis will be founded upon the notion of social negotiation as a tool for learning, as raised in the writings of the significant Scottish educational philosopher John Macmurray (1891-1976). Following his work, this paper will be organized around three key aspects of social learning; tackling difference, social wisdom regarding the behaviour of others, and self-reflection for reasonable emotional judgement.

A philosophy of friendship for learning

During the 1920s and 1930s John Macmurray held first a Fellowship position at Balliol College Oxford and later became Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at University College London. A believer in action over theory, he wrote and keenly lectured for public audiences, most famously via radio, about the significance of social interactions and specifically friendship, in promoting emotional learning and development. He endorsed the belief that learning to be a person requires education in and experience of knowing and appreciating others. He argued that through interaction we learn to reasonably judge the emotional responses of ourselves and others, and that this wisdom is integral to learning to be a human within a community context. It is not possible to know whether the artists, writers or publisher of 'Lord Snooty and His Pals' in those first years was familiar with Macmurray's philosophies but in recognising the ways in which this particular comic strip for children offered enactment of friendship and community, this article hopes to highlight the connections between the comic's portrayal of truly equal, close relationships and ways in which this is shown to develop the 'self' of the characters. It will further, position these examples within the context of the wider progressive educational movement of the day, of which Macmurray was just one part.

The early twentieth century was a period of significant development regarding educational research and philosophies, and in this context Macmurray found himself involved in a battle over educational thinking. He was not only interested in education for the young but was a vocal advocate for lifelong learning, and, most significantly in relation to this article, interested in learner focused education, meaning the interests and the personality of the learner would drive an individual programme of study. This era saw a boom in such humanistic approaches to teaching; John Dewey, Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner are just some of the better known names amongst the many, associated with these alternative models for teaching and learning. Central to each of their systems is the notion that the development of the person, rather than the focus on knowledge should pervade all schooling. R. W. J Selleck's *English Primary Education and the Progressives, 1914-1939* is a very thorough account of the main players and tensions which influenced the development of educational practices between the wars, and recognizes the tragedy that driving both sides, both the student centred and the knowledge centred approaches to education, was the same doomed ambition, that of preventing war from ever occurring again.

Macmurray identified how these two different educational priorities offered separate types of development, and he pitched 'technical knowledge', of factual, academic information, against 'valuational knowledge', social wisdom and the ability to reasonably assess what is worthwhile doing. Macmurray contended that it is only through relationships, through the interactions and development of social compassions that we are able to assess valual knowledge, or emotional judgements, reasonably. He argued that education should develop learning from social experiences and so enable an understanding of how, 'valuational choices should be rational in the sense that they should be subject to the rigours of living contexts and realities'. (Fielding, 2012, p. 680) In knowing why and how we react and interact the way we do, and in understanding the emotions and biases that drive such actions, Macmurray asserts that humans would be better equipped to tackle such sophisticated, complex and unpredictable exchanges beyond the classroom, in the real world.

There was a great, shared acknowledgement amongst those working in education at the time that social and emotional, individualized learning was a valid ideal for education. The challenge however was reconciling the discrepancy between the technical and the valual methods for the pupils. This was further problematized by the inevitable requirements of

examinations which compared children against one another and then decided a child's future progression into secondary school or work;

For, however widespread progressive thought became in the colleges, however popular it was in the official reports or among writers on education, it could not easily be put into practice while primary schooling ended in an examination which enshrined many of the values the progressives opposed. (Selleck, 1972, p. 143)

