Lived Epistemology, the Childlike and a Virtuous Education

by

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work. Any part of this thesis which bares resemblance to any work I have written and published alongside it I have acknowledged in the text and have only used what is my own. I confirm that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

The following thesis provides an account of what it means to approach epistemic concepts in a lived rather than abstract fashion. It argues that taking such a position naturally leads to an assessment of how the epistemic life might be lived virtuously, and it grounds this in experiences of *being-with-worth*. It then isolates and gives a thorough account of the key, childlike virtues found in the Golden Age of British children's literature: playfulness, a capacity for wonder, and intellectual humility and open-mindedness. After exploring how this model of a virtuous epistemic life might re-orientate philosophical discussions of nostalgia and the epistemic worth of literature, the thesis finishes by cashing out what a virtuous education might look like. This final move includes an analysis of some of my own attempts to achieve a virtuous education whilst teaching.

Introduction: Knowledge Deserves a Story

Over the years it has taken to write this thesis, I have taken on roles as university seminar tutor, module creator and convenor, workshop leader, peer and pastoral support worker and trainer, freelance philosophy specialist for children aged 5 to 18, club and international women's American football coach, and, for the past year, a full-time teacher of Philosophy and Theology at a private boys' school in London. I would now class myself as, first and foremost, a teacher. As such, this thesis may have retained some of the more theoretical explorations into the nature of literature, knowledge and childhood which set it in motion, but it has transformed into a document which primarily seeks to narrate the ideas which led me to and continue to underpin my classroom practice and teaching philosophy. In this introduction and the first chapter I lay out what I take to be required for a holistic understanding of the nature and goals of epistemic concepts. In chapter two I turn to a study of the Golden Age of British children's literature to help me derive an account of playfulness, a capacity for wonder, and humility and open-mindedness as key epistemic virtues. In the third chapter, I analyse how such an approach might help us reassess epistemic activity through two case studies: nostalgia and literature. The final chapter then articulates my teaching philosophy and analyses examples of my teaching practice in light of the epistemology and virtue account I have depicted.

A threshold moment

> *Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of "world history," but nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die.*

I first came across these words in the first year of writing my thesis as part of a philosophy and literature workshop on Darwin and Nietzsche. Housed in a black-

box studio, we students had been given this extract and tasked with creating a short dramatic rendition of the piece. No doubt fuelled by the opening four words and my research into Victorian children's literature, my mind immediately jumped to images which still vividly accompany the passage whenever I read it:

> **A mother is sat at her child's bedside. The curtains are drawn to the cold, frosty night outside and a candle flickers against the walls of the small, plain bedroom as they read from a large, hardback picture book. Versed in what is to come, the parent lowers their tone, slows their pace, leans in a painfully slight amount and enunciates carefully as they reach the key, dramatic moment: "knowing". Having only heard the word whispered when no adult was present, and without definition or example, its connotations are darkly mysterious and the child holds their covers all the tighter. The parent inwardly smiles as they continue to read, steadily resolving the panic and awe they have created, until, finally: "the clever beasts had to die." The child's fingers loosen and their stomach unclenches.**

Continuing to read Nietzsche's 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense' reveals that this is a hypothesised fable, used to introduce a scathing, philosophical reflection on the arrogant and deceptive essence of the human intellect.

> *One might invent such a fable, and yet he still would not have adequately illustrated how miserable, how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature.* (2006, p. 114)

There was no bedtime reading, no extended world to the story. In fact, it was barely a story at all. It was a few lines created to aesthetically and symbolically *fail* in the service of a critique of humanity. And so, I stop imagining and awaken those faculties more suited to understanding and analysing a philosophical argument.

However, I need only read a few paragraphs further into the essay, and be somewhat literate in allegory, before I can return to the fable with a defensible reading of Nietzsche as believing there to be a great deal of truth in those lines. The story, arguably, gestures towards the actual state and history of humanity as Nietzsche understands it. My imagination excitedly restarts – if it had ever really ceased – and begins calling forth living images of historical moments, everyday activity and a future apocalypse that support or refute the story as containing some truth.

After all of this, I am prompted to ask: Was this opening paragraph literature or philosophy? Fact or fiction? Invitation to imagine or believe? Designed to entertain or convince? Childish or profound? Critical or aesthetic? All of these and more?

It is with this final question that I came to see that Nietzsche, intentionally or not, had succinctly challenged a series of binaries which I had been taught to use to divide and categorise the world and experience. It is these binaries that this thesis will seek to explore and collapse more thoroughly, but not to the condemnation or destruction of knowledge, rather to a hopeful and shaky reconciliation with the clever beasts that invented it. Like a relationship which has been fraught with betrayal on either side, there may never be complete trust again, but there can be a recognition of what is beautiful and good in the other and a reminder of what made them an object worthy of love in the first place.

Of course, very little of this thought process consciously registered when I first read Nietzsche's opening paragraphs, and, had I not been engaged in creating this thesis, I may never have returned to reflect on the experience. It would have been even less likely that I would have tried to capture or express what had occurred. After all, our developed intellects – those apparently miserable, shadowy, transient, aimless and arbitrary things – negotiate such linguistic subtleties, and more, with apparent ease and without needing conscious attention. However, our projects cast a new light on the world that makes objects and ideas shimmer where once they were dull and give us cause to stop and reflect on what was previously unacknowledged.

The project I was, and still am, engaged in – the one that shone a light on how I was reading and interacting with Nietzsche's fable and lies at the core of this thesis – is

the resolution of an internal conflict between my analytical-disposition to epistemology and my deep love for and commitment to the power of imaginative stories. How could I reconcile my need to know about the world, and to be able to communicate and justify what I knew to those around me, with an ingrained but seemingly indefensible intuition that I *learn* from literature? How could I bring together knowing without articulable justification that the literary experiences I had as a child and those I was still having as an adult mattered to and constituted part of my knowledge of the world with a philosophical system which had unquestionably demonstrated to me the fact that a worthy, conjoined search for such truth rested upon articulable defences of such knowledge? It was passages like Nietzsche's that said to me there was something wrong with my understanding of knowledge and stories alike.

Throughout my life and education, I had learned that 'knowledge' was propositional and, as I came to study it, that it was a term with a definition. It had its necessary and sufficient conditions. I was worried, like many epistemologists, about what constituted the justification of my beliefs, but I was satisfied with the starting point and direction. The search was providing me with a sense of purpose and joy. Yet, there was also guilt. Epistemic and academic guilt that rippled from the tension between this term and my belief in the power of literature to convey knowledge. At first the guilt felt as though it stemmed from my infidelity to knowledge; I was knowing where I had promised not to know and betraying a system of thought which had given me so much. But the experience of reading Nietzsche's fable pointed elsewhere. As I described in my imagining of the bedtime reading, knowledge is not just a word upon the parent's lips; it is a *dramatic moment*. Knowledge is alive. It resonates. Its being and manifestation, the very experience of it, are bound up with the values and activities which cause it, which exist alongside it in its host, and it shapes in causal ways what happens after it. This realisation suggested instead that my guilt came from failing to acknowledge and repressing the lived, experiential side of knowledge for the sake of loyalty to its philosophical manifestation.

Throughout my life, I had also learned that I could interpret stories. I could search for meaning in them. I could learn about their authors and make reasoned

conclusions about why they might have written what they did and why they might have written it in the way they did. Stories could also act as a training ground for literacy and certain cognitive and emotional capacities. But I had learned that, ultimately, stories had a dominant, aesthetic component which separated them from truth and the search for knowledge. They were to be experienced and not relied upon to know about the world. This made sense. Yet the stories, particularly their characters, made fun of me or shook their heads in disappointment as I built my epistemic fortress to protect my beliefs and actions from their influence. Then came Nietzsche's fable and, confident and smug, they settled back and watched as it lowered the drawbridge and drained the moat.

One – that disembodied, rational, supposed token of humanity – may well object at this point: what a self-indulgent opening to an academic thesis. Not only has the author presumed that their personal experience is worthy of such lengthy recount but also that it contains any insight that has not already been articulated elsewhere and in a much clearer and objective fashion. I can only say that I did not intend to convey either of these presumptions, I only wished the form of my writing to do justice to the central claims, epistemological philosophy, and educational outlook of this thesis: epistemological concepts are not dead and abstract, they are also a series of dramatic and lived moments. Knowledge, belief, truth, and justification are things we live through and live with and epistemology can be as playful and anarchic as it is surgical and analytic. Most importantly, our epistemic existence needs and deserves stories.

Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of "world history," but, nevertheless, it was beautiful. The clever beasts had created a thing so powerful that it could both enslave them to it and free them from an ever-present awareness of the silence emanating from the world around them and the inevitable cooling and congealing of their star.

Some of the beasts would say their invention had eradicated the silence, others that it had revealed that there had always been sound behind the silence, and a few that they must destroy it and face the silence once more. Some stood and listened to the voices of their fellow beasts, some took up their messages and added their voice to the cacophony, a few tried to shut themselves away and find the silence again despite the din outside, and many simply ignored them and forgot there had ever been a silence before the voices. All the while, every one of those clever beasts carried their invention inside them. It grew within them until no one could tell where it began and where they ended. Whatever they made, their invention made with them. Whatever they felt, their invention felt with them. And, however they changed, their invention changed with them.

Many of them continued to discuss the invention, of course, but whether it actually was an invention or not, whether it was with them or outside them, and whether any of that mattered, had long since been forgotten. And so they laughed, and they argued, and they cried, and they pondered, and they lived. And their invention lived with them.

Until the minute was up.

After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts – and their invention – had to die.

Chapter 1: Experiencing Epistemic Concepts and Virtue Epistemology

Traditional epistemology

What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge? Is anyone ever in a position to rightfully say they know anything with certainty? When does one have good reason to believe? Is a belief justified when it meets internally or externally imposed criteria? Is there any knowledge or belief that does not rely on another belief for its justification? Does all knowledge reduce to propositional knowledge? Does all belief require language?

These are just some of the interesting and important questions asked in the field of epistemology. Philosophers working in this area have traditionally approached them in a particular manner and with a specific methodology, namely, via analytic concept analysis and logically rigorous inductive and deductive reasoning. They have hoped to define knowledge, capture the nature of belief and discover the "truth of the matter" through abstract reasoning and pure intellect. They have specialised and focused to an almost sublime level of detail, particularly when it comes to inventing and tackling Gettier-style problems surrounding a justified, true belief model of knowledge.

This traditional approach and its goals have been criticised by numerous schools of postanalytic, feminist, virtue, and postmodern philosophy, not to mention by evolutionary psychology, cognitive neuroscience and religious or spiritual practices. Traditional epistemology – or "epistemology 'proper'" as some feminist literature has taken to scathingly calling it – has been accused of being the epitome of inaccessible, ivory tower thinking, ignoring the discoveries of psychology and cognitive neuroscience, failing to take into account everyday experience, not addressing its ethical dimensions and impact, allowing privileged and outdated hierarchies to dominate discourse, perpetuating the mythical existence of concepts such as objectivity, metanarratives or a stable sense of subjectivity, and more. Some of these critiques will return throughout the thesis, but the idea I wish to explore is that the traditional approach has, to use Coleridge's image, become a Gorgon's head

that looks death into everything (cited Scott, 1985, p. 15). What I mean by this is that traditional epistemology neglects the lived, experiential dimension of its central concepts and deems first-person, subjective experience as problematic to achieving its goals rather than being, as I maintain, vital for a complete, holistic understanding of them. However, I do not want to position this as a critique *per se*. Traditional approaches are not wrong to do this, they are only wrong insofar as they do not recognise they are wielding tools that help them achieve one kind of understanding rather than the singular and correct way of understanding the nature and "truth" of a concept. Ultimately, how we approach knowledge, belief, and other epistemic concepts, and whether we are seeking the nature of the world or a better understanding of our relationship to it and each other, can only be measured in relation to the projects we undertake and what we take to be the most valuable aspect of human life.

In order to better understand what this might amount to I will briefly consider the concept of belief and how we can not only both reject the existence of beliefs and still have direct, lived experience of it, but that we must grapple with allowing both of these stances to co-exist in order to fully comprehend it. Intentional mental states such as belief may not exist in the way they are generally understood, but neither we nor concepts exist at a purely descriptive level, we are embodied and experiential and this must always be kept in mind.

Abstracted belief

We experience beliefs in many ways. The one that we standardly talk of is the concept of belief which we experience through its effects. This is the type of belief we try to communicate to each other when we explain or predict our own and other's behaviours. Belief in this sense has several components.

Firstly, these beliefs are commonly interpreted as having an attitudinal, propositional and intentional structure. "Intentional" is used here in the philosophical sense of the word as being aimed at, about or representing the world, rather than the everyday sense of being deliberate or motivated by an intention. As

such, believing is an attitude of accepting the truth of some proposition about a feature of an independently existing world. Beliefs thus fit the formula, "subject S holds attitude A towards proposition P, where proposition P is about or represents the world". For example, "I believe that all grass is green", which now simply means "I take the proposition "all grass is green" to be true of the world."

Secondly, most accounts of belief also add a necessary motivation or influence condition. A belief is the kind of thing that can motivate me to act or influence me to feel in some way. I cannot exist in a state where I believe P to be true and not have it factor into relevant decision-making, whether that is at the conscious or subconscious level. For example, if I have some odd disposition to eat all things which are green, I cannot believe that all grass is green without also being motivated to eat all grass and, unless there is some contravening belief or reason for not doing so, eating it.

Next, it is generally taken as standard that beliefs can be changed consciously, and subconsciously, by myself and by others. Let us say that I came across an organism which for all intents and purposes was indistinguishable from all the grass I have previously come across except that this organism was brown. It was then explained to me by a trusted friend why this new organism still constituted grass despite being brown. From then on, I continue to eat green grass because of the above, unusual disposition, but I do not eat this new brown grass. However, I continue to call both organisms "grass" in conversation and in my own, internal language of thought. It would seem reasonable to say that I no longer believed that all grass is green, but that grass can be both green and brown. Beliefs can be highly resistant to this kind of change, particularly in situations where a change in belief would require an overhaul of one's pre-existing narratives and understanding of the patterns of meaning which govern the world.[1] Yet, despite this resistance, the fact that beliefs can change and be changed is a cornerstone of our everyday understanding of belief and human behaviour. Indeed, being able to subject our beliefs to scrutiny with an

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[1] See (Connors & Halligan, 2014) for a paper containing a list of references to studies done on the resistance of belief.

eye towards validating or changing them could be viewed as one of the most distinctly human activities we can engage in.

On the above understanding, belief is a dichotomous, attitudinal, intentional, propositional, motivational, changeable state of being, and *a* belief is this state directed towards a particular proposition about the world. S believes P when they take P to be true of the world, do not doubt its truth and are motivated to act upon P in circumstances where a belief or non-belief in P is perceived to impact upon which action should be taken. However, we might ask of this account, in what sense do belief and these beliefs exist and do we experience them directly? If the above were the only way we could approach the nature of belief I would see myself as being closely aligned with the interpretationism (or instrumentalism, depending on how you are distinguishing your schools of thought) of Daniel Dennett. The type of beliefs so far described do not, in Dennett's (1991) terms, "robustly" exist. In other words, they do not exist in the same way that this computer is perceived and read as having an existence in the world independently of me and other perceiving creatures. Instead, they exist in the same way that centres of gravity and equators exist. They represent, help explain and predict patterns and actions created by other robustly existing entities. In the case of belief, they exist insofar as they help us understand and predict an individual's or group's patterns of human behaviour. They may even take on a more impactful role insofar as once they have been created and incorporated into personal and social consciousness they can also shape future patterns of behaviour. As such, whilst they do not exist robustly, they are not entirely fictional or arbitrary.

Take the example of me believing that this computer is in front of me. In what sense can you or I locate or experience that belief? You may say that you observe my actions and, given your understanding of human beings and that you also believe in the computer, you can state that I am acting in a way that is consistent with a belief in the existence of the computer. I can also do the same thing when examining myself. I can look at my own actions, ask why they manifested in such a way, and posit a belief as an explanation for my behaviour and even my feeling of motivation to do the action. The deduced belief also places me in a pattern which joins me with a general understanding of other human beings. It identifies that I am not an outlier

that needs explaining but rather another instance of action that is consistent with a previous theory of belief. We also see belief playing this explanatory role when we are trying to make sense of actions which do not fit with our understanding of ourselves or when we are trying to interpret the actions of another person. "But *why* did Kathy shun Jeet?" I might ask my friend. "She must believe those rumours!" says my friend. Similarly, Kathy may have gone home and said to herself, "That wasn't like me at all, I *must* believe those rumours." In both cases, the existence of belief, and a particular belief, are being posited in order to explain the observable patterns of behaviour. In fact, in the case of Kathy's self-analysis, the existence of subconscious beliefs which one is not always aware of is also being deduced to explain her behaviour.

What interpretationism identifies is that because we have come to be so familiar with the concept of belief we take it as given and existing to the point that if we cannot understand a person's behaviour we feel it necessary to reinterpret what their beliefs must be. This is perfectly acceptable for now given that we have few better explanations for these patterns of behaviour, but belief itself has not been experienced or identified directly as part of this analysis. It has only been hypothesised or deduced because of the experience of, what are taken to be, its effects.

Dennett's work is serving here to illuminate how traditionally analytic explanations might give an excellent account of the role that the concept of belief is playing and define it in accordance with this. His account of belief appears so abstract, universal and reasoned that it is difficult to refute, even if it is moving towards understanding these intentional states as not "robustly" existing. If Dennett is correct – and while I agree with his account that is a big 'if' for epistemologists at large – there are many adjustments and debates still to be had over the *exact* conceptual role and structure of belief and there is also still much work to be done in cognitive neuroscience to understand the workings of belief and the brain in general. However, my contention does not exist at the level of fine-grained and focused qualifications or scientific description but at the macro level of what is required for a complete understanding of the concept of belief. Frameworks such as Dennett's run the risk of being severely depleted in their *deep* understanding of epistemic

concepts insofar as they neglect *lived* and *direct* experiences in their attempt for abstracted universality. Just because there is no direct experience of such an abstract concept of belief does not mean there is no direct experience of *any* understanding of belief and, ultimately, a complete grasp of the concept of belief needs to wrestle with both the abstracted and lived dimensions of the concept. Indeed, I find it very telling that in his assertion that were eliminativists to find the scientific explanation required to completely overhaul how we conceive of belief, we would turn away from the 'folk psychology' he is discussing, "except, perhaps, in the rough-and-tumble of daily life" (Dennett, 1991, p. 50). But everyday life is not an "except", it is the norm, it matters, and how we directly live and experience these concepts during our rough-and-tumble is a huge part of understanding them holistically.

Lived belief

The following series of examples is presented as my attempt to work through a lived experience of belief. At least two objections may be raised about the process. Firstly, it is entirely possible that it will reveal much more about the limits of my imagination than any shared understanding or experience of belief. You may be able to identify a clear experience of belief long before I fully recount my own. However, this should not be a problem. The hope here is to lend credence to the idea that even though the type of belief involved in the hypothesising about human behaviour does not robustly exist, we can still identify a direct, rather than merely explanatory, experience of belief by reflecting on how we live the concept. As such, I encourage you to try and reflect on your own experiences of believing before, during and after reading my examples.