Consequently, Macmurray was just one of the many whose ideas about learner focused education were seen as theoretically beautiful, but superfluous to the business of schooling. Central to his tenants of education for a better future, and important to his belief in lifelong learning, was the impact friendship had on personal development, of the potential for learning through reciprocal relationships with equal and complex individuals. His writings, in both the 1935 monograph *Reason and Emotion* and the earlier *Freedom in the Modern World* (1932) wrangle with the notion that the self is constructed within society. Consequently, it is through interactions with others, through an appreciation of others as sophisticated, inconstant individuals that we are able to reflect upon ourselves and to learn to consider our actions within the wider social whole. Whilst this is not knowledge that will necessarily help one to learn mathematics or literature, Macmurray's thinking speaks to a more significant problem of what it means to learn to become a person equipped to manage the social complexities of adult life, and how people can be educated to consider their actions within the wider community and with consequences for the future. Society changed rapidly at the turn of the century, especially in regard to thoughts about the importance of the individual, particularly of the child as an individual self with rights, opinions and developmental processes of their own. Marketing and consumerism took full advantage of these new ideas, selling identity constructions not only to the children themselves but to their parents too. All other aspects of life were also impacted by the newly constructed 'self', in which personal needs and wants did not necessarily need to be connected to the community in which people lived. Macmurray however challenged this belief from the fundament, arguing that being a person is an integrally social activity, 'that the *personal* sphere does *not* refer to our *individual* wants and desires at all - it is rather composed of human relations between people'. (MacAllister & Thorburn, 2014, p. 146)

Learning beyond the *class* room

'Lord Marmaduke of Bunkerton', to give him his full title, was a comic strip character developed for the *Beano* when it was launched as a brand new comic for children. The Lord-boy character, carried a privileged upper class status and yet remained disempowered as a child subject to adult authority. In representing this dichotomy he was presented as a character with a sophisticated understanding of complex and contradictory social roles in society and the ability to negotiate them. *Beano* was the second comic marketed directly at a (predominantly working class) child consumer to be released by the publisher. With an already established reputation for children's magazines, and uniquely Scottish humorous newspaper strips such as 'Oor Wullie', D C Thomson's move into 'funnies', entirely strip comics only for children, was a natural development and a fantastic success. In many ways the Lord Snooty strip typifies how the D C Thomson children's publications department (managed at that time by 'Oor Wullie' writer Robert Duncan Low) merged their understanding of humorous characterisation, specific social context, relevance of theme and visual storytelling. *Dandy*, the *Beano*'s big brother, had included a strip called 'Our Gang',

which utilised a device very common at the time, as proliferated by comics such as *Film Fun*, of adapting famous film, theatre and music hall stars into comic strips. Dudley Dexter Watkins (a staff artist for Thomson) produced the licensed adaptation of Hal Roach's short films about a gang of unruly poor children, first known as *Our Gang* and later *Little Rascals*. In reworking the gang concept for the Snooty *Beano* strip however, it was made more relevant to, and therefore more popular for, British readers by including the explicit reference to cross-class interaction. The Lord and his alley friends exist within a relatively realistic working class context, whilst keeping attention to detail of each, individual member of the gang having a developed and unique character, role and story within the strips.

The first ever strip reveals the importance of dress codes in regard to different social class expectations, the self as defined by the clothes you wear. This strip typified an important type of social learning, only possible outside of the classroom. In exchanging his top hat for his 'disguise', the word he uses for working class children's clothes, Snooty passes as a regular child, thus enabling a true and equal friendship between him and the other member of the gang. Despite their economic and contextual differences, Snooty's Ash-Can Alley gang friends are characters who respect and appreciate each other as different but equal individuals. Through his costume, they still obviously know who he really is, however in changing his dress, adapting to his friends, Snooty's actions demonstrate behaviour which is considerate and respectful towards them. This is however a complex negotiation, as it is often Lord Snooty's upper class status that allows him to interact with the adult world and frequently within the narratives of the strips he is required to switch back to his costume of Lord in order to restore justice to the fortunes of his friends. It does however seem significant that the final panels most frequently show his having transformed back again into one of the gang, receiving either punishment or victory, depending on the strip, by their side. Despite his high status, and power as a lone child with free run of the castle, he is not defined by his privileged position, but rather desires to be part of a community with others and these relationships inspire and influence his growth and development.