Secondly, what I am doing here may well be arbitrary in selecting something to call belief. My own background, dispositions, biases, and so on, are likely pushing me towards calling the following experience 'belief' rather than another suitable candidate and it is a limitation of my conceptual system and network of meaning that stops me from attaching it to some other experience that you might wish to extend it to. However, I embrace that the below is what it is to live belief for me. The point is not to prove that the below type of experience *is* belief, or that we all

have the same experience, it is to gesture towards how I experience and what I identify as a lived experience of belief. My hope is that it will ring true with others, but, ultimately, as I have just stated, the invitation is to attempt a similar process as much as it is to agree with me. Why this is a valuable, reflective process, and why we might desire to share such potentially discrepant narratives, is discussed further on in this chapter.

The immediate difficulty of trying to locate a more direct experience of belief appears to be in distinguishing it from the experience of existing and simply being. I take it as given that I can have the experiences *this-computer*, *acting-on-a-computer* and *my-foot*. Just as you, right now, are having the experience *reading-a-thesis*. The question now is whether there is a distinguishable part of those experiences that is identifiable as an experience of *I-believe-the-computer-exists*, *I-believe-I-am-reading-a-thesis*, or *I-believe-my-foot-exists* or are the respective pairs entirely co-extensive? They certainly seem to be closely tied. Simply focusing on an experience of a limb or object appears to yield very little by way of separation. I do not *experience* any difference between *my-foot* and *I-believe-my-foot-exists*. Similarly, if I try to think about what I believe about an object or thought currently not with me then it feels as though I simply recall an experience of that thing in order to perceive the belief. For example, if I try to call to mind the experience *I-believe-Santa-is-real* what comes to mind is a previous experience of when I believed in Santa. In other words, I bring to the forefront of my mind a memory of an experience rather than one diluted to the belief that existed in that scenario.

The possibility of a direct account of belief, what it is for belief to be lived, is not to be found by concentrating on current or previous experience of belief but on trying to contrast the experiences *being-without-doubt* with *being-with-doubt*. Where being and belief are intertwined is in *being-without-doubt*, but where being and belief come apart is in certain instances of *being-with-doubt*. Perhaps this separation can help us to reflect on what it is like to experience belief first-hand. I say "perhaps" because it is not as straightforward as contrasting something which I currently doubt with something which I believe. For example, I might contrast *I-doubt-the-existence-of-aliens* with *I-believe-my-foot-exists*. I am thus experiencing *aliens-doubt* and *foot-belief* at the same time. However, on further reflection, there

appears to be little difference between these two experiences. The example of *aliens-doubt* is not actually a doubting experience in my case, but rather an instance of *I-believe-aliens-do-not-exist* in disguise. So unquestioned and unquestionable is my doubt that aliens exist that despite any desire to give the appearance of an open mind to their possible existence – there is no irrefutable proof that they do not exist after all – I actually hold the belief that they do not exist. In this sense, "I believe" and "I do not believe" appear to be two sides of the same coin in the phenomenology of belief. This example serves to remind us that where we may posit doubt we must be careful we have not actually slipped back into belief and so cannot learn anything by putting the experiences next to each other.

Perhaps then the best tactic is not to look at instances where doubt about the existence or truth of something is definite – for in that certainty, doubt threatens to give way to belief – but rather look to cases where the subject has been in inner turmoil and strife concerning a single proposition. Here I will take the extreme example of phantom limb experience and the more every day examples of reaching for a drink thought to be there and the Müller-Lyer parallel lines illusion.

Those who experience phantom limbs appear to be in one of the most powerful states of *being-with-doubt*. They are caught in a direct tension between *my-limb* and *I-doubt-my-limb-exists*. In the case of phantom limbs, there is a tearing apart of two of the fundamental aspects of the *my-limb* experience: *sight-of-my-limb* and *internal-perception-of-my-limb*. To drastically over-simplify, these two have repeatedly and experientially, since a very young age, been taken together and fused in the *my-limb* experience. Of course, *my-limb* was always constituted by these different parts, but the boundaries quickly disappeared because of the frequent and repeated taking of the experience as a single unit. With these boundaries gone, the conscious experience of a fragmented understanding of *my-limb* also disappears. Phantom limb, however, takes them apart again and the experience is one of serious cognitive dissonance between an experience of *internal-perception-of-my-limb* – which was, up until this point, co-extensive with *my-limb* – and the experience of *I-doubt-my-limb-exists*. Belief and being appear to have split, at least in

experience.[2] Belief was the state of *being-without-doubt* which existed prior to this split and will only exist again once the confused experience is reconciled or absorbed.

The experience of phantom limb is an extreme case – and an experience I have not had – but it did help me reflect upon more everyday examples that I have undergone. For instance, reaching for a glass that I thought was there but was gone. Whilst talking, I might become thirsty and reach for the glass I believe is behind me. However, feeling no glass, I turn and see no glass. In the moment of surprise that follows it certainly feels as though I have experienced both *no-glass* and *I-believe-there-is-a-glass-behind-me*. Memory and imagination quickly react and I experience my mind trying to find explanations that will allow a recoupling of *no-glass* and *I-believe-there-is-no-glass*. Sometimes this is instantaneous and subconscious, but other times the moment stretches on and I am left reeling, trying to find an explanation. Doubt fills the gap where being and belief come apart. Now, we may not be able to pinpoint whether that doubt is residue *I-doubt-there-is-no-glass* because, despite my sensory input, I cannot find an explanation and fully reconcile with *I-believe-there-is-no-glass* yet, or whether it is just a more general state of *I-doubt-the-existence-of-this-state-of-affairs* because I have no coherent and understandable account of the matter. Either way, I feel I have left the realm of *being-without-doubt* where belief and being go hand-in-hand and entered an experience of *being-with-doubt*.

Perhaps we can create that experience now with a classic illusion: Müller-Lyer parallel lines (see Figure 1).

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[2] For a more physiologically rigorous overview of the potential source of phantom limbs and phantom limb pain see (Andoh, et al., 2017) and for brief discussions of why the causes of phantom limb pain are still contested see (Giummarra & Moseley, 2011) and (Makin, 2015).
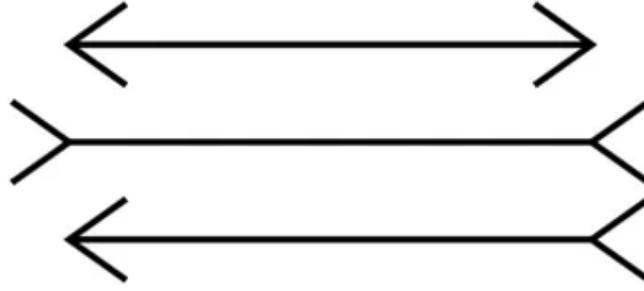
The immediate perception for most of us is that these lines are of different lengths and they have the corresponding experience *three-lines-of-different-lengths*. The belief is, at this point, co-extensive with the experience. However, evidence is easily provided with a measurement that they are not different lengths but are, in fact, all the same length. If you have not experienced this illusion before you can now, without permanently marking the paper, either measure each of the three lines to see that they are the same length or place a straight ruler vertically at either end of the lines to demonstrate that all three align on either side. The reason I stipulated not to mark the paper is that whilst the evidence introduced excellent reasons for not thinking the three lines are the same length, as soon as it is removed most of us will continue to experience the three lines as being of different lengths. As such, there is a separation of being and belief in this experience. My experience of being when returning to the original diagram is still one of *three-lines-of-different-length* even as I am in a state of *I-doubt-there-are-three-lines-of-different-length* or even *I-believe-there-are-three-lines-of-the-same-length*. As such, I am caught in a state of *being-with-doubt* that clearly contrasts with the state of *being-without-doubt* that I was in before I had checked the lengths of the lines.

Belief may now appear as though it can only be experienced negatively. It is the state of not being in doubt. This may well be how we best become aware of belief. Like Heidegger's hammer, we are not aware of it until it is broken. However, that does not mean it is not possible to become more mindful of my current state of belief given that I have, in other cases, been in states of doubt. Right now I can say I am in a state of belief about many things even if I cannot fully articulate them as separate from being, but I do know that they can potentially be separated in the way

that other experiences have been – what I take to be my default state of being, is thus also a state of belief. This is what I mean when I say I experience belief as *being-without-doubt*.

Living alongside abstraction

We now have the beginnings of an account of what a lived experience of an epistemological concept might be and how it co-exists with abstract analysis. Neither the abstracted nor experiential component of belief negates the other as they both have grounding, the former in explaining patterns of human behaviour, and the latter in a person's experience. In some instances, we may try to bring them back together or they will go together without issue. In the case of belief, we can see every day how deeply ingrained the opening, abstracted understanding of belief is, even if it is not always articulated in such a way. As such, the abstract concept surely does impact upon our experience of it. However, one may agree with a particular line of abstract theorising – as I do with Dennett's – but still recognise that its understanding of the concept of study is not the only way of defining or engaging with the concept. In this sense, belief is both an attitudinal, dichotomous, intentional, propositional, motivational, changeable state of being, *and* it is, at least for me, *being-without-doubt*. I say "at least for me" because there is no universally defined or recognisable way of understanding the latter. I can only live it and try to represent it to others with my own and other's narratives.

Of course, this is only to analyse the concept of belief. What about related epistemic concepts such as truth, certainty and knowledge? What is important to understand is that on a lived, experiential understanding of a concept the main question is: "what experiences are attached to it?" As I described above, my understanding of the lived state of belief is *being-without-doubt* but that is closely tied, if not often co-extensive with, *being*. However, there are times when what I would consider my regular *being*, and its co-extensive *being-without-doubt*, are interrupted by an emotional or even physical sensation, particularly when that state of being is challenged. Others might experience or talk of such reactions when they are challenged on the existence or non-existence of a divine being, the validity of an

ethical concept such as justice, the integrity of a political ideal, or the fidelity of a loved one. In these instances, the belief is not simply experienced as steady *being-without-doubt*, nor does it collapse into a state of *being-with-doubt* as there is still an experience of the proposition being correct. It is experienced by me as *being-which-resists-doubt*. It seems to me that lived understandings of knowledge, certainty and truth reside here without being entirely synonymous or distinct concepts.

When I try to identify these lived instances of knowledge, certainty, truth, and so on, as distinct from abstract conceptions, I tend towards memories of times when I have been so carried away in a passionate conversation on some topic that I have exclaimed, "that is so true!" whilst only having a vague sense of what the conclusion arrived at was and how we got there. I certainly couldn't recount the argument if pressed. These are obviously cases where the majority of philosophers would, rightly, not want to apply an abstracted understanding of certainty or knowledge. Yet the experience in the moment was that this was an unchallengeable proposition. I felt a physical reaction to the statement which was akin to celebrating a great achievement. This was *lived* certainty and truth. I can recall being carried to conclusions whilst following a particular line of thought or reasoning which makes such obvious sense that whatever conclusion I arrived at I not only accepted it, but was involved with it enough to already envision persuasively and passionately defending it. I was *certain* that I *knew* the *truth* of the matter in that moment whether I would be able to defend what I knew to the required standards on an abstract understanding of those italicised terms or not. It is not just that I am experiencing *being-without-doubt* which is stable through lack of challenge, I am *being-which-resists-doubt* where the stability of my being, insofar as I experience it as tied up with the proposition at hand, is tangibly *withstanding* an assault. Indeed, this might help us understand those instances where we convince ourselves of something without any extra proof or reasoning, where we think about something until we state: "Yes, I am sure that is the case". If you cannot call such an experience to mind, think of what might be going on for a game show contestant who moves from guessing 'B is the correct answer' to being sure that it is. In those instances, no extra proof has been provided and an abstracted understanding of justified surety, knowledge, and so on, might scoff at such a statement. However, at least as I have

experienced it, there is a solidification of my state from *being-with-doubt* all the way through to *being-which-resists-doubt*. Whatever an abstract or psychological analysis might reveal and posit about how and why we do this and what that must help us deduce about the nature of the subconscious, belief, knowledge, and so on, it remains that we *live* and directly experience the move from intuition or guess through belief and into certainty without any abstracted justification, only with a live feeling of it.

This notion of lived justification is a highly anti-intuitive one for someone of my schooling and upbringing given just how dominant and ingrained the conditions of articulation and narrative have become in Western society. As such, I experience such justification and my *being-which-resists-doubt* tensely and nervously. I am still experiencing certainty but I attempt to introduce doubt or resist any external recounting of the experience precisely because if I were asked to recount it I am aware it will be received negatively. In a legalistic society where one's defence from accusations of wrongdoing depends upon how precisely and articulately one can recount the narrative of one's own and other's actions, using a lived experience of justification is tantamount to accepting that one will be found guilty. However, lived experiences of belief, knowledge, truth, and so on, when captured by the move from *being-without-doubt* to *being-which-resists-doubt*, reveal how strongly we can live an experience of holding a justification for our beliefs that stands apart from what we can recount. As (Dupré, 2007) argues, we trust and are confident about certain beliefs in a way that is sometimes answerable to logical justification but can exist independently of it. To put this in terms of what has been outlined so far, on an abstract account one might require me to defend the claim that I believe or know my foot exists via reasoned and accessible argument. However, regardless of whether this argument were deemed to be a successful philosophical defence or not, I would still experience *being-which-resists-doubt* if challenged on the *my-foot* experience. The experience is simply too strong, too immediate and too clear. To draw from the children's literature in chapter two, in George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (2006), the princess attempts to tell her nurse and friend that she has seen her long-dead grandmother but they will not believe her. When she asks why, the nurse simply answers, "Because I *can't* believe you" (p. 8). People only "believe what they can" (p. 61). When what they are being asked to

believe is the presence of a dead woman, even if the grandmother had shown herself to them then they would not have believed their senses and simply called it a dream. For, "seeing is not believing – it is only seeing" (p. 62). In this instance, the nurse alludes to the fact that her certainty or knowledge that dead people cannot come back to life is, experientially, *being-which-resists-doubt* even in the face of a kind of justification that may well, abstractly, constitute enough to believe, be certain, or know that something is the case. On the opposite side of things, whilst we may want to say that the Princess' certainty or knowledge is unjustified and so does not count as an instance of abstract knowledge or certainty, this does not negate the fact that she is experiencing and living it as such.

At the level of lived experience, we can also see how we might experience belief, justification, knowledge, or certainty even in the same proposition depending upon the context. For example, right now I experience "pi to the nth digit" stably. I may not be able to reel off the correct numbers but I am confident that pi is a fixed mathematical concept and that a brief interaction with a search engine or a competent mathematician would reveal at least some of those digits to me. As such, even without checking what pi is to the nth digit I experience "pi to the nth digit" as *being-without-doubt* despite my lack of immediate, abstract justification. However, this can very quickly become *being-which-resists-doubt* if what pi to the nth digit is suddenly mattered to my life. For example, I have a vivid memory of myself as a child watching a game show where the contestant had to remember what pi was to a seemingly impossible amount of digits. Along the bottom of the screen were the digits. "Pi to the nth digit" was now an experience of *being-which-resists-doubt*, not just because the digits were given to me on the television screen but because I desired that answer to be correct as I wanted the contestant to win and they were matching up with what was on the screen. For example, had the contestant been there for less compelling reasons then I would not have had the same experience of *being-which-resists-doubt*. However, in this instance, it *mattered* to me that what was on the screen was correct so that the person could win. Alternatively, I can also remember when pi to the nth digit mattered to my mathematical examinations, and I also remember that during the examination I experienced "pi to the nth digit" as *being-with-doubt*. I had revised it, I thought I knew what it was going in, but with the pressure of what pi was to the nth digit

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mattering to my life I questioned it and so experienced it as *being-with-doubt* when, in fact, that position was one where I had much more abstract justification for saying I knew what it was than I do right now. In the game show and examination scenarios "pi to the nth digit" had consequences and so my experience of it mutated to fit those scenarios, whereas right now "pi to the nth digit" bears no consequence and even with no rational or logical reasons for it to do so it manifests as *being-without-doubt*. As such, it appears as though which epistemic concept I experience in response to the world is dictated by a pre-existing relationship to what is in the world. In these different scenarios I experienced belief, certainty and doubt in relation to the same proposition because, ultimately, the experiential side of these epistemic concepts is something I live as much as I abstractly discuss or prove.

Is a lived understanding anti-philosophical?

Several objections may be raised at this point, but a particularly pressing claim might be that this entire project is at odds with how philosophy is generally understood as a discipline. For example, in her analysis of poetry as philosophy Karen Simecek (2013) identifies how one widespread understanding of any philosophical inquiry mandates that it must meet the demands of generality, rationality, and justification. She maintains that such an understanding has led many philosophers to reject poetry as a source of philosophical insight precisely because it is the product of "an 'overflow of feeling,' both expressing subjective experience and giving rise to a subjective experience for the reader as he or she responds to the content together with the mode of presentation." (p. 28) It appears to me that the above analysis of a lived dimension of epistemic concepts is also a product of feeling and an attempt to understand epistemic concepts in and via an expression of subjective experience. Additionally, I have been inviting you, the reader, to follow in having a subjective experience in response to it and attempting to call to mind your own lived understandings. As such, does this stand at odds with the generality, rationality, and justification required of philosophical inquiry? Am I simply doing terrible and ill-formed poetry? I am certainly seeking to prompt you to consider what it is to experience an epistemic concept rather than engage in an inquiry which "seeks to establish truths or knowledge about the general nature of *x* by thinking

abstractly about *x*" (p. 28). Indeed, I have set up this account as moving away from precisely that. I am, like Simecek's understanding of poetry, "encouraging you to dwell on particulars" and this, on a standard model of philosophical inquiry, stands "in tension with the kind of abstract thinking required for philosophical inquiry" (p. 29).

Simecek goes on to compellingly argue that one can get suitable generality, rationality and justification via poetry. We can move beyond the context of the poem and demonstrate that the subjective experiences being reported and created are of importance to the general public's understanding of the concept in question insofar as the experience gives us access to the unobserved structures and standards embedded in them. I agree and would want to extend this argument to my own analysis by suggesting that reflecting on the experience of the concepts alongside their abstracted definition may well give us similar access to structures and standards. For example, after identifying my lived understand of belief I might ask, how do the structure and standards of my lived experience differ from those applied to the abstract concept and does that say anything about how I *ought* to interact with belief or particular beliefs? I will return to this question below. Here, however, I want to explore where I depart from Simecek's understanding of philosophy. On Simecek's account, in order to be philosophically worthy an analysis of an experience must not only help the individual learn something about the concepts, the lesson must be of importance to the general public; it must still be generalisable.

I endorse Simecek's contention that we "do not merely want to interfere with how an individual thinks, because this supposes that we have already worked out the standards for our conceptual understanding" (p. 37). The philosophical approach taken in poetry, taken here, and extended to education later in this thesis, does not dictate concepts but rather makes recommendations about "what we ought to mean or how we ought to think of things in order to truly reflect on the nature of the world or our normative demands (the meanings reflect our values) or both." (p. 37) This whole project is intended to challenge the very idea of what is demanded if one wants to call something a complete epistemological account. However, Simecek continues that a philosophical understanding is still based upon a "robust grasp of concepts" which she cashes out as meaning, "establishing a deep enough grasp that

we (as a community of language users) use the concept consistently and coherently with full appreciation of the values involved." (p. 38) I contend that this is one type of understanding that may be highly valuable to many projects, but it is not the only way of understanding, nor is it the only way of philosophically grasping, the concept. As such, it is not as "robust" as it might be.