In the strip from the 5th November 1938, for example, the 'tough gang from Gas-Works Lane', a persistent early nemesis of Lord Snooty's gang, attack and destroy the Guy Fawkes' Day Guy which the children had so carefully made. Lord Snooty is able to inflict revenge by offering to pay 'Bill Binks', a willing 'tramp' £5 (1200d) to prank the bullies. In a society where a pint of milk cost 7d, and a loaf of bread 5d, (and the *Beano* comic just 2d) this extravagant display of economic power seems to position Lord Snooty in a world where all barriers are removed. What is noticeable however is the choices he makes with this power, and particularly how he enforces justice. Rather than simply imposing his authority and status, Snooty is shown choosing to hand out justice to the bullying Gas-Works Lane gang through playful retaliation and collective participation alongside his gang. Through a surprise attack, making use of their willing 'tramp', the event of enacting retribution includes and requires participation from all the members of the Ash-Can Alley gang. In the final panel where we see them fighting alongside each other, the reader is reminded that despite his advantages Snooty considers himself included, and so acts in the interest of, and for the joy of, all of them. He chooses not to behave in isolation. Despite his title, the climax of the action is collaborative, the friends are fighting side by side.

Learning to tackle differences

It is through this notion of commitment to important relationships, where friendship frames personal development, that our capacity to tackle difference can be enriched. There are

several moments in this relatively short strip where interactions between characters of different social status' are played out with a strong suggestion of equality and respect, of humanity. The panel where Snooty hosts a 'free feed' to entice the 'tramps' to the castle shows Jenkins the butler serving them with calm dignity, seemingly undisturbed by this unusual occurrence, a model for accepting the unexpected with grace. Also the 'tramps' themselves are shown to be behaving with decorum appropriate to the occasion. There is a playful irony in one of them using 'Please' so politely to ask for 'a nice handful of silver spoons', suggesting his proclivity for stealing whilst managing to remain good mannered. The discrepancy between what people say and what people do is being played with here, effectively deconstructing assumptions about differences between characters based on their position, dress or social status. These strips are weighty with implied commentary on the superficiality and dishonesty of enacted conduct as opposed to the genuine actions of characters behaving how they truly are. This playfulness encouraging a child reader to recognize a difference between pretence and authenticity in others. That a group of 'tramps' can enjoy a fine dinner with the dignity of any high class Lord doesn't change who they are, it rather seems to draw attention to the 'performativity' of class behaviour and wealth, in contrast to sincere relations between people for who they are. That Lord Snooty, wishes to treat them with respect and offer them fair pay in return for their labour shows his willingness to see them as equal individuals, despite their difference in status. This is reinforced through the physical positioning of Snooty in Figure 2 literally between the high class butler and the table of tramps. For an audience of children, learning about the inconsistent social world, making fun of the collective contradictions and willingly accepting difference and change, are complex interactions that the readers would be able to connect to real life and lived experiences, and draws attention to how 'performed' behaviour is a choice, and as such people can choose whether to play along, or whether to behave in a different way.



Figure 2: Anon, panel 8 from 'Lord Snooty and His Pals' in *Beano*, No. 15 November 5th 1938. Image courtesy of The British Library, copyright of DC Thomson & Co Ltd.

Difference and disagreement, argues Macmurray, are integral elements of discovering the self. It is not only through friendship but also through acknowledging opposition and choosing to contrast oneself from others, by 'wilfully opposing himself to the family to which he belongs' community may be achieved. (Stern, 2012, p. 733) Difference does not separate when the intimate understanding of the other person enables you to appreciate their choices as appropriate for them, but not for yourself. Macmurray's recognition that true friendship requires acceptance and equality, was positioned as dichotomous to what he called 'functional relations', those where the necessary social requirements of everyday life force interactions with others. These exchanges often maintain pervasive power or role dynamics which affect

the interactions, such as salesman and shopper, or bus driver and passenger. Although this doesn't fundamentally prevent friendship in these situations, it does however reinforce constructions of society rather than of human community.