A holistic philosophy will also recognise and care about the lived experiences of concepts and how they are grasped by individuals and between small groups not just so more can be learned in order to create a consistent and coherent use between as many of us as possible, but because it is a mode of engaging directly with the concept and, ultimately, the other. This stands in tension with a traditional conception of philosophy insofar as the non-traditional approach I am pursuing is likely to highlight as much difference as similarity, and the final account may well not be consistent or coherent. To take the above examples, the experiences of knowledge, truth, belief, and so on, are potentially as varied as there are numbers of people who have experienced them.

Does the introduction of such variety not mean there is never a robust understanding of the concept as it seems to be opposed to generality? Does such an account create a conceptual mess rather than help us grasp the concept in question? One might look at how I understood my experience of belief as *being-without-doubt* and ask whether this is not simply the abstract definition of certainty or ask whether putting experiences of knowledge and truth on a scale of *being-which-resists-doubt* creates hazy boundaries where they need not be. These charges may hold some weight, but the result is not that such an account resists *philosophy*, only that they stand in relief to other styles of investigation and hinder certain goals. When the abstracted definitions and inquiries are put alongside experiential accounts, they actually create a holistic understanding of the concept that embraces rather than shies away from the possibility that we are beings who exist and live in a conceptually messy and experientially driven world whilst also being capable of at least attempting abstract reasoning and drawing parallels between thought and understanding via reduction of shared traits or agreement on precise terms. If a philosopher is truly a seeker of truth, wisdom, or understanding, it must be remembered that we live our concepts as much, if not more, than we define them and that these concepts do not

stay in neat boxes when they are experienced. The necessity of precise distinction is present when engaging in abstract concept analysis in order to regulate and order thought, but the fact that subjective experience adds variety to a concept where traditional philosophical analysis attempts to bring coherence does not mean that they have to stand in tension. They *complete* each other. Like two jigsaw pieces, staring at the details of one might stop me from being able to appreciate the details of the other, but they still fit together to create a whole. Trying to look at the fine-grained details of both the lived experiences of a concept and how to understand it abstractly may be impossible, but it does not mean the two do not join to create a single picture. The intricacies of any individual piece of the puzzle are as beautiful and important as the whole, and, in this sense, the whole is *not* more than the sum of its parts, but nor is a fine-grained appreciation for one piece reason to say one understands the whole better than those who specialise in other pieces. Indeed, when the pieces are gathered together, we can see how the pieces join and where they might even cooperate. Just as the motivating and explanatory functions of belief seem to depend on belief being able to have a lived force, so we often live some of the responsibility to form accountable and articulable beliefs.

This is not to say that the experiential dimension to understanding a concept cannot be generalised, only that it does not need to be in order to be part of understanding a concept and to be used in philosophising. On the contrary, one might find that an experience of justification – of *being-which-resists-doubt* – resides in sharing the experiential dimension with others and having them express their recognition of the account. Indeed, the more widely this happens and the more people express it the more one philosophising at the abstract level is likely to take notice sensing there is something about the 'truth' of the concept to be expressed. Not that such recognition is necessary, and whether it does or does not happen the experience of the concept is not invalid.

The role and value of a lived understanding

George Levine (2002) argues that the story of traditional, Western epistemology has thus far been one of responsibility to the objective world, understanding the

nature of the world as it exists independently to us, and discovering the truth of the matter. Due to the belief that an embodied and perspectival view obscures the world, this responsibility demands self-denial or a metaphorical sacrifice of one's subjective view in an attempt to reach the Nagelian "view from nowhere". Levine powerfully characterises this in terms of the expression, "dying to know". In order to reach the world as it is in itself or even an abstracted concept which can exist in agreement between a community, the self must be sacrificed. As such, what is lost on such a self-sacrificial account but gained in an attempt to seek experiential and lived understandings is an insight into the other.

In trying to meet and communicate with the other at the view from nowhere, we must remove ourselves and ask them to do likewise. As such, were we to accomplish the project we would be empty and exist nowhere alongside the world and its objects. We would be with the world, not seeing or sensing it but simply with it, and whilst we would be on the common ground of nowhere there would be no real communication between us for there would be no subject to interpret, speak or hear. The traditional project then, in its attempt to achieve a true vision of the world, asks us to care about the other and ourselves only so that we can discover and remove what constitutes our subjectivity to better see the world. This is supposed to provide an understanding of the concept by clearly seeing what, in the world, lies at its root. A lived understanding, however, does not try to look through the subject to see what is shared at the root of the concept but looks *at* the subject in order to understand their experience of the concept. To give a complete account of a concept one must also understand other subjects not so that we might remove their subjectivity but because it is what provides the understanding. In this sense, it also restores communication – *I* speak to *you* – and the struggle to understand a concept not just in abstraction but as a lived experience is also a struggle to communicate with and fully understand the other.

This resurrection of the importance of the subject should bring to mind the standpoint epistemology of feminist scholarship. Due to the centrality of the subject in an experiential account of understanding, questions such as "*who* is experiencing knowledge or belief?" are taken to be just as important as what is being known, believed, and so on. As such, a lived understanding is in full agreement with the

claim that there is no such thing as ungendered, declassed, deracialised knowledge or belief. If we accept that there is the lived element to a concept then we cannot reject the fact that there are these gendered and racial dimensions to it. My *being-with*, *being-without* and *being-which-resists* will all be determined at least in part by my experiences of my gender, race, economic background, and so on. One might look at the introduction to this thesis, the stories from my life that have been running alongside my arguments, and my attempts to explain epistemic concepts and read in them, firstly, my experience of a tense completeness between what is lived and what is abstracted and the value of both, but, also, secondly, a dull or mundane set of stories which reflect the fact that as much as I am entranced and captivated by these epistemic concepts I have not experienced them in the way that narratives from feminist epistemology often outline: as concepts which are withheld, which other, which disempower, and which demand conformity.

Many feminist scholars also seek to find a liberatory epistemology through such a standpoint approach. This is an epistemology that is interested in explaining how oppression operates and that can affect social change through revealing and countering such oppression (Grasswick, 2011). It is also an epistemology which makes visible "the forms of ignorance systematically produced and reinforced by mainstream perspectives that still insist – explicitly or otherwise – that particular groups of knowers, particular forms of knowledge, understanding, and insight, or particular topics and questions about human knowledge are beyond the pale of epistemology 'proper.'" (Rooney, 2011, p. 13) Such positions seek to make visible the oppression that has arisen from the project of seeing the world from the view from nowhere and asking that subjectivity be removed. In a turn away from the actual goal of the project, the powerful subjects in this tradition have deemed their subjectivity to be or to be the closest to the objective. They have then claimed other subjects to be deficient and made their goals the "proper" goals of epistemology. Even where those that are deemed ignorant are allowed to grow in knowledge, they are only allowed to grow along lines which maintain the power-structure in place so that they cannot overtake the 'expertise' of the powerful and they can only be tested and deemed to have achieved in accordance with tests and thresholds set by

the powerful.[3] Indeed, Nietzsche scathingly exposed this power dynamic when he said of abstract and reasoned philosophising: "behind all logic and its autocratic posturings stand valuations […] requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life." (Nietzsche, 2002: p. 7)

One may claim that such power struggles and oppression are a bastardization of the goal that is at the heart of the traditional project and, as such, the project cannot be deemed any the less because of those who perverted it. However, incorporating a lived understanding of concepts and epistemology resists this happening insofar as the request for experience and stories, and the desire to see the other rather than to see them in order to remove them, is inherently anarchic. It embraces the fact that questions such as 'what is belief?' and 'how do you know?' can be answered not just through traditional means but might also "expect a narrative-like response emphasizing personal experience" (Noddings, 2011: p. 416). As such, it constantly challenges whatever the static, 'powerful' definition is, leaving room for liberation. For how can there be any single *legitimately* privileged understanding of a concept if each lived dimension is being articulated by the only one experiencing it and that individual, in turn, has no access to any other understanding except via its gatekeeper: the other?

Despite its challenge to hierarchies and power in the conceptual and epistemic domain, lived understandings do not seek to overthrow traditional epistemology and philosophical inquiry only to replace them with a different tyrant. For example, Noddings notes of some standpoint feminists that they claim those who are typically disenfranchised have a privileged knowledge given by their disenfranchisement. Their situation and experiences mean their narratives "are epistemically richer and more accurate than those generated through traditionally objective methods" (Noddings, 2011: p. 414). The claim may be that they have experienced differently and so add texture to current understanding, or that in experiencing the rejection of power their accounts move towards awakening others, or perhaps that they are experiencing from a peculiarly embodied standpoint as they inhabit rather than

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[3] To take just one example, Erin Tarver (2017) provides an excellent analysis of this at work in sports fandom.

reject their subjectivity. Whatever may ground the claim, however, an issue arises which might cause my experiential account to diverge from standpoint epistemology so characterised. The notion of one account being "epistemically richer" than another reinstates the belief that there is a single end goal which can be used to measure the value of all accounts against. As explained above, the challenge to power in an experiential account is based upon the individual's experience and this eradicates not just the power base for the currently powerful, but any objective or universal claim to a legitimate hierarchy altogether. There may be agreement between some as to the most valuable kind of epistemic account, but there is no way for that judgement to be imposed upon another who lives their concepts differently.

To return to standing a lived, experiential understanding of a concept next to the traditional, abstracted philosophical one: both are pieces of the puzzle which should be explored in full and to as great depth as possible but both are still single pieces. Similarly, within the experiential side, individual narratives form small parts of the design that make the experiential piece and must all be drawn to see a complete picture. As such, the abstract philosophical account, for all of its historical ties to the abuse of white, masculine, heteronormative power, remains another way of understanding concepts with its own, worthwhile goals and pursuits, and any one subject's experiences are not ranked any higher or lower than any other's by any objective standards. Here I am in agreement with John Chandler's scepticism about the kind of strong positions laid out by Noddings above, as there seems to be no good reason to remove any of these projects – or experiences – from the table completely. Chandler and I wholeheartedly embrace the fact that in some situations one or another may not work or may be associated with social ills, but a liberatory epistemology cannot liberate through exclusion and "we should reject the whole idea of monolithic, global standpoints which predetermine our methodology across the board, whether we identify them with gender, class or anything else." (Chandler, 1990: p. 381)

Virtue epistemology

When looking at Simecek's understanding of philosophical analysis, I alluded to asking how the structure and standards of a lived experience might stand up against an abstract conception and what that might say about how we ought to interact with epistemic concepts such as belief. As has hopefully started to become clear, where a traditional analysis has sought the truth of the matter and the external world as it exists in itself via the removal of self, a lived understanding asks instead that one is faithful to one's own experience and the legitimacy of the other's experiences of the concept. Putting these side-by-side, particularly in light of feminist analyses of how the traditional project has been enacted, I find that I cannot help but ask questions like: How *should* epistemic concepts be presented? How *should* I experience and pursue them? And so on. The study of epistemology, as well as our epistemic practices, are human endeavours and are bound up in intersubjective and ethical decisions. "How do we want to go about our epistemic business?" is as much a question of who we should and want to be as any other human domain. What norms do and should govern our epistemic behaviour and our interactions with others? What should I believe? What should I know? Who should know? Who do I trust? Who do I believe? What makes for a flourishing or good life in the epistemic sphere and beyond? Indeed, the forms of approaching epistemology and conceptual understanding that I have been looking at separate in many ways precisely because they answer these questions differently. Their goals and what they are willing to do to see them met are distinct.

Some forms of virtue epistemology direct themselves towards these questions. All virtue epistemology shares the view that establishing what the epistemic virtues are will help answer epistemological questions, but determining what the virtues are depends upon what they help us achieve and what epistemology is aimed at discovering. For example, traditional virtue epistemologists are divided over what kind of virtues will help us achieve a better understanding of knowledge and justified belief. Reliabilists such as Ernest Sosa tend to focus on physical faculties such as good eyesight and memory as they reliably allow us to access the truth: a justified belief is a belief formed by such virtues. Responsibilists such as Linda Zagzebski, on the other hand, look to character traits over physical dispositions

because whilst reliably achieving the truth is a good, *how* we get there matters. However, these positions are based upon traditional epistemic projects such as defining knowledge and refuting scepticism. Radical virtue epistemology has challenged what the goal of epistemology is and so redefined the virtues to fit that. For example, if gaining a holistic understanding of a concept is the goal, one might say that someone who is open minded to and patient with the stories of others is the virtuous agent. Or, if someone believes the end goal of all human life, including how we use and pursue our epistemic concepts, is to lead a fulfilled life, faculties which allow access to truth or a disposition which is not inclined to accept a state of affairs without infallible proof may switch from virtues to vices insofar as the latter wastes much of a person's life and the former might cause an agent to miss those instances where truth does not contribute to a kind or loving action.

Through an analysis of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, Taylor (2014) explores the nature of virtue ethics and its ability to ask of abstract ethical analysis whether it might "come to undermine the connection between understanding what human life is like and living a human life" (p. 286). Radical virtue epistemology, much like some of the philosophers already discussed, is wary of traditional epistemology doing the same thing and forgetting what the demands made by everyday life are during its analysis. For example, Roberts and Wood (2007) claim that traditional accounts, including traditional virtue epistemology, are stuck in the fastidiousness and technical finery of abstract reasoning, Heather Battaly (2010b) maintains that epistemologists, particularly sceptics, are ripe to become intellectually self-indulgent to the point of allowing the strength of their desire for truth to prevent them from seeing the value in other parts of life, and Manson (2012) highlights how a traditional epistemic focus has led to the prevalence of an acquisitionist model of knowledge-seeking, where truth and knowledge should always be acquired, which ignores the fact that in life there is also often virtue in *not* knowing or finding out. Asking traditional epistemic questions, for example, could not get us to the realisation that the responsible, virtuous agent "will not needlessly put herself, or others, at risk by her epistemic pursuits" (p. 259).

It may be argued that considerations about what implications follow from a pursuit of truth or knowledge and their desirability should be left to the domain of ethics,

but the exclusion of such thoughts and defining them as belonging somewhere else is, precisely, to take a stand on what the nature and value of epistemic concepts such as knowledge are, how the issue of scepticism can be addressed, and what the end goal of epistemology is. It is to say that epistemology is detached from life, will be complete once the relevant definitions and arguments have been found, and that other philosophical areas, such as ethics, can be omitted from this domain not only for the sake of a single study but completely. It is that thinking which has turned epistemology into the narrowly specialized and detached subject it is has been criticized for being. Instead, Roberts and Wood maintain that epistemology must be brought back, via the virtues, to a realisation that is embedded in emotion, caring about things, and that the basic purpose of definitions is actually "to facilitate *understanding of the concept* in question […] not just get a formula that "works"" (2007: p. 19, my emphasis) and that "the great purpose of philosophical epistemology is to sharpen our understanding of knowledge and related epistemic goods" (p. 19).

Jason Baehr (2011) has split radical virtue epistemology into strong and weak camps depending on whether it seeks to jettison traditional goals altogether or illuminate others. Just as with my argument above for not allowing a complete rejection of a traditional, abstract approach to epistemology, I do not see that there is a good reason to completely remove traditional goals. However, I have argued that an understanding of the kind which Roberts and Wood gesture at necessitates taking into account how people *experience* these concepts and the norms and identities that are formed around them, particularly given that such experiences will be entirely bound up with their outlook on life, projects, and who they desire to be. Indeed, because of this subjective element, there is no absolute sense of what an experiential understanding *should* be but there are experiences – as I gestured towards in my brief discussion of lived justification – that help us understand what *kind* of epistemic agent we want to be. For example, through my continual experiences in relationships, I have come to see that I want to be the kind of person who is honest as much as possible, who continually thinks about alternative perspectives and how others interpret the situation, who uses "I feel" statements over "You are" statements, and so on. I *want* these norms to govern my epistemic conduct whether because they allow me to achieve other goals – such as effective

communication and positive working environments – or simply because I experience them as the right way to go about things and, to foreshadow terminology used below, they provide my existence with a sense of worth.

One need only consider Joseph Wright's 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump' (Figure 2) to recognise that the *type* of person we want to be extends to how we want to go about knowing, believing and our epistemic inquiry. How do we want to introduce others to knowledge, what kind of environment do we want to create for belief and understanding, what characteristics do we wish to create in those who seek to know and understand, and how do we treat others, including the non-human, in our endeavours? The central figure in this painting may well have learned some piece of knowledge from this experiment and he may end up being able to transfer and justify this knowledge to the other characters, but this is not all that is going on. Each of the figures is *experiencing* knowledge and what it is to be led to knowledge differently. Indeed, there is something very uneasy about this being in a domestic setting and the imposition of "looking" that is being made upon the girl shielding her eyes, the other girl who is horrified, and the boy who seems torn between wanting to escape and play a role. Others are bored, pensive, and intrigued. If I were to transfer my own experience, some in the scene may come to inhabit a state of *being-which-resists-doubt* in relation to whatever might be learned from this process, but others may experience *being-with-doubt* not because the process is not one which should logically and reasonably prove its conclusion, but because the methods of obtaining it were not virtuous. The justification may pass abstract tests, but it does not pass the *lived* one. Or, knowledge may not be experienced this way at all, but knowledge and learning may now be a state of *being-without-compassion* or, to return to the feminist analysis from above, experienced as the *realm-of-men*. If we observe the face of the man conducting the experiment, he is not looking to any of those in the room but to the viewer. Although his expression is an intensely difficult one to read, he is certainly engaging us and framing the experiment with his arms as if inviting us to engage with it and be the final figure in the array of human reactions to the experiment. What kind of epistemic agent will we be? For all our movements towards abstract discussion and experimentation, this question cannot be detached from our experiences of being a subject in these situations.

Figure 2: Joseph Wright's 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump' (1768), National Gallery [online]

<u>*Being-with-worth*</u>

Epistemic concepts and how we conduct epistemology may be continued in the traditional, abstract way in order to achieve an unfiltered view of the truth of the matter and the external world. However, I have argued that parallel to this, and occasionally intertwined with it, is our lived experiences of these concepts and the implications of being an epistemic agent. In order to fully and holistically grasp epistemology we must embrace its lived dimension and the stories of those who live it regardless of the complexity, tension and difficulties they might bring. Bound up in this is another, vital experience which demands attention and demonstrates that one must face the question of what kind of epistemic agent one wants to be head on: *being-with-worth*. This experience is, ultimately, an awareness of the worthwhile nature of one's existence that can determine how we treat and explore epistemology and can indicate where virtuous activity lies.

Just as with *being-with-doubt* or *being-which-resists-doubt*, *being-with-worth* is a difficult experience to fully narrate and it certainly does not have a universal cause at its core. There is no single object, action or interaction that we all share that causes us to experience our current existence as worthwhile. However, I take it as given that there is such an experience. In the same way that I tried to distinguish belief, doubt and certainty I believe I can separate *being-with-sensation-and-emotion*, *being-without-worth* and *being-with-worth*.

An experience of or lacking worth is not an everyday occurrence. For many of us, what constitutes our regular experiences are sensations and emotions. We move through life encountering and responding with joy, sadness, anger, calm and so on, but we rarely notice or represent to ourselves the worthwhile nature of our existence. I bite into the chocolate cake that rests next to me, experiencing the brief relief the pleasant taste brings to the worries and anxieties I am experiencing as I write this thesis. I rush down the street afraid I will be late to my next meeting, I stop on a bridge captivated by the beauty of a sunset, I stub my toe on the desk and yell in joy as I win a sports match. All of this is possible without experiencing the presence or lack of worthwhileness. This is *being-with-sensation-and-emotion*.

Being-without- and *being-with-worth* are breaks in or additions to these experiences of sensation and emotion. They are not the experience of the grief that comes with losing a loved one or the happiness that comes with achieving something I have trained hard to acquire. They are the falling away or filling up of my awareness of existence with a sense beyond immediate sensation or emotion, a sense that my experiences are playing a role in a holistic understanding of the nature of one's life and activity as worthwhile or worthless.

This can be, but is not necessarily, tied to a sense of purpose given by another or by oneself. For example, I might judge that my life has been worthwhile in its attempt to complete one or more tasks set by myself, a parent, a friend, a divine being, and so on. Or, I might deem my life worthless because it did not achieve one or any of these same goals. To take another example, it may be that one feels life has been full of powerful and varied experiences and was, as such, 'a life well lived'. Or, its opposite might have occurred, and I conceive of my life as a life wasted. A third

possibility, to return to Nietzsche's fable, may be that life is experienced as worthless because of the impossibility of lasting impact; no matter what deeds I do or experiences I have there is no eternal record or endless ripple effect. Conversely, it may be that in this freedom from eternal repercussion comes a liberation and sense that every moment is worth something if it is done in pursuit of what one wants.

Ultimately, we should not see *being-with* and *being-without-worth* as sad or happy states of being. They are beyond such emotions insofar as anxiety, sadness and grief might come alongside a deep conviction that I am living a life worth living, and my happiness, pleasure and triumph might be bodily and temporary reactions that soon wilt because of an underpinning sense that my existence is not worth very much. As such, in amongst the maelstrom of sensations *worth* or its lack emerge as separate, fundamental feelings, and, when they do occur, they are what all other experiences must measure themselves against.

To return to Wright's painting, it is not just that the figures in the painting are experiencing epistemic concepts in a certain way, but these concepts are interacting with their conception of a worthwhile life and they are helping to mould it as well as being weighed and measured against it. If this is an instance of knowledge, or scientific inquiry, is it part of what they take to be a worthwhile life? For example, it is not just that the female and child figures in the painting are experiencing the experiment, its process, its resultant discovery and knowledge as belonging to the realm of adult men, they are also experiencing whether that realm is one that they desire to belong to and if it offers any promise of providing an experience of *being-with-worth*.

The young woman seems to think not (Figure 3). She has turned her head from the scene and there is clearly little interest in the advancement of her scientific understanding. One might read her and the man she is talking to as young lovers and posit that she has attributed *being-with-worth* to a state that exists after finding the correct suitor. Her whole existence at this point is lacking in comparison with that ideal, and there is nothing in the scene that she has turned her head from that will allow her to achieve that. However, I find it hard to see amorous joy in her

eyes. She does not meet his wet, longing gaze nor is she avoiding it in a flirtatious fashion. It is as though she is looking down on him with an internal sigh at the game she is being forced to play. One could draw a lead between her pretty "collar" and his hand as he necessitates her attention, knowingly or otherwise, with his privileged (and yet subservient) position. Neither knowledge nor social interaction is helping her explore what she takes to be worthwhile. For her, this scene only contains a scientific realm that is closed to her and a social one that she is forced to engage with and she is not just experiencing a temporary boredom but is in the depths of *being-without-worth.*

Figure 3: Young Couple from 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump' (see Fig 2)

The young children, on the other hand, are all experiencing scientific inquiry and understanding as *being-without-compassion* but they experience it differently in relation to how it plays into their future and current *being-with-worth.* The youngest girl, for example, gazes upon the scene despite her sister's efforts to pull her into an embrace and the socially-correct response for a young girl (Figure 4). She

continues to look as the bird struggled even as her face clearly shows signs of sadness, and fear or empathetic anguish is suggested by the slight grip her hand has on her sister's clothes. She overcomes all of this then to look on in defiance of the experiment's grotesqueness. One might say she is forming a standard of *being-with-worth* that stands in stark contrast to what she is witnessing. Beyond her immediate reaction of horror and pain, she is coming to a deeper understanding that an existence filled with and orientated around such activity and the pursuit of knowing about the world through such methods would be worse than worthless, it would be downright evil. Her tenacious looking could almost be read as a chastisement of the viewer's sense of worth if they do not feel her indignation along with her, particularly if one reads her as a precursor or early instance of the Romantic, innocent child who was about to come to prominence and signal how the industrial, over-scientific adult might be saved from themselves.

Figure 4: Young Girls, from 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump' (see Fig 2)

The young boy may well be feeling as the youngest girl does. The fact that he has turned and moved away from the scene under the guise of a helpful and physical task, gripping the chord as if he were a miner or sailor using the rope to hoist buckets or a sail, and the look of trepidation on his face as he glances back speak to this (Figure 5). However, he *has* turned back, unlike the young woman, as he knows that what lies behind him is the realm of men and scientific knowledge that he is destined for and should desire. Despite his emotions, this is where his *being-with-worth* is to be found, not necessarily in the practice itself but at least in the recognition and acceptance the practice will bring him.

Figure 5: Young boy, from 'An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump' (see FIg 2)

They are thus assessing the virtue of scientific inquiry and the characteristics of those who engage it upon the basis of the role it may play in facilitating their achievement of *being-with-worth*. The observer of the painting then is not just being invited by the central figure to respond to the lived experience of epistemic activity

but is also being presented with a palate of conceptions concerning what constitutes the worthwhile life. We may simply identify with the character that best reflects what we already believe and experience or we might assess and at least attempt to experience and reflect upon the alternative conceptions and whether we have given them their due. This latter course I will argue is the virtuous one.

<u>Virtue as what achieves *being-with-worth*</u>

Here I wish to briefly explore Alasdair MacIntyre's understanding of virtues and external and internal goods to help explore the role *being-with-worth* plays in an overarching conception of a virtuous and good life. According to MacIntyre, a virtue, at least in its broadest sense, is "an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods" (1981: p. 32). Internal goods are the experiences or states of being which are defined and experienced as excellent only through the specificity of a practice and its community. External goods are those which can be achieved in a multiplicity of ways and so are only contingently tied to the practice.

MacIntyre's famous example is of the child playing chess. If a child plays chess to win only because of the promise of candy they are chasing an external good. The candy has no necessary link to chess, it is only attached to chess because it has been offered as a reward and it could be attained by other means. As such, the child could be motivated to cheat and not engage with chess as a self-contained practice with its own standards of excellence but only as a means to achieve candy. However, MacIntyre continues, we might hope that "there will come a time when the child will find in those goods specific to chess, in the achievement of a certain highly particular kind of analytical skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity, a new set of reasons […] for trying to excel in whatever the game of chess demands." (p. 30) If the child now cheats, they cheat themselves out of the internal goods of chess rather than gain the external good of candy.

It is important to note that only a few paragraphs earlier in his paper MacIntyre did not define the internal goods as those things which are necessary for achieving excellence in a practice but rather those things which are "realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity" (p. 30). As such, we should not mistake what MacIntyre is saying. He is not saying that only excellence in chess is an internal good, nor that adeptness in the aforementioned skill, imagination and intensity are virtues. Rather, excellence in chess *and* this specific brand of skill, imagination and intensity are the internal goods. The virtues are those character traits that grant us access to these.

MacIntyre then extends his explanation further by briefly exploring the internal goods of portrait painting (p. 31). His discussion of this appears to be much more confusing than it need to be, but, best as I can understand, MacIntyre claims that there are two kinds of internal good for the portrait painter: the excellent products and performances of the practice and the life lived in pursuit of the excellences of the practice. When we bring the chess player and the portrait painter together we can identify a list of MacIntyre's internal goods of a practice: those products and performances that are excellent according to the practice, the life lived in pursuit of the excellences of the practice, and those character traits or skills that are acquired as part of that pursuit. To be a truly internal good on MacIntyre's account, none of these can be acquired as part of another practice or by other means. In other words, were that practice not to exist these goods would not be achievable.

In *After Virtue* MacIntyre extends his definition of the virtues through two more stages. The above is the first stage where he situates the virtues in relation to practices, but in his second stage he situates them in relation to the good life for all humanity. The good life, according to MacIntyre, is nothing more or less than "the life spent in seeking for the good life for man" (2007: p. 220).[4] The virtues then are those things which not only allow us to access the internal goods of a practice but also are what give us access to more varied and deeper understandings of what the

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[4] MacIntyre uses the word "man" rather than "humanity" and so direct quotations reflect this where my own writing uses the latter.

good life might be and which "sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good" (p. 219). In the third stage MacIntyre claims that it is impossible for one to seek the good or exercise the virtues only as an individual, as we are all bearers of a social identity and inherited past which constitutes our moral starting point and particularity; "the story of my life is always embedded in those communities from which I derive my identity." (p. 221) Any attempt at individualism will ultimately fail because of this and a quest to seek the universal good will start from it. We are each a part of a "living tradition", a "historically extended, socially embodied argument" (p. 222) which will strengthen or weaken depending upon how well and how thoroughly we exercise the virtues of that tradition. As such, the virtues are not only aimed at the good life of the individual but at the sustaining (or rejecting) of those traditions the individual is a part of.

What I take to be correct in MacIntyre's account is his understanding that the virtues must be in service of some end and their value is instrumental. It is difficult to see how any character trait or ability could be valuable in and of itself. I also hold with the need to distinguish between goods that are internal to a peculiar context and experience and ones which are external to it and bear no necessary connection to the subject's situation. Indeed, as everything I have outlined so far in this chapter would suggest, I even fully embrace MacIntyre's localised and experiential description of these goods. For example, one might complain that much of what MacIntyre has thus far described is highly uninformative. What has he *really* told us about the "highly particular kind" (1981: p. 31) of chess-based versions of the skills he outlined? He may have made a broad gesture towards the end goal of portrait painting via his repeating of an Orwell-qualified, Wittgensteinian dictum concerning the ability of portraits to reveal the soul and provide everyone with the face they deserve, but he said little about the actual *life* of a painter and he readily admits that the community can adapt not only what constitutes excellence in this practice but also the very goal of the practice. As such, we are left somewhat reeling and without insight if we are not part of that community. Providing such information is not his or any other virtue theorist's task however. That is rightly the task of the painter and the chess-player to express within their community and the internal goods he hints at are goods that, in many instances, resist any more detailed articulation. In fact, such an attempt would risk losing the goods their specificity,

as analogies are drawn for the uninitiated and personal or communal experience is lost in translation. I also cannot deny his third stage, for it is the kind of account I provide above when exploring the different traditions surrounding epistemic concepts. My own story, all our stories, which constitute the experiential and lived understanding of epistemic concepts form part of the "living traditions" which underpin the legitimacy of the claim for an equal voice. Where I depart from MacIntyre, however, is in his account of where the distinction between the internal and external goods must be drawn, his fervent emphasis on communities of practice as being a locus of internal goods, and his account of an individual's search for the good life being the good life for all humanity.

MacIntyre sees an internal good as one that can only be achieved through engaging in a particular practice and subjecting oneself to the standards of excellence set by the community. He also takes the good life to be the one spent seeking the universal good of humanity. Yet, if external goods are still *goods* – as he admits – why leave them out of being part of an account of the virtues, and why necessitate the search for the good of *all* humanity as part of the good life? In terms of the former it is because external goods, on MacIntyre's conception, are mostly, if not exclusively, finite. As such, chasing them breeds competition and undermines what is now starting to appear as something that takes on almost sacred connotations for him: the community. MacIntyre's emphasis on historicity is one that may well allow for one to become more enlightened about oneself and one's heritage, and emphasising one's role and (critical) subjugation to the standards of the community may well bring about some of the safety, sense of meaning, and so on, that come with such communal interaction for most, but these are not *necessary* by-products of the kind of engagement that MacIntyre talks about. MacIntyre's almost disciple-like attitude towards the community – something that perhaps fits more with the tendrils of Thomistic Natural Law which creep through his writing – blinds him to something much more basic and which I have argued for: that all of these things, the community, his so-called external and internal goods, and the universal good of humanity, are best explored and explained in relation to that experience *being-with-worth*. Whatever tradition I might be supporting or rejecting, whatever practice and standards of excellence I choose or am seduced into surrendering myself to, they are motivated by the search for and experiences of *being-with-worth*, and *being-*

with-worth is the only experience which is undeniably, unequivocally and universally a *good* experience. Communities might be built around shared experiences of what constitutes a worthwhile life and they may support our exploration for it, but they are subservient to it.

This *being-with-worth* is not the Aristotelian *flourishing* life as it not built upon a teleological world view. There is no particular ideal of this state of being that we are all striving towards, although a belief that there is and an attempt to bring it about might be part of some models of it. *Being-with-worth* is simply an experience that cannot be denied as good for one who achieves it and is that which all other structures within a life are built or destroyed in relation to. All other goods are external to me and are good instrumentally and contingently based on their ability to cause it.

A virtue then may be defined in an adapted MacIntyrian fashion as: *an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which enables us to directly or indirectly achieve experiences of the internal good, namely, being-with-worth*. As such, if I am asking questions about what sort of epistemic agent I should be, I am really asking the question: "What sort of epistemic qualities, practices and experiences allow me to achieve *being-with-worth*?" What I can then continue to agree with MacIntyre on is that this is, in some sense, determined by my cultural and social context, tradition and practices, but the search for it is also, in many instances, hap-hazardly a matter of trial and error and thus is facilitated by experience and understanding of as many conceptions of *being-with-worth* as possible. This is what stands behind the claim I made above about the virtuous observer of the painting and it needs much more defence. However, this is a defence the remaining chapters will implicitly mount.

Completing a virtue theory

In this chapter then I have advocated the need to recognise that epistemic concepts have a lived dimension that must be accounted for and taken as a worthwhile area of philosophical inquiry if we want to come to a holistic understanding of their

nature and how we use them. Part of this included a recognition of the narratives that come with such a lived conception and that each of us not only experiences these epistemic concepts in valuable ways but that we should attempt to articulate and share those experiences not only for the sake of finding the abstract truth of the concepts but to understand them and one another better. However, these are ultimately normative claims concerning the nature of the virtuous epistemic agent and inquiry and are defensible, at least in the terms I have laid out, only by appealing to their potential for deep and lasting experiences of *being-with-worth*. As far as I am concerned, this is a legitimate appeal, as experiential accounts, although not wholly constitutive of worth for many, speak directly to our *being* much more than abstract analysis. Abstract analysis thus loses touch with the experience of the worthwhile life much more dramatically by cutting out the lived dimension of concepts than the latter does by ignoring the former. In addition to this, I take it as irrefutable that worth is found for many of us (although, *contra* MacIntyre, not *all* of us) in inter-personal, discursive and legitimising communities of practice.

If this is truly to be an account of a particular type of weak but radical virtue theory, there are other questions that need to be answered.[5] Some I have already addressed. I have provided an account of the nature and definition of a virtue. I have indicated that *epistemic* virtues might be somewhat, although not wholly distinct, from other types of virtues if they pertain to how one acts and conducts oneself in relation to the search for knowledge, truth, belief, justification, certainty and so on. I can also make explicit what was hopefully implicit in the above, that a lived epistemology and the search for *being-with-worth* means that the virtues are concerned primarily with the *achieving* of *being-with-worth* and that all other states and achievements in the epistemic realm – such as knowledge, truth, justification, trust, and so on – cannot be good in themselves but can only be good in relation to this end. Also, due to the fluctuating nature of what will cause a sense of *being-with-worth* (between people and within a person) the virtues similarly vary and, at all times, we are making a best approximation of what will continue to incur a state of *being-with-worth*. What is left now is to turn to the nature of some of the particular epistemic virtues and virtuous epistemic activities. For this, I will be turning to the area of

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[5] Adapted from Baehr, 2016, p. 3

study which inspired this thesis and was rooting the ideas in my consciousness long before I discovered them in this form; the childlike figure of nineteenth-century children's literature.

Chapter 2: The Childlike Figure and their Virtues

The Golden Age of Children's Literature

The childlike figure – the figure that is to embody the virtues I wish to promote – is one that I have constructed from a variety of texts published during The Golden Age of children's literature. It is always difficult to pinpoint the defining features, starting and finishing places for such a nebulous concept as a "Golden Age". However, in children's literature criticism it is usually used to refer to a style of writing for and conception of children that came to full force in texts published in the 1860s and lasted into the early 1900s.

If pushed for something even more precise, it is particularly tied to the publication of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865, However, I hesitate to follow those who locate the beginning of this Golden Age with *Wonderland*. Firstly, because Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* was published in 1862 (around the time when Carroll was first recounting the adventures of Alice to Alice Lidell and her sisters) and, as will hopefully become clear, this text deserves to be considered as part of the era. Secondly, *Wonderland* creates such radical models of child education and children's literature (if it suggests any models at all) it stands out even from the other texts that characterise the Golden Age. In many ways, it is as much the black sheep of the period as it is the defining text of it.

Determining the end of the Golden Age is just as, if not more, tricky. Different discussions concerning the Golden Age that I have witnessed in the literature and person allow the incorporation of texts such as Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* (1902), J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1904), Edith Nesbit's *The Magic World* (1912) and A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926). Indeed, depending upon which characteristics one was trying to emphasise, I do not imagine it would be too difficult to extend the period as far as *Swallows and Amazons* (1930), *The Family from One End Street* (1937), *Five on a Treasure Island* (1942), *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), or even further.

For the sake of ease, I will not be explicitly constraining the concept to strict texts or dates, but I will be roughly limiting the following discussion to those texts written between 1860 and 1900. There are some interesting generalisations that can be made about the works of this period and their character which speak directly to a virtue-based model and they are orientated around, at least as I read it, something akin to *being-with-worth* and how epistemic activity can feed into or hinder such a search.

Understanding 'child' and 'childhood'

In his *Centuries of Childhood* (1996) – the criticised but respected first major study of the historical development of childhood – Philippe Ariès traces the separation of childhood and the child as distinct periods and constructs from the rest of life back to the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries. He then points to the seventeenth century as the time when childhood stopped being viewed with amusement and began to be considered with moral seriousness. Throughout the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries different conceptions of what constituted the child's difference fought for dominance in the social consciousness. Two of these are captured neatly in *Alice Through the Looking Glass* when the Unicorn responds to Alice's appearance and Haigha's announcement that she is a child: "I always thought they were fabulous monsters!" (1965: p. 213) Here the Unicorn juxtaposes the two understandings of children as "fabulous" and as "monsters".

The "fabulous" side of childhood refers to the notion that the child is a pure and innocent being. They represent a state of and oneness with nature, an intuitive and untainted link to the divine, and a state before sin and immoral urges. The child did not always remain a passive symbol of this either, and in many works of children's, and even adult, literature much could be learned from the active child voice. For example, the "angelic" children in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century children's literature were the ones who usually died young and returned to their rightful place in heaven still pure and innocent, but not before they left their divine mark on their family and friends through well-borne and idealised responses to illness, hardship and society. As such, this innocent child "serves as the perfect catalyst for the

conversion of corrupt adult characters […] [and] as an example for the child reader" (Vallone, 2001: p. 279). These children were thus not only a moral voice in a corrupt and cold modern world, an exemplar for children and adults alike, but they also acted as a symbol of hope for adults that rediscovering at least the essence of their own inner innocence and connection to nature and the divine was possible. The child and childhood thus remained "a refuge from the painful complexities of modern life" (Gubar, 2009: p. 4) and was emblematic of a "pre-Victorian state of spiritual and imaginative well-being" (Furneaux, 2011: p. 189).