It is then an active choice for the character of Lord Snooty not to play along and separate himself from the working class community despite the expectations of his high class. Arguably however this idealistic, classless, reading is rather problematized in the strip where Snooty chooses a suitable 'tramp' from a line up. As this moment emanates the subservient positions of the poor in relation to the rich, rather amplified by the irony of his diminutive size against the poor adults, it could be critiqued perhaps as an image evocative of slavery. In the context of the post -depression British consciousness however, this sort of presentation of the self, in search of any work you can find, would have been a familiar image to the workers. The country's economy was more stable and growing stronger again by 1938 due to the industrial growth motivated by the threat of the Second World War, however the suffering of over ten years of mass unemployment during the recent depression was not that far from people's minds. Representation of poor children and their lack of material things is often connected with the work they are willing to do, although changes in education increasingly removed them from official labour. In this sense, the work the children are shown to be doing to build the Guy is significant. That a panel shows them engaged with the process of constructing and dressing it, a tradition which allowed children to raise money to afford fireworks to celebrate November 5th, immediately endears the child characters to the reader through a shared recognition of an activity which they too would, most likely, be participating in. The gang members may not be exactly like the readers, being from a different place or social class, however in sharing the experience of building a Guy, familiarity and a shared ideal, despite difference, is constructed. The panel showing characters working hard at an activity familiar for most readers creates an alliance, a friendship, through acknowledgment of the time and effort invested in children's work. This friendship enhances the power of the evoked disappointment, for both the characters and the readers, when the Guy is destroyed.

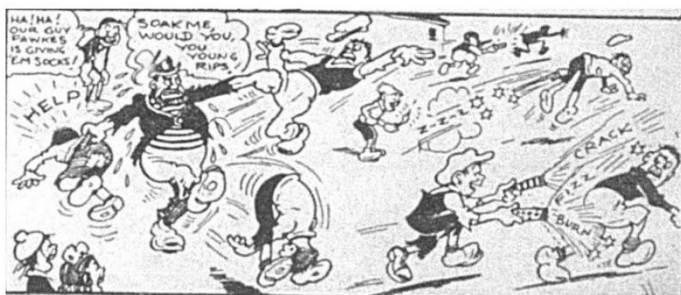


Figure 3: Anon, panel 13 from 'Lord Snooty and His Pals' in *Beano*, No. 15 November 5th 1938. Image courtesy of The British Library, copyright of DC Thomson & Co Ltd.

Learning social wisdom

Despite all of these examples of difference being accepted, one area where segregation seems important is through the concept of the street identity associated with the gang, so much so that it is included in their name. In contrast to the castle which is Snooty's home, children spending the majority of their time on the street was unquestionably the norm of the late

1930s. Children had more untethered time, freed from the confines of labour and of their parents by new laws regarding employment and education. The unsupervised streets were a place to meet, play and to establish yourself. That particular groups occupied certain streets relates not only to the ways in which young people were trying to claim space, but it also suggests something about their status or position in society. While 'Ash-Can Alley' is associated perhaps the predominant work of rubbish collection or chimney sweeping, very lowly paid but essential workers, and the noun alley is evocative of such workers housing, 'Gas-Works Lane' would be associated with factory workers, more suggestive of industry and progression, but also more vulnerable in times of economic recession (many gas-works closed in the depression of the 1920s), further reinforced by their association with a lane and thus, a higher class of housing. The playing together, or playing against groups from different socio-economic areas would have been a familiar activity for readers. In comics and in real life it also played an important role in establishing friendships and power relations, and in teaching wisdom regarding the behaviour of others. Through experience, children become able to recognize motivations and drives in different people and become sympathetic to how these personal desires can influence social interaction.

In addition to his capacity for negotiating and accepting difference, Snooty is also shown to be a character with a sophisticated understanding of the needs and motivations of others; he is socially wise. In the edition from the 31st December 1938 both Lord Snooty and his Aunt Mildred are overwhelmed with a large number of exactly the same Christmas gifts that they have received from friends. Snooty has a glut of ice skates and his aunt, ice boxes and refrigerators. As a character astute enough to be motivated by people rather than material things, it is not surprising that he is able to quickly leave his gifts, choosing social over material play. The second panel shows him changing his clothes so he can go and join the gang, who are shown struggling to stay afloat using upturned tables, barrels and bath tubs, due to a broken water pipe. The details within these panels encourage the reader to appreciate the playful and creative activity of these children. The twins Snatchy and Snitchy, are already in their role play with makeshift binoculars, pronouncing 'There she blows captain Snatchy!'. This narrative continues into the third panel where Snooty has joined the raft bearing a pirate flag, and where the action shows Hairpin Huggins high jacking with a life belt the ironically named Happy Hutton from his raft, which has an enormous patchy pair of trousers as a sail. The drama of this moment, the details and the energy of the multiple exchanges in each panel demonstrate imaginative play in action and evoke the passing of a good deal of time in this role play, despite the transition only being from one panel to the next. Despite the clear narrative of piracy and plunder, it is not Snooty who bears the captain's hat on his raft but rather Scrapper Smith. With the gang he shows deference to his friends, acting as an equal. He is however sage enough to see how he can use his position and his possibilities to help his friends. Scrapper's desire to participate in the skating competition is something Snooty is able to 'fix' for him and the rest of the gang. The attitude of resolution implies this is something they *should* be able to have, rather than something Lord Snooty is doing *for* them; not something he is offering but something that is in the interests of a fair world.



Figure 4: Anon, excerpt from 'Lord Snooty and His Pals' in *Beano*, No. 23 December 31st 1938. Image courtesy of The British Library, copyright of DC Thomson & Co Ltd.

There is a recurring motif in these strips implying that simply being able to buy something, does not make it more valuable or more important. It is rather the motivation for giving and the ways that you use that which you have, the demonstration of social wisdom, which matters more. The motivations behind the action and the purity of the intentions as an act of understanding and appreciative friendship is highlighted as the most important aspect. From the very first edition of the strip, in July 1938, when Lord Snooty is introduced as a high status character, the true friendship of the gang, and his mutual appreciation of them is evident from the start. For his birthday they have 'got' him, by this they mean patched together and made as best they can, a cart drawn by their pet goat Gertie. Snooty joyfully pronounces as they drive along, 'Gee! This is the best birthday present I've ever had!', to which his friends reply 'Aw shucks!'. This lovely moment of mutual warmth and appreciation is strengthened as the reader has already seen that in his castle Lord Snooty has a huge amount of gifts from friends. It is rather the riding the cart together, belonging to and being a part of the group, which Snooty cherishes. This touching moment pre-empts the main drama of the strip as the cart, at high speed, shown cinematically through the blurred wheels and the motion of the goat not touching the ground, crashes in the next panel into the horse drawn cart that Snooty's posh friends are driving sedately over as a gift. The fine cart that the rich boys clearly have enough money to simply buy, is destroyed in the crash, and when they show it to Lord Snooty he, and the reader because we are in on the joke, are able to enjoy his performance of a privileged child rejecting an inadequate gift as insulting to their status, knowing that is not truly arrogant behaviour but rather a performance of posh-ness and a play with status. When contrasted with the joy of the homemade cart and the quality of interactions with the gang, the insignificance of economic and social status is reinforced. True friendship is at the heart of the most important gift.



Figure 5: Anon, panel 1 from 'Lord Snooty and His Pals' in *Beano*, No. 7 September 10th 1938. Image courtesy of The British Library, copyright of DC Thomson & Co Ltd.

Figure 6: Anon, panel 6 from 'Lord Snooty and His Pals' in *Beano*, No. 7 September 10th 1938. Image courtesy of The British Library, copyright of DC Thomson & Co Ltd.