The corresponding conception of how to treat, raise, educate and write for children was one that emphasised the need to protect and prolong childhood, not only for the child's sake but also for the adult who was viewing it with hope and nostalgia. A carefree existence became the fundamental right of every child and, with that, "childhood became an increasingly popular locus for fantasies about leisure and freedom from adults." (Makman, 1999: p. 199) Children should be allowed free-reign with their imagination and to safely play away from the mature, adult world for as long as possible. Education should happen gradually, through play, experiential discovery, and a process of gentle guidance in reasoning to conclusions. It should also be something open to all children as, by this understanding, they were "society's victims, struggling, often against hopeless odds, for physical and spiritual survival" (Briggs and Butts, 1995: p. 133). As such, alongside a duty to help and instruct the child where necessary, authors took up what Avery refers to as the "duty to entertain" (1975: p. 122) as well.

This competed with the "monstrous" view of the child as one who, rather than being innately innocent, was in a natural state of savagery. The child was an uneducated and unformed token of base drives and, even worse, original sin. On this understanding, the (good) adult was wise, knowledgeable and experienced and, as such, should be educating the child in what was right and wrong with directness and verve. The adult was the gatekeeper and arbiter of factual and moral knowledge and within the collective adult mind is everything the child needs. During their education, whether formal, literary or at home, the child should be ready and grateful to receive this and, if not, must be forced to for their own salvation and society's good. Lerer traces such reasoning back to the Puritanical texts of the

seventeenth-century and the realisation that books could not only shape the lives of children but that "only through reading, through performing the catechism, and through reflecting on exemplary narratives could the child be prepared for heaven" (2008: p. 83).

Although some proponents of this conception of the child might still have ascribed to the Lockean view that a fantastical story was a legitimate tool for sugar-coating the necessary morals and making them easier to swallow, it was undoubtedly the moral instruction that came first. Others simply did away with the frivolity and, although they told stories, they contained few fantastical elements. As Maria Edgeworth asks in her preface to *Parent's Assistant*, why should we given children tales of giants and fairies just because they like them? "It may be said that a little experience in life would soon convince them that fairies, and giants, and enchanters, are not to be met with in the world. But why should the mind be filled with fantastic visions, instead of useful knowledge? Why should so much valuable time be lost?" (2003 [1796]: p. 4) Her father shows that they are both steadfast in this conviction when he writes the preface for her *Moral Tales for Young People*: "we have disclaimed and reprehended all attempts to teach in play. Steady, untired attention is what alone produces excellence" (2003 [1802]: p. 169).

Given that the most prevalent funders of literature for children entering the nineteenth-century were Christian organisations concerned with saving children's souls through correct education, this model was possibly the more prolific even if there were staunch advocates on both sides. Sarah Trimmer, for example, bemoans even those of a Lockean ilk and declares their attempt to entertain as well as "improve the heart or cultivate the understanding" a failure (1976 [1802]: p. 20). All they have succeeded in is paving the way for a corruption of the youth and they have allowed a 'Continental' way of thinking to take hold, where revealed religion and a sense of duty are abandoned. Trimmer sees in children's literature instead a worrying trend towards imitating scripture, depicting Nature as God, emphasising chance over divine plan, and that children are above restraint. This continues into the mid-nineteenth-century. William Caldwell Roscoe warns adults that, due to children's omnivorous reading habits, they must be careful in their selection of books and not choose those that will "fill their minds with a confused medley of

ideas" (1976 [1855]: p. 23). Roscoe's worry is that the child's imagination is too strong, and its vivacity confounds the borders of reality and fiction, allowing emotion and fantasy to overtake reason and sense. The child is not yet knowledgeable enough to resist this and so the adult is needed to guide the way. He also warns against those stories where "the author attempts to slip in his moral unperceived, and by a sly sidewind to influence the character of his reader. This is lost labour […] the story should be devoted to its purpose, and the exposition be as plain and direct and forcible as possible. Children like this." (p. 38) The well-intentioned but stern Mary Martha Sherwood follows suit in works that have the potential for inciting fear and paranoia by dwelling on the all-seeing eyes of God. Indeed, in one infamous and vividly described event from *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1822) the children are taken to gaze upon the still-swinging body of a hanged man. According to Sherwood, "it is the greatest blessing which we can possibly receive, to be *made* to know our God, and to be made acquainted with all that he has done for our salvation." (p. 2, my emphasis) To this end she offers guidance to parents in between stories via prayers to be said with their child after the story. Sherwood rejected the idea that the child could be reasoned into good behaviour but must be taught to obey instantly. Avery (1975) highlights how in her story *Obedience*, for example, the child who obeys immediately and swallows their medicine survives, whereas the child who refuses on the basis of supposedly rational principles dies.

Alongisde and amongst these competing views was also what Avery terms the "cult of the rational and learned child" (1975: p. 157). For the most part it is aligned with the latter of the above views due to its focus on the education of the child in vast amounts of knowledge and insofar as it does not treat childhood as something sacred like the Romantic view. However, this "cult's" image also separates from that of Edgeworth, Sherwood and others. The emphasis on reason is something, as has been highlighted, that is not necessary for the kind of education proposed by Sherwood. Similarly, in light of the strides taken in scientific inquiry and exploration during the period, the moralistic link to the divine was fading and, on this conception, science and industry became the motivating reasons for a child's education. Indeed, Trimmer's lamentation of the loss of revealed religion and duty could be caused as much by this scientific conception as the Romantic one. In this

sense, the "fabulous" and "monster" conceptions recombine in rallying against this "cult" and depicting the "revival of religious mysticism and a renewed feeling for the numinous" in childhood and through the child (Prickett, 2005: pp. 12-13). How these square with the mysterious nature of the Divine is different, but they recognise and embrace it where this rational and learned child may not. The latter child either scandalously *understands* God through nature and reason or, even more radically, turns from God to science by denying him or because of his unknowability. It is this battle that, in part, determines the nineteenth century as "a paradoxical combination of sincere religious belief and profound religious doubt." (Labbe, 2000: p. 97)

In my terms, what we can see from this brief account is that in the eighteenth- and first half of the nineteenth-century there was a battle to give the most compelling account of what constituted and could bring about *being-with-worth* amidst growing social reform and oscillations in the public understanding of what roles religion, science, knowledge, and childish imagination might play for both the individual and society. This was a struggle waged both openly and implicitly in the pages of children's literature as authors sought to indoctrinate, persuade or reflect their own conception in their works. This continued into the 1860s but the decade also signalled the general triumph of a model which designed children's literature around children's own experiences, which valued the child's reading experience as much as it did the lessons which may or may not be hidden in the text, and began in earnest to place the judgement of what was good and enjoyable for them to read in the hands of children themselves. The period also began to take seriously the idea of children as metaphysicians, as human beings who could work with the logic of complex, imaginative ideas and situations and interpret the meaning of works but without falling into the trap of wanting to cram them full of knowledge or entirely jettisoning the idea that they might have an intuitive understanding of the world and what might stand behind or beyond it.

The roots of this paradigm shift are often followed back to Catherine Sinclair's 1839 work, *Holiday House*. Even though the changes are not thought to have taken broad control and large strides until much later in the nineteenth-century, and the text both contains an obvious angelic child in Frank and many moral lessons, there is a clear focus in at least the first half of the novel on a narrative which cares about and offers

insight into the author's understanding of a child's thoughts, feelings and experiences. In the characters Harry and Laura, Sinclair "puts forward boldly the charm and interest of the undisciplined child" (Godley, 1976: p. 96). Harry and Laura fit none of the models so far described, and what gives the book its "freshness" in the period is "the sprightly and sympathetic manner with which Sinclair describes the exploits of the children" (Butts, 1995: p. 83). From this beginning, and through the rise and development of these ideas in the Golden Age, by 1890 Edward Salmon was commenting on the change that was happening in how children were represented: "a healthier and more natural tone characterises juvenile literature today, and our writers are in the habit of going to life itself for the models instead of evolving from their inner consciousness diminutive prigs to be dignified with the names of boys and girls." (1976: p. 333) Even those groups which had sought to bring primarily and overtly didactic and morally instructive tales to children for the sake of salvation, such as The Religious Tract Society and The Society for the Protection of Christian Knowledge, widened their publishing remit to take into account the secular and creative tastes of the new generation. As Maureen Nimon notes, by the end of the nineteenth-century even Sunday school magazines such as *Aunt Judy's Magazine* have moved from being fierce and unequivocal defenders and promulgators of religious values to being scarcely distinguishable from other children's magazines of the time. The punishments grew less harsh, the need to be constantly on guard waned, and even the characters "were often children who were recognizably human, rather than personifications of virtue or vice." (1988: p. 248)

In addition to this, the experiences of previously disempowered groups were beginning to be represented in these works. Children were obviously beginning to get a voice they had never had before, but, perhaps because children's literature was not taken as seriously and so not as heavily screened as adult literature, children's authors, particularly women, were also slipping in their subversive and angry messages concerning the status of girls, women and animals. Kimberly Reynolds points to the fact that both women and children were at this point disparaged and repressed by the prevailing social order and this identification led to women using children's literature to poke fun at the male establishment: "no longer were they attempting to reproduce male values and attitudes, rather they began to challenge

and subvert" (1994: p. 28). For example, Juliana Ewing – a prolific and beloved author of the time who will play a significant role in the below account – is clear in her anger at the distinctly different treatments that boys and girls are subjected to. In 'Benjy in Beastland', for example, she is explicit in her disdain for the excuses made for boys in relation to their meanness of character: "They have a license which no one would dream of according to "the girls", but it may sometimes be too readily decided that "boys will be boys", in the most obnoxious sense of the phrase" (p. 121). She repeats this in 'The Land of Lost Toys': "It is generally understood in families that "boys will be boys", but there is a limit to the forbearance implied in this extenuating axiom" (p. 32), whereas in 'Timothy's Shoes' she demonstrates the opposite, that girls are denied as full a childhood as boys are given and that they are expected to have a conscience and mend their own clothes almost by nature. Unlike boys, "you can make [girls] work, and they can amuse themselves when they're not working." (p. 92)

We also read in Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* explicit and implicit claims about both animal and child cruelty – cruelty to those without a voice. Like 'Benjy in Beastland' it seeks to rid the world of not only wrongful treatment of other living beings – wrongs more often perpetuated and overlooked when committed by young boys and men than girls and women – but also the inaction of those who stand by and watch: "My doctrine is this, that if we see cruelty or wrong that we have the power to stop, and do nothing, we make ourselves sharers in the guilt" (1993 [1877]: pp. 160-161). It is also a call to become educated, experientially if possible, on as many matters as possible. Ignorance, according to the novel, breeds wrongdoing and suffering and although it is not as evil as deliberate malice or looking upon evil and doing nothing, it does place the ignorant at fault.

The matter of how much of a moral should be contained within a work of children's literature had not been settled. For example, for all of *Tom Brown's School Days'* depiction of the inner workings of the child and events with immediate relevance to the child, Hughes is happy to reveal his moralistic intention in writing it: "My whole object in writing at all was to get the chance of preaching. When a man comes to my time in life and has his bread to make, and very little time to spare, is it likely that he will spend almost the whole of his yearly vacation in writing a story just to

amuse people? I think not." (2005 [1857]: p. 3) At the other end of the spectrum, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* proved that a moral was not necessary for a successful story. Not only does Alice "escape the moral-finder" (Dusinberre, 1987: p. 59) but authorial mastery is seemingly abrogated, and, by Carroll's own admission, meaning is intentionally left to be decided by the reader rather than provided or strongly suggested by the writer (p. 42). Other authors struggled to find where they wanted to lie on this scale. Juliana Ewing's stories, despite their attention to the experience and enjoyment of the child, are inconsistent in their presentation of morals and moralising. As her sister Horatia Gatty writes, she much prefers those books where "Julie's" lessons can be inferred rather than the ones where they were explicit and didactic with horrid children standing in direct contrast to the good (1887: p. 37). The fact that she can write this indicates Ewing's dabbling in both direct moralising and this hidden or even non-existent style. The wrestling with the need for or how best to present a moral will be returned to.

<p align="center">***</p>

This account is dense and obviously generalised. Many of the patterns taken from it have a variety of qualifications and interact with each other. The authors are not immune from falling into one or the other camp at different points, as my outlining of Ewing on moralising above indicates. For example, a prolific criticism of some of the male authors from this period is that they continue to perpetuate a romantically idealized childhood due to their own repressive needs. On top of this, for all its social commentary, these child figures are undoubtedly middle-class. Even those poor heroes cannot help but appear as middle-class constructs of what the poor *could* achieve were they to raise their standards. However, what is important to note is not only the conceptions of what gives existence its worth – natural innocence, divine duty, scientific knowledge – and how they are best achieved, but that the Golden Age indeed emerged bearing the residue of these understandings alongside a developing sense that: (a) the child's experience of worthwhile life comes over and above the role they play in an adult need for a nostalgic and idealised link to a better existence, (b) the child's experiences of a worthwhile existence matter *right now* as much as their future experiences, and (c) the child deserves and needs to have an active voice in constructing their own

understanding of what was worthwhile and of the spaces and opportunities for experiencing *being-with-worth*. As such, what has emerged from the above is that during the Golden Age the worthwhile life of a child (and other disenfranchised voices) was captured by a developing sense of agency and of immediate and active access to creating experiences of life's worth. This could create both an immediate sense of a worthwhile life and set up a future with possibilities for continuing such experiences. Alongside this, however, writers during the period were struggling with understanding life's worth as residing in a space between the dutiful, other- or divinely-directed moral life and the individual, freely imaginative and playful one and whether it was possible to marry a fact-filled, increasingly naturalistic and scientific understanding with legitimate experiences of the unknowable and transcendent. The period was also beginning to recognise that whilst childhood may have some particularities which gestured towards resolving some of these issues, it was not a state to be entirely idealised or one which was entirely separate; it contained insights as to life's worth that all could share in.

What is noteworthy about this generalised, historical style of trying to account for a particular notion of the worthwhile life is that it is, to use an image that will return in this thesis, a shadow. It is flickering, incomplete, interpretable and without a solid existence, not to mention that it is cast by a continually mutating mass of humanity and interpreted by a situated and complex individual. As such, it gestures towards what might actually be worthwhile in a life but it resists complete articulation and a definitive list of end goals because it is part of an unending and unfinished cultural battle. Any attempt to render it complete by an individual such as myself is to deny this constant movement of both the mass, the shadow, and myself. However, an account and experience of the shadow is possibly its own greatest defence in two senses. First of all, as the rest of this chapter is dedicated to, the virtuous characteristics and activities described come with their own experiential flavour and residue. The virtues then, perhaps paradoxically, constitute part of the worthwhileness of the end goal insofar as the worth of the end point can be "tasted" in their appetizer. Secondly, my own experience is an experience at least of *being-with-worth* whilst encountering the texts and their call to embody the below virtues as well as trying to create spaces to cultivate and educate others for them. Perhaps then, what is outlined above and below is not the way to *being-with-worth* but is

itself the *being-with-worth* for me and I can only hope to strike a chord with the reader and to inspire or influence some similar journey in them. It is with this in mind that I now wish to explore the virtues of childlike learner.

Conceiving of the childlike figure and childlike virtues

The first thing to note is that there may be some who immediately recoil from the word 'childlike'. For example, in his search for a term to denote the distinct nature of children's literature, Peter Hollindale puts the word 'childlike' aside as he takes it to be "a word denoting innocence and naivete which we use with condescending approval." (1997, p. 46) However, this is not the case for the nineteenth century, where childlike figures are, ultimately, those who have access to current *being-with-worth* and have maximised their future chances of it. They are thus revered.

Secondly, it is important to state that the childlike figure is not necessarily a child. As most virtue theories maintain, when we begin to get a conception of our goals we often turn our gaze towards those who we believe have achieved them or who have the tools to achieve them, so that we might learn from them. In this instance, the culturally created child, and *some* children, are that, but not every child does achieve childlike status or experiences of life's worth and not every adult fails to. Thus, my conception of the childlike does not contain the idealisation or the pessimism of the Romantic account. Its child object is not *entirely* fictitious and it is a state which the adult *can* achieve. However, the child is not entirely opposed to this ideal either and there *is* something to be learned from characteristics seen in many children. As such, this childlike figure resists the 'monstrous' account from above as well. The importance of this will also become apparent in the next chapter where I tackle an issue that many literary critics take with nineteenth-century children's literature and which philosophers take with any appearance of: sentimental nostalgia.

The capability of the adult to partake in and the child to exist apart from a state of chidllikeness is perhaps the first and most important link that my conception of the childlike has with George MacDonald's. George MacDonald was a Scottish author,

minister and theologian. He was not uncontroversial in the beliefs he espoused in the course of his sermons and writings, and he was often at odds with church doctrine. However, his beliefs lie at the heart of his largely successful career as a children's author, not least of the all the notion of the childlike. On the matter of who is and can be childlike, MacDonald opens his collection of theological teachings, *Unspoken Sermons*, with an interpretation of the childlike as one of the central divine elements in man, boldly stating that "God is child-like" (1997 [1867], p. 12). Indeed, in many of his fictional works, the wisest and most powerful figures take on the form of a child and a youthful demeanour whilst maintaining an air of age and wisdom, and a character's moral purity or epistemic capacity is often revealed through their ability to recognise these figures as childlike and see them in their youthful form. And one of, if not the, most quoted of his expressions is: "I do not write for children, but for the childlike, whether of five, or fifty, or seventy-five" (1976 [1864]: p. 164). Whenever he wrote, MacDonald wrote in order to speak to or to inspire the childlike in his reader, and he spoke to that which could link the child and adult in their divine possibility. MacDonald's childlike was not a virtuous state that could only be obtained in childhood, it was "an essential lifelong attitude" (Hilder, 2003: p. 56).

Despite its centrality to his works and thinking, however, what the childlike is, how to recognise a childlike character, and what it means to adopt a childlike state of existence are not fully spelled out. The majority of critics who discuss MacDonald's works implicitly follow the sentiment explicitly argued for by King (1986): because there is never a clear statement from MacDonald as to exactly what the childlike means it should be treated as a guiding but largely intuitive notion. That is to say, we may be able to pinpoint two or three concrete characteristics from studying MacDonald's notion of the childlike, but, ultimately, we should rely on our instinctual feeling as to what it means and allow it to guide us from a more enigmatic position in our conceptual repertoire. Such an interpretation does resonate with several key aspects of MacDonald's thinking. For example, his scepticism regarding analytic and rigidly schematic thinking, his rejection of the overly-rationalistic thinking that he saw as characterising the scientific methodology pervading the society around him, and his promotion of the strength of will and capacity to act upon a honed sense of intuition and moral feeling. Indeed,

as the first chapter of this thesis has suggested, I have a lot of sympathy with these positions and emotions and I take no issue with the traits 'incomplete' and 'intuitively guiding'. However, MacDonald's depiction of the childlike, as far as I am concerned, fails in a few ways: it cannot detach itself completely from at least some hidden, regressive desire that it shares with the Romantic conception; it struggles to find its footing in how it might be experienced and embodied by real (in other words, non-divine or idealised) women; it does not do enough justice to the potential of scientific and empirical exploration; it often overestimates the metaphysical and theological capability of children and often refuses to create guides where they are necessary despite having them where they are not; and it is inextricably bound up with a Christian God and faithful obedience to it. As will hopefully become clear, many of these issues are overcome by placing MacDonald's stories alongside those of, for instance, Lewis Carroll, Juliana Ewing and Charles Kingsley.