Learning reasonable emotional judgement

Michael Fielding's article 'Education as if people matter: John Macmurray, community and the struggle for democracy' highlights the moral philosopher's focus on educating about 'how human beings lead good lives together in the context of profound and persistent change'. (Fielding, 2012, p. 677) Teaching emotional sensitivity however, as noted above, did not become the major project of school education in the 1930's and 1940's, and in the wartime context 'the emphasis shifted slightly from the 'individual' and towards 'society'', (Selleck, 1972, p. 127) consequently discipline, authority, hierarchy and knowledge remained the normal school experience for most children. These strips however make fun of classroom, based education, siding with Macmurray's ideas and laughing at those who prioritize book knowledge above reasonable emotional judgements. Children's comics and text story magazines that predated the strip style weeklies, had a strong tradition of utilising school stories, about the experiences of groups of (predominantly upper class) children at boarding schools. Earlier, publishers had been concerned with producing reading material that adults found suitable for children, since adults held the purse strings, so often these stories would be fun and sometimes rebellious, but essentially moral and conforming. The most well-known and long lasting character (although not the earliest) Billy Bunter, created by Charles Hamilton for *The Magnet* in 1908, was a greedy troublemaker but his naughtiness never gave him an upperhand and he was often punished. Unlike these earlier publications, D C Thomson comics sought to connect directly with the child readership, encouraging them to buy the comics with their own, often very limited, pocket money. This marketed the buying and reading of the comic itself as an act of anti-authoritarian rebellion. The comics spoke directly to the working class child, validating their experiences as important and typical though the types of characters presented in the comic. In this context, the learning experiences of children in their regular classrooms was less significant than the learning which occurred in everyday lives, on the streets, between families and between friends. Lord Snooty's gang offered the pretext for a similar exploration of the social dynamics between children as school stories, whilst framed in a more relevant and familiar context for readers or groups of children on the streets. Through humour, it acknowledged the importance and implications of everyday, social interactions as formative and influential learning experiences.

As demonstrated by the 'Lord Snooty and His Pals' strip from the 10th September 1938, Snooty's education consists of two private tutors each in cap and gown, demanding that Snooty finish his maths problem. The posture of the two teachers, pointing at the blackboard and the problem, and their standing together, separated from Snooty at his desk and amongst books implies a very traditional learning dynamic, where the subject and the information is central. The teachers expect mastery of specific skills, in this case mathematics, but are not interested in engaging with the student. In Ash-Can Alley, when Snooty is caught under the assumption that he is playing truant from the local school, a mistake plausible due to his disguise, the situation of the classroom echoes the same authoritarian approach to knowledge, despite a seemingly more informal environment. The teacher's motivation for engaging the children in the Be Kind To Animals protest is in deference to the Headmaster's wishes, rather than any genuine engagement with the issue. The teacher is purely following instructions, and

not encouraging ‘valuational knowledge’, and it is this that the children are able to take advantage of to reveal her hypocrisy and superficiality of character, ultimately getting her fired as a poor example of behaviour to the children.



Figure 7: Anon, excerpt from ‘Lord Snooty and His Pals’ in *Beano*, No. 7 September 10th 1938. Image courtesy of The British Library, copyright of DC Thomson & Co Ltd.

Neither of the educational experiences demonstrated in this strip show learning environments where the emotions and interactions of learners matter, however we very clearly see that Snooty’s actions are connected to the relationships he has, and that the understanding and empathy for his friends motivates him to act creatively and sympathetically. Unquestioning obedience, as demonstrated by the school teacher leads in this strip to flawed motivations:

In schools, as in life, Macmurray argued for the centrality of spontaneity, imagination, experimentation - orientations and practices reciprocally sympathetic with the education of the emotions.

In addition, instead of clinging to fixed beliefs he argues we need to develop a willingness to embrace ‘the true security that comes only through the capacity to change our opinions continuously, in a balanced and controlled fashion, by a continuous testing of them against the changing facts of experience’’ (Fielding, 2012, p. 682)

Through this testing against reality, playing out and stretching knowledge to interactional situations, learning becomes embodied, tested and therefore ‘valuational’. Macmurray advocated both real life experiences and use of imagination for this ‘playing out’ process. His notion that self-development is a result of the interactions between knowledge and engagement with others, thus encouraging continued enquiry and adaptation to different contexts. Macmurray’s educational theories were heavily influenced by his background of moral philosophy, which advocated our capacity to interact with others as a ‘measure of our humanity’ (Fielding, 2012, p. 684) and that in order to be fully open to such interactions our capacity to manage change and to adapt to difference was fundamental. In the pre-Second World War context in which he was working, the predominance of new child protection ideologies was increasingly separating children from the regular everyday experiences of adult lives, and parents were encouraged to believe in childhood as a space protected from adulthood. This paternalistic approach, alongside the industrial concerns of the day for ‘development’ and ‘progress’, put pressure on classrooms to demonstrate a safe and protected education, in which progress could be monitored and evidenced. Despite Macmurray, and others as previously mentioned, advocating for ‘education *in* rather than *for* society, through

immersion in forms of community life that both affirm our uniqueness and our mutuality', (Fielding, 2012, p. 686) schools increasingly became institutions separated from wider society, advocates of an individualistic approach to consuming knowledge as preparation for an individualistic, consumerist secondary education and adulthood.

Arguably the impact and consequences of this trend can be seen to be mirrored in the transformational journey of this one particular comic strip. As a weekly strip, the transition of characteristics and behaviour was a slow and subtle change, and not necessarily a consistent progression. The freedom of the 1938 Lord Snooty and His Pals, out on the streets, challenging authority and testing their knowledge in real world situations did not last. With the onset of the Second World War, the German's and Hitler himself became adversary characters in the strip, creating scenarios less about children trying to negotiate the real adult world, experiencing self-development and making true moral choices, and were more about vanquishing the enemy, a binary construct, in the interests of the nation. By the 1950 Snooty's pals were no longer Ash-Can Alley children, but characters living within Bunkerton castle. This residential transition altered the power dynamic between the characters, the removal of the social and economic separation between him and his gang, and their conformity to the castle context, allowed Snooty to become more of a leader: they had adapted to him, rather than continuing the charade of his changing clothes to fit in with them. Strips became less about social interactions with figures of authority and highlighting child powerlessness, and instead the humour of the stories would primarily focus around things and material resources, enforcing objects as descriptors of identity, rather than actions and behaviour. Although socially Snooty was still part of a gang, the strip was increasingly about the abilities of Snooty alone to take action and succeed. These changes in the 1950's strips echoed the real experience of children, the residential confinement of most stories showing children protected within the home (the castle), and the unstructured and unrestricted experiences of street life interactions no longer being the norm for most readers. The social and economic progress of 1950s Britain made domesticity and conspicuous consumption both an expectation and a model of behaviour.

Learning to move with the times

By the 1970s, the gang had gone. Although the strip continued to use the other characters periodically, Snooty's ability to outsmart and outmanoeuvre others was entirely self-contained, and the complex interactions of a whole gang playing together had entirely disappeared. His actions were no longer a response to important friendships but rather a demonstration of his authority and individual abilities. His status as Lord however became increasingly problematic through the 1970s and 1980s, as without his pals, he became distanced from the experiences of the majority of his (still predominantly working class) readers. Lord Snooty finally retired in 1991, although he is occasionally allowed out for special editions and reminiscences. In 2008 however there was a shocking development for many *Beano* readers as Lord Snooty the Third (grandson of the original) became a new strip. Snooty III was more of a spoilt, privileged child, who despite being a leader of his own gang, was mostly alone and used his expensive toys to cause mischief. The strip was not popular and only lasted three years, but it seems rather fitting in the light of current concerns about the consequences of education that the nostalgia for the original Snooty, who was inclusive, socialist and a good friend should be superseded by an arrogant, friendless and selfish grandchild.