What is not accounted for by these works, however, is a separation from the divine without also a *complete* removal of morality. For these writers one cannot be simultaneously childlike and be disobedient to or disassociated completely from the divine. That is not to say that one will not waver in commitment to the divine and so one's childlike status, but any wavering means a loss of virtues and access to what is of the utmost importance and worth to life. This divine element is not a problem for this thesis insofar as I am translating what remains to a context that does not require a Christian, or other, God. I am not rejecting God as a potentially powerful element of the concept for some and, as will emerge below, I am following these works (if not their authors) in leaving open a potentially non-secular concept of the behind and beyond. However, it does mean that what I am isolating cannot be the same notion as what is found in these texts. This religious element, more than anything else, creates a necessary gap between the nineteenth-century sources and my own project. I will have to provide an account what it is to have the virtues I list *without* the divine. That will hopefully become clear as we move through them and into my educational contexts.

With it understood that the childlike learner need not, and should not, refer only to children, that it is founded upon but not synonymous with MacDonald's conception,

and that I will ultimately disassociate it from the divine, I will now turn in earnest to some of the core virtues of the childlike learner which allow them to experience and continue to chase in good stead *being-with-worth*. The virtues I will focus on are playfulness, a capacity for wonder, and intellectual humility and open-mindedness.

<u>Playfulness</u>

As mentioned, for these authors there are certain moral, divinely-decreed rules that are unbreakable and off-limits. Outside of this, however, the Golden Age is one that promotes play and the childlike learner is undoubtedly playful. Child*like* play is not found in child*ish* flights of fancy or the playful romping of the Romantic child, nor the play-based learning that was rejected by the moralists cited above, although such things might have their place. Childlike play and playfulness are active and involve the creation of meaning alongside and in direct negotiation with fellow players of whatever age. This kind of play facilitates a sense of one's existence as worthwhile through moments of ownership, community, fun, enhanced understanding and a life-long disposition to continue in this mode and to explore possibilities and alternatives.

Playful collaboration

The first and perhaps most prominent form of playfulness found in these texts is in those moments where children bring about or accept moments of creative collaboration before and during story-telling. As Marah Gubar (2009) argues, many of the Golden Age authors viewed the child as complex, accultured human beings who are caught up in the constraints of their society just as much as the adults. However, rather than slip into what was presented as the normal story dynamic of the children gathering round to be told a faithfully recounted and pre-selected story, whilst having some wisdom imparted via a (hopefully) entertaining experience, many of these texts frame and intersperse the main story with images of creative interaction and negotiation between storyteller and listener as to what should be in

the story and which rules it and they must conform to. This spirit of playfulness and co-conspiracy in breaking and changing the rules is not just delighted in by the child but the adult also and, in this collaboration, a childlike nature is seen in all involved even if they all bring something different to the negotiated space.

Children are depicted as being capable of setting the terms of and reshaping stories. They are, in Gubar's terms, "artful collaborators" who, with the right adult, can avoid "the fate of functioning as passive parrots." (2009: p. 6) Yet, they are not self-sufficient and their imagination and play are not presented as distinctly superior to that of the adults. Indeed, we get the sense that without the adult, the experience would not achieve *being-with-worth*. This is a *collaboration* that is founded upon a childlike willingness to employ imagination and take a fresh approach to the rules but also the childlike humility, further discussed below, found in the willingness of the one capable of facilitating such play and a surrendering of control even to the child to do so. Gubar focuses on child narrators in Juliana Ewing's stories, particularly highlighting *The Brownies* and the continual revision of stories by children in the text. For Gubar, these acts highlight how "the prescriptive power that adult scripts wield over children is mitigated by the force of revision" (2002: p. 43). However, it is important to note that whilst it is the handing over of the power to revise to the child that is perhaps the most novel element of these texts, it is not just children who do the revision, it is also adults who do it for the child and for themselves, and the children need the material for revision. They need a structured piece to play with rather than a blank piece of paper. As one young lady comments at the end of Ewing's 'Melchior's Dream': "I don't think I could have dreamt such a wonderful dream." (1895 [1862]: p. 47) For childlike play and *being-with-worth* to occur, these different elements must be present in the same space – the imaginative, creative and passionate figure and the well-versed, foresighted, humble figure. Because of this then, it is not just the children who are offered the chance to break free of narratives and structures rather than revere them, it is also the adult.

This joint endeavour in creative collaboration and childlike play is a model that is repeated and emphasised in Ewing's works. For example, in 'An Idyll of the Wood' the children make their case for leaving behind the old rules of stories which must

end happily, have everyone survive and get married, and be fictional. They demand a sad, true story where everyone dies and there is a bad ending. In 'Melchior's Dream' the Christmas guest and Richard haggle over the nature of the story with Richard demanding that he be freed of the precedent set by his school usher that close-to-life tracts must be used that indicate the good and bad behaviour of boys at his school. The guest agrees to avoid a true story so long as he is allowed to use Richard's name in the story. Richard assents and fiercely guards this agreement, almost immediately interjecting to declare, "I smell a moral." (p. 19) The storyteller, keen not to deceive his audience but aware that he is not technically breaking any of the new rules simply responds: "Your scent must be keen, for it is a long way off." (p. 19)

These kinds of interaction happen across other stories of the period. For example, we see it in MacDonald's 'A Scot's Christmas Story' when the children ask for a tale of Scotland although, in this instance, they are breaking the rules not only for their own sake but for the teller's: "Because you will like it best yourself, papa" (p. 311). In Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses*, despite creating a caricatured narrator who is averse to fantasy and sternly calls for silence and attention before her story, she cannot cease the children from their questions and whilst she often attempts to simply placate them and move on, in other instances she cannot help but be drawn into creating more details and so revises the story for and with them. In her movement between her first and second story, the Aunt is caught by her own logic and drawn into full-blown creation for and with the children when they demand the story of the frog who couldn't boil the kettle:

> "Oh, but you do know it, Aunt."
> "No, indeed I do not. I can imagine reasons why a frog would not
> and should not boil a kettle, but I never heard any such stated."
> "Oh, but try. You know, Aunt, you are always telling us to try."
> "Fairly put, Jane, and I will try" (1992: pp. 342-343).

And by the time she comes to telling a third story there is very little resistance:

"If Jane and you wish for a winter story, my next shall freeze hard.

What! Now? You really do allow me very little time for
invention!"

"And please, Aunt, be wonderful."

"Well, Laura, I will try to be wonderful; but I cannot promise
first-rate wonders on such extremely short notice." (p. 350)

The models that are being presented are undoubtedly meant to be replicated in real
life book reading and interactions between story-telling adults and their child
audiences. And, as Deborah Thacker points out, just as in the texts, book reading is
a social game where the adults play with the illusion of control so that the child can
playfully test adult power and their own authority. Indeed, the adult may take a cue
from examples such as 'Melchior's Dream' and when adopting the authorial or
narrative voice, if they are reading out loud, may take control with that voice, play
with it, negotiate the story with their child, and disrupt the "conventional,
controlling modes of storytelling." (Thacker, 2000: p. 7) This is a model of playful
activity for the dual audience of adult and child implied by these texts. A dual
audience that becomes one via the childlike "sprout" – to use an image from
Mencius' virtue theory – in each of us.

In childlike play, old rules are being identified and subverted and new ones
playfully put in their place. This is not to say that these children and adults
completely subvert the society they live in, however. In fact, they enjoy many other
comforts of "civilised" life alongside their creative interactions. Indeed, one might
think that many of the examples I have provided are tame in comparison to what
we might think represents playful and subversive behaviour and collaborations in
contemporary society or even children's literature. What is the potency of asking
for a story without a moral when compared with the rule-breaking and dark play of
teenage dystopian fiction for example? However, even outside of the context of a
stricter and more moralistic Victorian society, I have not come across any
contemporary, mainstream texts which frame the telling of a central story with a
depiction of creative negotiation and collaboration between storytellers. Many
contemporary books may invite the child to fill in the gaps of meaning and the

morals of stories are ambiguous if not gone entirely, but that is not the same thing as the promotion of creative and playful *collaborations*.

There is still the possibility of giving and receiving nuggets of moral wisdom amongst this playful collaboration – after all, "a tale without a moral is like a nut without a kernel, not worth the cracking" (Ewing, 1992 [1870]: 105) – but even this is presented as all the more potent and better for the playful collaborations that have preceded it. Indeed, the worthwhile nature of this playfulness is not just found in the interactions but is also visible in how the children must deal with the emotional fallout of their creative interactions. For example, the request mentioned above in 'An Idyll of the Wood' for a sad, true story is followed through on and "though they were tired of stories that end happily, when they heard it, they liked a sad ending no better than other children do" (p. 61). Richard's requests also lead to a less-direct and more enjoyable experience for the children, but it is one which he admits, "hit me rather hard." (1865: p. 49) This impact is both the price and the payoff of such collaborative, playful activity.

These negotiations and interactions can go wrong however, as Smith finds out in MacDonald's *Adela Cathcart*. At a Christmas party held by his hosts, Smith finds himself faced with a room of young children and asks them if they like fairy-stories. They say they do and he proceeds to excite their imagination by asking if they have heard of a number of tantalising stories about a giant that was all skin, a princess with a blue foot or Don Worm of Wakemup. However, unable to tell all the stories he offers the decision of what kind of story it will be to the room and suddenly he is faced with a cacophony of voices and arguments over whether the story should include a wicked fairy or not. At this point, Smith takes control of proceedings and guides them towards a story about a bad giant (denying that he knows any good stories about good giants in the process) and tells them one of MacDonald's most famous stories which was to go on and be published apart from its place in *Adela Cathcart*: 'The Giant's Heart'. However, upon finishing the story the room is aghast:

"Silly thing!" said a little wisehead.

"What a horrid story!" said one small girl with great eyes, who
sat staring into the fire.
"I don't think it at all a nice story for supper, with those horrid
spiders, too," said an older girl." (p. 337)

Smith tries to take back control of the situation by suggesting a game and fails and
then, upon hearing that at least one child is planning to use his story to scare a
sibling he makes his final mistake: ""No, no; you musn't be unkind," said I; "else
you will never help little children against wicked giants. The giants will eat you too,
then."" (p. 337) Smith has too hastily and heavy-handedly revealed the moral of the
story and he is scoffed at by the children and Smith admits one of the older girls
"made me feel rather disappointed with the effect of my moralizing" (p. 338).
Knoepflmacher interprets this scene as MacDonald acknowledging "that not every
reader will relish this or any other of his elliptical fairy tales" (1998: p. xviii) Indeed,
we might put the failure down to the *type* of children in the room. By the standards
of the virtues being explored in this chapter, they do not seem childlike as their
interjections during the story are not collaborative and imaginative, nor are they
interacting with the story with a humble and wonderous disposition or on its own
terms. They interrupt competitively and to merely criticise the more fantastical
elements (p. 320; 322) and Smith sees no option but to cease their interjections:
"Then don't you find any more fault with it, or I will stop." (p. 322) Yet, it feels
like there is more to Smith's heavy-heart when he reflects that "the disappointment
was no more than I deserved" (p. 338). We might deduce that in addition to the
children's approach, he was also not the most childlike and conducive to a shared
and truly playful experience. From the start it appeared as though he was simply
manoeuvring the children towards a story which he knew and which he felt was
worthwhile rather than honestly engaging them in a playfully creative and
collaborative process. He performed an appearance of playful interaction rather
than genuinely facilitating one and he paid the price. He takes comfort in the fact
that a single girl stays behind to say that she thought it was a nice story and she
would be good, but his moralising to the reader after this –"The darling did not
know how much more one good woman can do to kill evil than all the swords of
the world in the hands of righteous heroes" (p. 338) – feels somewhat hollow after
what has happened and it is as though there is a lesson in here that MacDonald is

trying to recount from experience. To reach the childlike beyond those that are already good, these interactions must be genuine and skilful on the part of the adult. His moralising and slightly sneaky approach to collaborative storytelling undermines the childlike in him and through his failure it is reinforced that childlike playfulness requires the childlike in the child but also the adult.

Perhaps somewhat worrying to a contemporary reader about the playful practice in these texts, however, is that this playful activity, whilst being enjoyably subversive and creative, also has the potential to perpetuate and solidify what we would take to be unhealthy relationships and rules. While some structures are played with, there are others are left untouched. These are usually the most hidden, deeply entrenched or insidious ones. The less these structures are played with the more they stop appearing as externally imposed rules and the more they are simply handed down as givens, even via playful and creative activity. As Lerer (2008) comments, this playful collaboration may well be part of an educator appealing to children's tastes but for most of these authors they also wanted to, and thought it right to, attempt to shift that taste in certain directions. In keeping some moralising and some social structure, we might want to say that these narrators and their authors don't fully capitalise on or open themselves up to the full potential of the model they are promoting. For example, I have already highlighted that a Christian God and morality underpins these texts and MacDonald maintains in his essay 'The Fantastic Imagination' that there are moral rules that even imaginative literature and fantasy can't play with: "In physical things a man may invent; in moral things he must obey – and take their laws with him into his invented world as well." (1976: p. 164). Additionally, Gubar (2002) argues that we still cringe at the paedophilic overtones of the Doctor asking Tiny to "kiss my fluffy face" in Ewing's *Brownies* and we should suspect that despite the playful and collaborative model he has still exerted a coercive force and trained Tiny to behave in a way that satisfies his desire. Auerbach and Knoepflmacher (1992) also point to how *Speaking Likenesses*, for all its playfulness, depicts the child listeners as being goaded into ferocious charitable sewing and there are strong overtones of this being feminine work which will be perpetually handed down along with the stories from generation to generation. However, how this childlike model of playful activity might develop its potential for self-awareness and openness is something I will return to in chapter four and we

can put it to one side for now in order to acknowledge that the lives of these childlike adults and children are depicted as not only being more worthwhile because of their collaborative playfulness, but also that those living them experience this worth. The children are set up to become positive and active forces in shaping and influencing the society around them, as opposed to being static images and emblems of escapism or empty vessels to be filled as quickly as possible. Both the adults and children in these interactions are now drawn into fun, transgenerational relationships and create works with immediate vitality and potency. These are not just fleeting, positive experiences, but are life-affirming ones that gesture towards an underlying sense of one's capability to shape and impact the world, something that very much indicates that one has *worth*.

Playful nonsense and playing with shadows

In his comprehensive and intriguing work, *Philosophy of Nonsense: The Intuitions of Victorian Nonsense Literature* (1994), Jean-Jaques Lecerle contends that the nonsense literature of the Victorian period reflects the polarisation of the speaker between their understandings of language as speaking ("it is language, not I, that speaks, the words come out of my mouth 'all wrong'") and me speaking language ("I am in full control of my utterance, I say what I mean and mean what I say"). Nonsense, in its breaking but also radically conforming to, the rules of a language both supports and subverts the myth of a precise, informative and world-tracking language. From similar beginnings, Lerer also argues that during this period nonsense became emblematic of the "force of the imagination" which could issue a direct challenge to "the logic of adulthood and the laws of a civil life" (2008: p. 191). Stephen Prickett suggests it does so in at least two main ways. He points to the works of Lear for a form of nonsense which challenges current society and structures of meaning based upon a tour-de-force of "emotion, nostalgia, and sheer buffoonery" and then to Lewis Carroll for nonsense which works with undeviating, 'adult' rationality but pushes it "to its furthest and wildest extremes" (2005: p. 124). All of this indicates nonsense's subversive character and, according to Lecerle, nonsense texts for children during this period, "aim at (and choose their characters from) the type of child who has not yet been captured by the institution" (1994: p. 4). In this sense, the nonsense that is used in these texts is an extension of the above

collaboration in that it allows the author to explore their own understanding of society and language whilst playfully subverting rules, but, in their expertise with language, they also create a space for the child to begin playing with meaning and the form of language in a different way to the playful activity outlined above. The permission to play provided by nonsense, it is hoped, will then extend away from the text and allow the childlike figure to question and challenge the "nonsense" they begin to see around them.

However, despite its fame in the *Alice* books and making a few appearances in MacDonald's *Princess* stories, it is not overly prolific in the Golden Age. Nonsense is a specific, jovial and linguistic instance of a potentially broader project which is to make sense of the meaning of society and life itself. Playing with nonsense can provide an immediate, worthwhile experience but the result is, as Alice says of the *Jabberwocky*, that it "seems to fill my head with ideas." (1965: p. 142) These ideas still need to be worked through and transformed into something else. Where nonsense plays with the bounds of common sense and opens up the possibilities and playfulness of language, it only accidentally achieves or needs further collusion to get to the level of social or existential playfulness. Perhaps this is what fantasy and, in particular the fantastical images of shadows, do in the works of MacDonald and Ewing. They attempt to more directly facilitate reflection on our deepest and darkest selves as well as the social constructs around us.

'The Shadows', told by Smith during *Adela Cathcart* and which, like 'The Giant's Heart', went on to be published outside of *Adela* in other collections, tells the story of Mr Rinklemann's rise to kinghood in the fantasy realm of the shadows. The shadows that come to visit Rinklemann claim they are the shadows of humans, not inanimate objects. Indeed, they become upset at the thought of being associated with the latter. What they mean when they say they are the shadows of humans, however, is not that they retain human form, or that they have one form at all, but that they are the shadows shaped by the fact that humans are aware and conscious beings with moral sensibility, hidden desires and regrets, and reflective capabilities. Their form, it seems, adopts the shape of our innermost thoughts and feelings. As with clouds and inkblots, they take no unquestionable or predetermined shape, but rather take on the form of whatever emotion or thought is present in the viewer at

that time. However, where clouds float and inkblots remain still, these shadows dance and change to give mesmerising life to that which is seen. To put it in playful terms, they repeatedly change their shape and rules and never allow one form to dictate their existence for too long. They are the shadows cast by our own flickering and changing immediate memories, thoughts, and feelings. As such, whilst they are always at play and changing and jesting, they "always jest in earnest" (p. 191). In fact, they can do nothing but be earnest for they are filtered through the "truth" of our perception.

To demonstrate this, the shadows take the form of Rinklemann's conscience at the start of the story and it is precisely in light of this that we can read his fearful aversion to them. To him the shadow's "insane lawlessness of form" (p. 194) makes them worse than goblins and gnomes which are, at least, solid and complete and so understandable and conquerable. However, he does admit that even through their metamorphoses they retain their identity – they are "each of his own type" (p. 194). In this admission he expresses precisely the tension that exists when one does not recognise oneself in how one interprets the shape of a shadow. For the shadows as they exist independently of the observer *do* have an "insane lawlessness of form", at least insofar as the flickering flames do. Yet they also have a "type", namely that type given to them by their human observer. This is the type that comes from that 'object' that now exists between the flame and the wall to mould their appearance – human perception. Apprehension of the shadows comes from having oneself revealed in this lawlessness. Indeed, their play and energy draws directly upon the conscience and ideas of the viewer. For example, where there is a clean conscience their energy is positively playful or gone. Towards the start of the story the shadows are subdued by Mrs Rinklemann's entrance and despite their best efforts "the queen only smiled, for she had a good conscience." (p. 199) Similarly the shadows cannot scare children who have not yet developed a sense of self or a worried conscience. The shadows actually declare that they "especially belong to children" (p. 207), as the child's imagination lets them dance happily and act out scenes of wonder, and that they seldom seek to frighten anyone: "We only want to make people silent and thoughtful." (p. 196) However, they cannot help what form they take and what lies in wait in those silent and thoughtful moments if the viewer has a tarnished conscience. For example, one shadow tells of a time he prompts a granddaughter to

think of her grandfather sat alone in the dark. He is sat alone because "he has filled his own mind with shadows, which we Shadows wanted to draw out of him. Those shadows are very different from us, your majesty knows. He was thinking of all the disappointments he had had in life" (pp. 214-215).