The educational ideas that may be seen as embodied in the action of the strip and character in the 1930s, re-emerge in Richard Gerver's 2019 *Education: A Manifesto for Change* which reinvigorates many of the arguments that Macmurray was making one hundred years ago. Its publication now seems to address explicit concerns around contemporary education with regard to discourses concerning the ways in which school systems are inadequate preparation for children in the modern world. One example of the ways in which these typical concerns are being responded to by educationalists, can be seen clearly within the Scottish context. After a long re-evaluation process (started in 2002), the new Curriculum for Excellence was implemented in 2010, consciously prioritising skills they identify as relevant for a contemporary context. Focused through the development of four capacities, those of 'successful learners', 'confident individuals', 'responsible citizens' and 'effective contributors', the curriculum's aims, 'helps our children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life in the 21st century.' (*Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence*, n.d.) The emphasis on social connectedness and personal engagement with a wider community is strongly evident in each of these capacities, and they advocate development of skills such as openness, respect, resilience and well-being. The emotional nature of these qualities recognises the importance of the social, interactional context for all learning and echoes Macmurray's social learning priorities of tackling difference, developing social wisdom and self-aware reasonable emotional judgement. In arguing that the current education system does not sufficiently prepare young minds to be adaptable, inventive and creative, and thus does not build skills of self-confidence and assurance within an uncertain and changing world, both Macmurray and Gerver raise a challenge to educators to embed the social in the educational, a challenge which all school systems, not just Scotland, are currently trying to respond to. In advocating the role of true friendship in learning, as a way of creating an environment which promotes discourse and exploration alongside equal, curious and compassionate others, they both suggest that social learning is not only for children. Indeed, Gerver speaks directly to educators in his introduction advocating that despite differences of opinion, they must work together:

Humankind is gloriously complex, organic, unpredictable and evolutionary, and that is why education is so frustratingly complex. There is no elegant solution, no neat and tidy answer, but there are pathways we can explore, given the right stimulus, the right questions, the right attitudes. (Gerver, 2019, p. 10)

In the early days of Lord Snooty, the readers were children living within a socially divided Britain, back dropped by excruciating economic depression and under threat of an intractable political conflict; a circumstance which seems eerily familiar. In this context, Snooty's uninhibited attitude was a great role model: he was a character who genuinely cared, who was empathetic to the perspectives of others, who had the liberty of an explorative trial and error approach to learning, and who had genuine friendships with those who were different. Lord Snooty does not do things for his own gain or achievement. He uses his position of privilege to challenge injustice and to champion his friends, to ultimately participate fully in community. It is however important that Snooty does not take the moral high ground, as his position would make it very natural for inequality to define his relationships. The pleasure within the strip is the plethora of ways in which it seems to reinforce the community mindedness of the character of Snooty. That he is able to consider others, to recognize them as whole, complex human being and then to help, encourage or challenge them through his actions, repeatedly establishes him as not only a kind, moral character, but also person constructed, formed and affected by the community in which he lives. Ultimately though, this

boy, although dressed like a Lord, is still a boy, a reminder to readers that whatever the social position, status or costume of people they meet, it is their humanity - how they value and treat others – not their status, money or clothes that defines them. Snooty is a role model for learning through experience, for developing our capacity to accept difference, for gaining wisdom about others from social interactions, and for enacting reasonable emotional judgement; in this, he exemplifies Macmurray's, and so his contemporary ally Gerver's ideals for education, that teaching should enable learning of a lifelong, empowering skill, specifically of how to be a better friend and therefore a better human.

¹ The strip it is generally accepted was created and mostly drawn by Dudley Dexter Watkins, who was an artist employed by D C Thomson for several of their comic publication. There is, however, no official acknowledgement of authorship within the comic and therefore it is not possible to be absolutely certain about who drew each weekly strip, and whether this was truly the work of only one creator, or whether in acknowledging Watkins as producer, the work of others for these specific strips goes unrecognised. Although it seem most likely that it was Watkins, certainly for the early years, it seems appropriate to define the artist as anonymous due to this lack of certainty, and in recognition of the often unrecognised collaborative process involved in comics production at the time.

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