Indeed, due to this moment of interpretation or creation of meaning that comes only through their playful form, the shadows argue they are necessary to humanity. They demonstrate this by telling the stories of their successes and their interactions with humanity. They made a murderer confess, halted a wedding by revealing a bride's true nature, stopped an alcoholic from being able to drink alone, and inspired a musician to play "a shadow-dance that fixed us all in sound forever" (p. 204). They, of course, recognise that their abilities lie in whether the observer can engage with this process or see something there, which, in turn, depends entirely upon their willingness and disposition. For example, they tell the story of a miser who they could do no good for:

> I tried very hard, but […] although I made all sorts of shapes on
> the walls and ceiling, representing evil deeds that he had done, of
> which there were plenty to choose from, I could make no shapes
> on his brain or conscience. He had no eyes for anything but gold.
> (pp. 210)

It is this limitation that is worrying the shadows in MacDonald's story the most, due to a fatal turn they have witnessed in human nature. They are the shadows of "the twilight of fire, or when one man or woman is alone with a single candle, or when any number of people are all feeling the same thing at once" (p. 195). They exist in moments that teeter between light and dark, wakefulness and rest, the ordinary and the magical, and it is their existence on this brink that also provide them with their strange, playful power. But humanity is attempting to banish them completely – and so hide from what their playing can reveal to a person about themselves – through the proliferation of new, artificial lighting. Humans, it seems, are attempting to destroy precisely those spaces where shadows are most powerful: the still moments between waking and sleep, between full light and dark, and the corners of rooms as one sits awake with a candle. If we extend this via the

interpretation of MacDonald's childlike figure as a rebuttal of over-rationalisation and scientific explanation, we may understand it also as humanity's attempt to shed light on things that were a mystery. We no longer wish to *play with* the shadows in candlelit moments for they are now a matter of scientific inquiry and the utmost seriousness. They must either be still and completely understood or completely gone.

These shadows have so far put an emphasis on the need for playful, unsettled and unsettling moments of interpretation and fluid meaning as well as the need to follow this play up with an openness and willingness to conduct self-reflection; to see in the meaning that has been drawn from the fluidity – or the nonsense above – an understanding of what we are bringing to that meaning. The meaning was not found *in* the shadow, it was found in the form we gave it and so was in us. Playful images and creations represent and interpret us as much as we interpret them, just as on Lecerle's account of nonsense we speak language as much as language speaks. However, this seems to place emphasis on the childlike figure being self-reflective rather than playful. That is indeed another virtue, but playfulness still comes before it and underpins the point being made here when we look at another work of MacDonald's. 'The Golden Key', and at what happens in *Adela Cathcart* around the telling of 'The Shadows'.

In another link to the Divine, MacDonald believed our imaginative and creative (and so our playful) capabilities are our most God-like traits (1976). This is borne out in 'The Golden Key' when Tangle and Mossy are in search of the realm which casts the shadows on the earth. There is more than a little hint here of the allegory of Plato's cave where the cave-dwellers sit and watch shadows on the wall, taking them for reality, until one breaks his chains and turns around and heads outside to learn the truth that stands behind the shadows rather than gaze upon mere appearances. In search of that realm, Tangle and Mossy enter a fantasy realm, or, at least, a realm 'beyond' this one. Here dwells, amongst others, the Old Man of the Fire – simultaneously the oldest of the Old Men met by Tangle but who appears as the youngest, a naked baby. Whilst childlike and somewhat divine, the Old Man of Fire is not the creator of the shadows Tangle and Mossy were looking for. He does, however, play with different sized balls of colour in order to cast his own figures

and shadows upon the floor, and he does, therefore, engage his divine, imaginative faculty to create his own shadows – just as we all can.

It is important to see that in MacDonald's philosophy it is not just playful shadows cast by other objects that can be interpreted as shining a light on our inner workings, but we can create our own playful, enigmatic and shadowy texts for others. That is simply part of who we are as human beings and bringing that worth to someone else is something that the childlike figure also finds worth in. Indeed, 'The Shadows' is discussed in *Adela Cathcart* in a way that implies that the story is a type of shadow if the above reading is correct. For example, Adela interrupts Smith's telling of the story at least twice to ask for an explanation of the its meaning. In both cases, Smith responds that he is not sure and even responds with a question of his own: "How can I tell?" (p. 196). These responses by Smith confuse and frustrate Adela who proclaims that she now has a distrust of Smith as a storyteller because she does not believe him to have had any meaning in mind. However, as she continues to ponder she admits that her depression has somewhat shifted because of the story (p. 218). In her attempt to find meaning and engage with the shadowy mystery of the story she has begun to read anew herself and her beliefs. It is not just Adela who is affected by 'The Shadows' either. Immediately after its telling we are treated to a reinvigorated Smith as he ponders upon a snowstorm and revels in "the sense of being lapt in a mysterious fluctuating depth of exquisite shapes of evanescent matter" (p. 221). If we compare this to his mood and the situation after his failed telling of 'The Giant's Heart' we can see that in this attempt there is a genuineness to his creative project and his claims to not be aiming at a meaning – of his creating a flickering shadow - and both he and his audience benefit from its playfulness. He allows the listener to stand between him and the wall and interpret the shadows that are cast during the telling, rather than asking them to stand aside and simply gaze upon a shape.

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The virtue of playfulness then is the disposition to identify rules and structures, to challenge them or create new ones, and act according to the new paradigm. The kind of playfulness seen in childlike figures is one that involves well-intentioned

active collaboration with other childlike figures, a willingness to indulge in nonsense and play with shadows, as well as to create one's own shadowy, playful material for others. Such things not only create positive experiences of community and fun but also a sense of personal worth through seeing and enacting one's own power in the world and on others. Childlike play reveals that there is much to the world that one can interact with in a meaningful and creative way and one's experience of life becomes "full" in the way outlined in chapter one. The childlike life is not only worthwhile because it is empowered through playfulness but also because it empowers others through the creation of shadows – it perpetuates the valuable experience.

How is this an *epistemic* virtue? On a more traditional model, one may well argue, as Lecerle does in relation to nonsense, that playfulness gives one a kind of implicit knowledge about the workings of language, literature and social interaction. On a lived understanding, however, playfulness would immediately appear to facilitate many more experiences of *being-with-doubt* given its ability to undermine and shift structures of meaning. The more rules that are played with, the more that are viewed as potential playthings. This is a good thing insofar as it allows for increased exposure to different ideas of what is worthwhile by playing with those ideas and pieces of knowledge that are dictated to provide worth. However, it can also work to strengthen those meaningful structures that do remain. My resultant knowledge may well go beyond *being-which-resists-doubt* insofar as it is now also *being-which-has-resisted-doubt* and, if it has been involved in an intensely personal playful experience is built upon a strong experience of *meaning-created-with-and-through-me*.

I will be extending my definition of play and playfulness further in chapter four – particularly in relation to the challenging realm of dark teenage play which is missing from this literature but which is characteristic of late-twentieth century children's literature – and, as already mentioned, I will be returning to the challenges of play which ignores its own structures and divorces it from the divine. However, for now, it is time to turn to a second virtue.

Capacity for Wonder

As with the concept of the childlike, George MacDonald does not give a complete account of the nature of wonder, but he deliberately echoes Francis Bacon when he writes: "wonder, that faculty of the mind especially attendant on the childlike imagination, is the seed of knowledge" (1895: p. 15). This sentiment, whilst emphasising the childlike imagination, is in line with the reverence wonder has been treated with throughout the history of Western philosophy ever since Socrates declared that wonder was the feeling of the philosopher (*Theaetetus*, 155d) and Aristotle claimed that all philosophy begins in wonder (*Metaphysics* I: II), and it retains a central place as a core virtue in my conception of the childlike learner.

To generalise, wonder is the emotion we experience when we encounter an object or event that appears to be at odds with the world as we know it. We are surprised that it does not fit into the categories we already have and are baffled but intrigued by. A desire is created in us to know more about the object and to incorporate it into our understanding, but even as we fill this gap the object of wonder stands as a symbol for how the world has the potential to surprise us and the powerful aesthetics of the unexplained. For example, as a child I did not understand rainbows and experienced wonder at how they could even be possible. I sought to know more about these beautiful objects which defied my expectations of what was capable of occurring in the world. Even as I learned more about how they are formed and why they might be aesthetically pleasing, rainbows maintained traces of this wonder as their aesthetics still extended beyond their explanation and their form embodied a memory of how the world could be accessibly strange.

This experience of a motivating incompleteness can be contrasted with experiences of other mysterious objects that come with negative emotions such as fear or disgust. Where I embraced the wonder of rainbows, I rejected the unknown of the dark. What was cloaked in the corner of my room was just as unknown to me as the origin of rainbows, but where looking at a rainbow was an experience of beauty and life-affirming possibility, the dark was an unknown which I had no desire to explore. I shunned opportunities to explore the mysteries of the dark and I sought to end its existence as quickly as possible. Rainbows elicited a positive response to

the limits of my current knowledge, whereas the dark was an experience of myself being under threat from those limits. Both my response to rainbows and the dark were invitations to imagine or prompted my imaginative faculty. What could the origin story for a rainbow be? How on earth did it get there and where did its colours come from? What lies in the dark and why would it be there? What would it want with me? However, where one experience prompted me to open the door to my imagination willingly and I embraced its results, the other inspired firm resistance to the reflexive response to create what was beyond the visible and tangible. I asked the rainbow to help me create but I demanded that the dark keep its gifts to itself, even if it did not listen to my demands very often.

Neither the dark nor rainbows elicited awe, and wonder can be helpfully understood as different from awe. I put the distinction in these terms: whereas wonder includes a perception of oneself being equal to the task of understanding of the object in question, awe prompts a feeling of the inadequacy of one's understanding. In awe, we are over- or disempowered rather than inspired to search. Wonder creates a transitory state of lack and we experience the removal of that lack as possible. Awe brings with it an inescapable unknowability, a sense of one's own powerlessness and that one's very existence is insufficient. Awe, in this sense, is as disempowering as wonder is empowering.

Wonder then is a feeling of surprise at something beyond one's understanding that causes the imagination to pleasantly swell and motivates an imaginative and open form of inquiry, often with an aftereffect on our conception of the possibilities present in the world.

Because of the element of surprise, which enables us to find something new and exciting in the world, the experience of wonder has been closely linked to childhood and, for many, it is directly tied to the undeveloped and inexperienced mind of the child*ish* figure. This link is drawn out in some works analysing the Golden Age. For example, Schrock explains wonder in MacDonald's writings as "the explosion of new meaning into the mind, *only possible to the naively expectant child*" (2006: p. 67, my emphasis). Here Schrock is expressing the understandable sentiment that wonder is tied up with the ignorance of the child who, because of their lack of

experience, has the potential to experience wonder at almost every turn. However, whilst the existence of wonder may be more prolific in childhood it is not necessary or limited to it. It is not mere amazement or a regressive emotion which, due to the pleasure of the experience, motivates one to stay in the wonderous state as long as possible. We are not meant to retain the same subject of wonder and stay ignorant or naive. The rainbow, as I said above, may retain the fingerprints of wonder and I experience these along with it, but it should no longer be the object of wonder. If this is the case, I did not capitalise on the motivation, I simply rolled in the pleasure. I do not understand the world any better. The childlike figure, however, uses their wonder to seek understanding even as they retain a conception of the world and grant that it may never be fully understood and there is potential for wonder still in everything.

We should also be wary of Schrock's use of "naïveté", which implies that wonder *requires* naïveté. However, a gap in knowledge or understanding does not imply naïveté. Both at the start and end of *Adela Cathcart* we are reminded that Smith has this wondrous mind-set as he gazes into two snowstorms and sees a "vague and dim solidification of space, a mysterious region […] out of which anything might come" (p. 1) and "a mysterious fluctuating depth of exquisite shapes of evanescent matter" (p. 221). It is here that he seems, if not entirely comfortable, at home with an underlying sense of excitement. It seems to be this wondrous mind-set that must be re-born in order to set Adela back on a childlike path as, after some of the stories, she begins to wear looks of deep interest and "abstracted thought and feeling" again and to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, for she had the appearance of one who is stilled by the strange newness of her thoughts." (p. 150) Smith further articulates a feeling that now looking like this she is experiencing a consciousness of existence quite different from anything she has felt before. And Adela is certainly not a naïve child, nor is Smith.

For an adult to retain the childlike capacity for wonder without simply regressing they must put in work and resist the trappings of old age and experience, which would seek to tell them that they have found the right path to understanding and a sense of the world being known and mundane; these are issues to be returned to in the below discussion of intellectual humility. MacDonald often uses metaphor and

fantastical description as a way of trying to help the adult reader rediscover their capacity for wonder and the young child to experience it. For example, consider this passage at the start of *The Princess and Curdie*. Mountains, where the narrator tells us:

> are portions of the heart of the earth that have escaped the dungeon down below, and rushed up out. For the heart of the earth is a great wallowing mass, not of blood, as in the hearts of men and animals, but of glowing hot, melted metals and stones. And as our hearts keep us alive, so that great lump of heat keeps the earth alive: it is a huge power of buried sunlight – that is what it is. (2006: 85)

Just as with Nietzsche's fable at the start of this thesis, one might ask after the truth of this description. Does it contain some truth but ultimately stem from a deficient understanding of plate tectonics and, because of its lack, it is filled with slightly more fantastical elements? Is it simply meant to be a childish fantasy that, although containing a modicum of truth, is meant to entertain and set the scene for a fantasy rather than inform? Or, is this beside the point? The metaphor is meant to inspire a childlike mindset in its reader and evoke an experience of wonder towards something that may have once been perceived as wonderous but has become an everyday object to them in their 'old age'. There is wonder to be found in old experiences recast if we are only willing to engage with them in a different, childlike way.

Although I have focused on MacDonald, wonder is a recurrent theme throughout the literature of the Golden Age and authors regularly attempt to elicit it. For example, in 'An Idyll of the Wood', the old narrator is one who continues to find wonder in the woods unlike all the other adults who come there and have grown used to it. The regular, summer visitors to the wood will picnic there year after year and they see it as the same and hear the same song being sung by every bird. They do not realise what he does and that no lifetime could reveal all of the beauties and lessons of the wood. There is always some new detail to be wondered at in the wood, and each song is different and beautiful in its uniqueness. Each new wonder

and each new song is capable of driving one's understanding in a new direction. It it is only the childlike character with a continuing capacity for wonder and who is willing to work at retaining it who *hears* and experiences the wood as continually worthwhile in its newness. Those who lose this only experience the picnic.

Nonsense has already been discussed in relation to playfulness, but what was not fully discussed was how part of the pleasant experience might come from the way in which Carroll's use of language and word play causes a wondering at the very way language works. Language suddenly becomes something unfamiliar, without clear boundaries and a realm of possibilities. It is no longer completely understood but we simultaneously feel like we may well, once again, be able to master it. We may not be able to – we fail to command the temper of verbs and the pride of adjectives impenetrably as Humpty Dumpty does – but this oscillation between a perception that we can and our inability to just adds to language's endless capability as a vehicle for wonder. As a human construct it constantly lures us into thinking that we can get to grips with it – and so does not stray over into the realm of awe – whilst always remaining capable of becoming strange and delightfully mysterious again. Gyring and gimbling hold no terror for me and yet they never cease to set my mind inquiring.

However, where the wonder of the *Alice* books is contained within wondering at logic and language and the wonder of MacDonald's work in fantastical metaphor, the wonder of Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* also comes from an appeal to the strangeness of the world we already inhabit. As Prickett writes of Kingsley: "No fictional fantasy could equal the variety and peculiarity of the life he found teeming in the rivers and sea; there was no need to pass through any looking glass" (2005: p. 145). Indeed, the narrator of *The Water Babies* tells us of a time when elephants would be thought of as impossible monsters (1994: p. 48), and declares that "German bogey painters […] could never invent, if all their wits were boiled into one, anything so curious, and so ridiculous, as a lobster." (p. 91) For many, the elephant and the lobster may have lost their charm but we can re-find wonder at their existence by being asked to consider them afresh and with this new capacity for wonder turn it onto the world and cease to speak of strange things that cannot exist and cannot happen and, instead, look to the strange things that *do* exist and *do*

happen every day. Even Maria Edgeworth, an author I separated from this childlike conception at the start of this chapter, embraces the wonder of the natural world. As Immel, Knoepflmacher and Briggs (2009: p. 228) argue, Edgeworth's use of Rosamond's experience of a flea under a microscope in her story 'Wonders', depicts the extraordinary and fantastical potential of an ordinary creature. Edgeworth too demonstrates the alluring potential of nature and its ability not just to incite pleasure but to fill readers with the transformative power of knowledge and inquiry.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

A capacity for wonder must be worked for as we age and become familiar with the world, but maintaining a capacity for wonder is not an impossible task. I will be discussing the ways in which I have tried to bring wonder into my practice as a teacher and to develop the virtue of a capacity for wonder in adult education in chapter four. However, for now, it is important to note that this attempt to create in oneself a capacity for wonder can reinvest the world with joyful potential where it has been lost in our 'adultlike' existence. The context above was one where science was perceived as generally threatening, and many worried that it had already affected the worldview of society. However, what the search for wonder gave to science, and what allowed those worries to be placated in some, was the status of a realm of high adventure. Wonder does not separate science and the natural world from the humanities and literature, for they share "a common feeling for the strangeness of a world whose seemingly solid matter turns out to be a sea of atoms" (Shaw, 1999: p. 2).

An experience of wonder then holds the potential to be an experience of *being-with-worth* in and of itself through the way in which the world becomes a constantly surprising place to be, pregnant with stimulating experiences conducive to a life full of worth. As an epistemic virtue, it positions us in a positive relationship to not knowing rather than one which emphasises any deficiency in us. Through wonder we experience the epistemic life as a constant unveiling rather than an unending search to fill a gap. In each new encounter there is not the reminder of our lacking, but an experience of dramatic and pleasing challenge.

Of course, some might turn away from this experience insofar as it contains a high possibility for instability as the world is always able to surprise us and give us something new which can unsettle our current structures of meaning and interpretations of existence. Yet what could vanquish that concern about the stability of meaning appears only to be the belief that one has found correct answers and, more importantly, that everything in the world can be reduced to whatever terms you have already used in accounting for existence. This, I want to argue, is a huge leap of arrogance and closed-mindedness which cannot lead to a stable sense of *being-with-worth* where the above can. At this point it is important to note that, as may be becoming clear, these virtues are very much interwoven and must be understood in relation to each other. Playfulness can lead to wonder and the capacity for wonder is broadened by intellectual humility. Alternatively, an experience of wonder can lead to playfulness through the creation of meanings behind the wonderous object and to intellectual humility by having one's sense of the mystery of the world re-invoked. So now I will turn to the virtues which stand opposed to this vice: intellectual humility and open-mindedness.

Intellectual humility and open-mindedness

Playfulness is often conceived of as a character trait that is childish. It is tied to flights of fancy, figments of the imagination and a lack of seriousness. Wonder is similarly associated with a childish state of mind that is lacking in experience and naïve. Playfulness and wonder are taken to be things that will disappear as one 'grows up', matures in reasoning, rationality and complex relationships, and sees the world for how it 'really' is. If they are dabbled in as part of later life they are because one has children in need of a playmate, needs a break from the real world or is, for some reason, stunted in one's development. They, like 'blankies', night lights and thumb-sucking, are artefacts of an existence that has been transcended. Yet, as I have been outlining, this need not be the case. Playfulness and a capacity for wonder can be child*like* insofar as their continued practise can provide experiences of existence's worth beyond the merely regressive. However, if these virtues are to achieve their maximum potential, they require an openness to

engaging in what might be perceived as childish by others, a humble acknowledgment and revealing of the gaps in one's own understanding, and to the possibility that alternative ways of viewing the world might be correct. This capability is what I am calling childlike intellectual humility and open-mindedness.

There is something of a humble self-effacement and joking connected to the status of the child in many of the Golden Age texts, but they also come with a knowing nod to the potency of their position. For example, in Ewing's 'The Land of Lost Toys', Aunt Penelope takes on the role of storyteller. She maintains that her excellent capabilities as a narrator come from the fact that she has not had any children of her own and so has not yet transferred her "childish follies and fancies to them and become a properly sedate grown-up." (p. 35) Although she talks of "child*ish*" and "fancies", we can infer that what she is in fact talking about is her ability to continue to engage with children's stories and fantasy. She has retained the ability to search for meaning and lessons in them despite their association with the juvenile and fantastical. In the story she revisits a wood and tree from her childhood and there finds a beetle, a hole and an adventure ready to be learned from. She, like many of the children in the stories I have been recounting, is still able to move between worlds and traverse the boundaries between the adult world of serious reality and the childlike world of fantasy. However, she does not enter the fantasy world purely as fantasy. She is able to bring stories and learning back with her. It is this that marks her our as childlike rather than childish figure.

Where the childish figure travels to the fantasy realm merely for pleasure and escapism and the adultlike character does not or cannot make the journey because of their understanding of the realm of *mere* fantasy, the childlike figure can venture out and explore the possibilities of the fantastical realm, or what lies beyond and behind the world, in order to make remarkable discoveries. Indeed, the adultlike figure who cannot see the possibility and symbolism that is inherent in this fantasy realm, who dismisses learning from the symbols and emotions made there, is actually creating another fantasy: that there is nothing to be learned from the fantastical. We can see such a warning in MacDonald's *The Flight of the Shadow*. His protagonist, Belorba, has just met for the first time the woman who is to cause her much grief for the rest of the story. She relates to us that upon meeting this

woman she had doubts about her being a witch or ogress. However, she quashes them and thinks them to be silly thoughts. Instead of listening to the intuitions of childhood reading and the 'truth' of what stood behind these stories when meeting this woman, she dismisses them as she has been told that those images and tales bore no impact on real life. As such, she falls foul of surprise and is hurt when this woman does, indeed, turn out to be evil.

The adultlike characters in these texts already have pre-set notions of where knowledge and learning will and should come from, most often presented as logical reasoning and the immediate senses. They thus dismiss any learning that comes from beyond these boundaries. They might be amazed, shocked or baffled by an object in the world or an experience but they will maintain that there is an explanation to be had via the routes they already ascribe to. As has already been mentioned in my first chapter, in one scene from MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*, Princess Irene attempts to tell her nurse and friend that she has seen her long-dead grandmother but they will not believe her. When she asks why, the nurse simply answers, "Because I *can't* believe you" (p. 8). People only "believe what they can" (p. 61). When what they are being asked to believe is the presence of a dead woman, even if the grandmother had shown herself to them then they would not have believed their senses and simply called it a dream. For, "seeing is not believing – it is only seeing" (p. 62). As was discussed when I noted this interchange in chapter one, the nurse alludes to the fact that her certainty or knowledge that dead people cannot come back to life is, experientially, *being-which-resists-doubt* even in the face of a kind of justification that may well, abstractly, constitute enough to believe, be certain, or know that something is the case. Because of where the experience comes from – the fantastical notion of a dead woman returning to earth – it simply cannot be the case. However, the childlike figure does not discount a potentially educatory experience because of the sphere to which it belongs and they traverse the above boundaries as part of their search. They are not limited in what counts as evidence for truth and are open and receptive to novel routes to knowledge.

In many of these tales, for example, there is a point where the fantastical happenings can be attributed to a dream, hallucination, post-death experience, and so on. Yet it

is only the adultlike learner who takes heed of this and discounts the experience because of this. The childlike learner cares not for the nature of its embodiment, only what they can take away from it. One who has a childlike personality is one who recognises that these stories and tales may not be true in the strictest sense, but they engage with them as they also recognise their own limits with regards to knowledge of the world and existence. If we look to how the interaction between narrator and reader is presented in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* we can see an example of this. The narrator tells the reader that Scrooge "found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor […] as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow" (p. 62). This narrator does not exist in any strict sense for the reader, but the words, lessons, and experiences are being presented to them as worthy of an audience despite coming from an unreal yet somehow present voice. We should not fight this experience and debate its strict reality, as Scrooge attempts to do when he claims Marley's ghost to be but a bit of spoiled food (p. 56). The strict reality of the spirit for Scrooge – or the fantastical realm or even the narrator for the reader – is beside the point; it is their message and that message's potential for knowledge formation that we must engage with and evaluate as well as the emotional experience involved in the journey to it. Scrooge's journey from a so-called man of reason and harsh scepticism to one with an open mind allows him to ultimately engage with what the spirit has to say and the night's fantastical experiences and adjust his life on that basis.

As such, the childlike mind – one which is open to experiences of wonder and disposed to playfulness and the possibility for revolutions of thought upon the basis of this – is exploratory, bold and creative in their epistemic life. They can be so because their open-mindedness and humility allow the world to retain its status as full of possibilities and many paths to epistemically relevant experiences remain open. The world can still have an impact on thought and understanding rather than the world simply being there to be assimilated and explained under a pre-decided structure of thought.

In this openness to possibility comes an unbounded potential for playfulness and wonder, and in an openness to wonder and play we continue to demonstrate our own humility and open-mindedness. These virtues thus align in a symbiotic whole

which renders the world a realm of possibility and oneself a creative and active agent in it. The childlike virtues support experiences of *being-with-worth* by setting positive epistemic projects for the agent and by construing the world as an exciting and promising domain for those projects.

Facilitators and spaces of virtue

The above has articulated why playfulness, a capacity for wonder and intellectual humility and open-mindedness can be conceived of as three of the core virtues in the search for *being-with-worth*. They were found rooted in and explored through the Golden Age of children's literature. Before moving on to explore how a lived understanding of epistemology and these virtues might shift the boundaries of debate around questions of nostalgia, literature and testimony, I want to return to this literature to see what can be understood about which characters and what spaces allow for the development of these virtues. These authors embraced the responsibilities that came with the virtues they were highlighting, and their texts are filled with spaces and guides that were not only troubled by the industrial, scientific world but that wrestled with the fall-out of the empowerment that their literature was trying to bring about. An inquiry into this will be of great import in the implementation of my teaching philosophy in chapter four.

The childlike teacher

How do these authors maintain that one best facilitate and cultivate these virtues and how might they think one can educate for them? We have already seen examples of good and bad storytelling in the form of Smith and can deduce from his experience that one who works to bring about a childlike disposition should act in good faith towards any creative collaboration and seek to create works of a truly, rather than faux, shadowy nature. This storyteller should not be the Socratic ironist, who at least on some accounts feigns ignorance in order to work towards some predetermined end. They should instead display the virtues of playfulness and

humility, bravely taking on the unknown element of this type of collaboration, in order to bring these virtues about in others.

This model can be extended to leaving room for the childlike learner (of any age) to take up the active role not only during but after the story. Even if a moral is exposed, there should be a moment where the child can decide whether they want to engage with the meaning they have created, and with what they have taken from the experience, or not. They should be challenged or invited to consider the meaning and the potential role it might take in their future life, but they should not have the meaning, even if co-created, forced upon them. Such force threatens the empowering foundations of the creative experience. For example, in 'Idyll of the Wood' the children ask if the old man really did hear the story in the birdsong that fills the woods. He responds that he did, but that he is aware not everyone could hear it even if they stood where he did. At the end he tells them that he still hears the song of the bird even though it is dead because its ghost resides on the topmost branch of the tree outside his cabin. The story ends as the children are laying plans to get into the woods but we are never given an answer as to whether they make it past their parents and into the woods or if they hear and understand the song. We get a sense that a childlike reader, one who has been inspired by the story of the old man and is playful and open-minded enough to meet the story on its own terms, is being invited to adventure, to seek the truth behind the story that exists in the wood and its birds, and to find meaning outside the authority of adults. But it is not an explicit invitation. The teacher of the childlike cannot lead them there if they wish them to retain and practise their virtue, but must allow them to see and grasp the opportunity themselves.

Similarly, in Jean Ingelow's *Mopsa the Fairy*, after a hundred pages of action and adventure and a desperately moving return to the human world by the protagonist Jack, he is kissed good night and heads to his room:

> Then he got in his little white bed, and comfortably fell asleep.
>   That's all. (p. 316)

The beauty of this ending is the addition of the final line. Auerbach and Knoepflmacher suggest that these last two words soothe the reader as the mother soothes Jack on his return but that they also "imply that there can be no return to the imaginative worlds Jack has now altogether forgotten." (1992: p. 209) However, I read this final, jolting line as one which rocks the comfort of the image preceding it. It is a challenge to the reader rather than a closing of the door. It is inviting one to assent or rebel against whether that is, in fact, all. The story is over, but should it be revisited? Is there nothing more that can be taken from it? Does the experience have nothing the reader can use or reflect upon once they close the book? It is in the reader's response to these questions that they do or do not find their childlike nature and virtue.

The childlike educator is thus one who invites and attempts to stir action but does not enforce it. Aiming to create wonder is also integral to the childlike educator's efforts. As we saw above, many of these texts do not just extol the virtues of a disposition to wonder, they attempt to create experiences of it through their stories. It is in this light that we should read MacDonald's claim that teachers should be fairies (McGillis, 2003). Teachers are those who 'queer' the world and make it strange and ambiguous again. As Nicola Bown argues, fairies returned to the Victorians "the wonder and mystery modernity had taken away from the world (2001: p. 1). The childlike teacher is one who does the same to education and spaces of learning. Part of this comes through allowing the learner to question, not just to give them the answer, but, once again, not just for the sake of letting them find their own way to the truth but because they may have something fresh to contribute. In this sense, the childlike teacher displays the virtue of intellectual humility in order to facilitate the student's disposition for wonder. For example, in 'The Higher Faith', MacDonald talks of how, often, an aspirational child will approach the scholarly disciple in order to seek answers, trusting that the disciple's place of pedagogical power means they have something valuable to bestow on them. However, rather than meeting this childlike questioner and their being so full of heart, "unusual feeling", "lively hope", and "wide-reaching imagination" (1895: p. 34) with enthusiasm and learned humility, the disciple responds that there is no answer in any book they know of and so there is no answer at all. In their arrogance, this disciple does not ascribe to the notion that something not revealed to the

scholarly community could be revealed to a child and he forbids them from searching further with an authority brought on by "years and ignorance" (p. 35). This disciple does not recognize the qualities of childlikeness and instead sees *only* a child whose lack of experience means they have nothing to bring to learning or the conversation. Those who have a strong and embedded childlike character are compelled to answer these questions and seek their answers regardless of the adultlike figure, but this results in them turning from the community the teacher is a part of – a difficult and painful process. However, the teacher who shares in the childlikeness of the child can capitalise on the nature of these questions and develop the virtue of the student. They do not dissuade them, they provide what knowledge they have, but they do not provide rote answers or pretend they have the answer. Those that remain childlike as teachers humble themselves to become co-learners in the face of such questioning.

Perhaps the most childlike educator from the Golden Age is Kingsley's narrator in *The Water Babies*. As with the above texts, the narrator ends the story on a deliciously unstable and playful note which allows the reader to embrace a humble yet powerful and active stance or to turn away from the story as they see fit. Additionally, as was explored in the section on the virtue of wonder, this narrator is a voice that seeks to create wonder in their reader. We can also note the way that the narrator dabbles in playful nonsense during their story, and promotes humility throughout the text by challenging the intellectual arrogance of both fictional and real figures from the contemporary world of science. On top of this, however, the narrator of *The Water Babies* stands out as a childlike educator due to the sheer chaotic energy of the voice and narration, something that I experience as inspiring and motivating and therefore conducive to the other virtues.

Humphrey Carpenter writes that *The Water Babies* is "self-contradictory, muddled, inspiring, sentimental, powerfully argumentative, irrational, prejudiced, [and] superbly readable" (1985: p. 24). He and others (Darton, 1982; Manlove, 1975; Horsman, 1990) have taken this to be reflective of Kingsley's own chaotic and emotionally-charged disposition and it is perhaps for this reason that the narrative voice is the strongest character in the book. It is prejudiced, angry, sentimental, funny, and deeply caring. For Darton and Horsman, this is the weakness of the voice

as it flitters from nonsense to moralising and mistakes passion for fact, but, for me, it is all the more entertaining, all the more endearing, and all the more sincere for these qualities. It is its paradoxical humanity coupled with the relentless energy for what is worthwhile in life, regardless of how internally inconsistent it might seem, that makes it a voice worth experiencing. None of the critics named believe this voice to be an artistic choice on the part of Kingsley – although Manlove floats the idea – and I am sceptical too. However, regardless of whether Kingsley intended it or not, at its best and most energetic, the narrative voice throws the reader into the unexpected and, taking them by the hand, runs with them at a furious pace and headlong into play, stopping only to tearfully or sentimentally gaze with high emotion on a poignant scene. Although we might not want or always be able to go to the exhausting heights of Kingsley's narrator, one cannot deny that the vivacious teacher, who embodies and faces the virtues they want to extol at every turn is one who is immersed as far as possible in them and gives to them a potent lease of life. Evidence of this reading of the narrator can be found in the next chapter's discussion of the epistemic value of literature where the narrator features heavily.

As such, the childlike teacher appears to be one who: engages in the playful and creative process in good faith; challenges and invites the learner to take an active role in meaning making and narrative tasks without forcing them to; attempts to make the world wonderous and strange; genuinely acts as humble co-explorer with the learner; and embraces their role with vivacity, emotion and their humanity on display. However, we can add to this at least one more thing. We have already read in the above how the childlike is not just one who interacts with and facilitates others engaging with playful creations and shadows, but is also one who creates them. As such, the childlike teacher should also be read as the creator of texts such as the ones I am discussing, but also as one who creates spaces for the childlike student to flourish. I now want to turn to one such space: the Victorian Christmas hearth.

Christmas as a childlike space

Christmas was an important time for a range of Victorian writers, whether their aim was to exploit a lucrative financial trend or to capitalise on the opportunities to develop their readership's social and moral character. However, the form that Victorian Christmas stories sometimes took does not always sit easily with the expectations of the current reader. At contemporary productions of the long-running West End show *The Woman in Black*, for example, the line "Christmas is the perfect time for telling ghost stories" is usually met with a round of slight chuckles. To a modern audience, the idea that terrifying or mysterious tales have a place at a time of year when we are meant to feel safe and blanketed by seasonal warmth, is a comical one. That the dark fantasy of Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) stands out amongst the plethora of contemporary Christmas films and books testifies to this. Indeed, the juxtaposition of the film's two main worlds, Halloween Town and Christmas Town, and the presentation of their complete ignorance of each other, exemplifies what holiday historian Steve Roud has called the eclipse of Christmas' mischief and magic by Halloween (2008: p. 529). We no longer expect to see a Christmas collection begin with a call for "Hobgoblins, Raw-Heads and Bloody-bones, Buggy-bows, Tom pokers, Bull-beggars; and such like horrible bodies" (Anon, 1734: p. 10), nor do we witness the workings of fairies, goblins and witches on our Christmas cards (see Appendix A). We have moved more towards what William Thackeray advocated in 1847 when he reacted against this ghostly and serious vein. Namely, that Christmas literature and festivities should be characterised by "a proper, pleasant, rouged, grinning, junketing, pantomimic business" (Thackeray [1847], cited Forrester, 2016: p. 51). However, whilst this shift seems to have broadly happened, it was a gradual one, and during the transition there are Christmas spaces which utilise both Christmas' safe sentimentality and its ghostly origins in order to create experiences that are both secure and unsettling. This is a space which, if approached playfully with a capacity for wonder and humility, allows the childlike figure to access lessons which will reverberate with them for a long time.

So important was Christmas to George MacDonald that he rarely mentioned any other holiday in his stories (Gabelman, 2014). According to Smith in *Adela Cathcart*, Christmas is part of the "childhood of the year" where we experience Christ as "that strong sunrise of faith, hope, and love" (p. 19) and reject being old, cunning, selfish, careful, distrustful, petty, weak and foolish men and women and re-embrace the childlike in our hearts. Even putting aside this Christian message, we can see how MacDonald often uses Christmas in his invocation of the mysterious and the thoughtful, and, according to Sadler, he depicted it as the time when "one must be willing to cast off the cloak of adult doubts and cares long enough to spend that special night, if we can find the place, in the wise woman's magical hut; a night of self-realisation that may have, for adults and children alike, some frightening consequences about it" (1973: p. 20). Indeed, one might say that Sadler's description perfectly sums up the Christmas journey of Adela from depression to reinvigoration via stories which, when embraced in a childlike fashion, cause deep, sometimes frightening, but ultimately saving, self-reflection. This is the holiday that, after all, inspired the creation of Smith's 'The Shadows' amidst the flickering candlelight. It could equally apply, however, to the central character of the great Christmas story of the Victorian period already discussed as extoling the virtue of childlike humility: Scrooge.

The childlike potential of a Christmas space infused with safety and shadows is also borne out in Ewing's texts. From the opening story of her first ever publication, 'Melchior's Dream', right through to her 1884 'The Peace Egg: A Christmas Mumming Play', Christmas continues to appear in her writing as a time of joy and wonder. However, it is also occasionally tinted with a dark or mischievous and mystical feel. She uses this side of Christmas to depict haunting experiences which focus upon one's ability to learn from strange events in a childlike fashion. 'Melchior's Dream' has already been discussed in this thesis as a story which engages in creative collaboration, but it can now be noted that part of what facilitates this interaction is the Christmas setting. It is a time where the children are amongst the safety of family and, even if arguing, are feeling the warmth of home as a blanket against the cold outside. It is thus the perfect time for these unsettling stories which prompt self-reflection. The learner is safe and has the time to delve into them, and when they emerge from them they return to that same safe

space and to the embryonic warmth of family and fireside which can allow for the growth of the ideas the story has implanted.

We also see Ewing's version of the childlike teacher at work in her Christmas spaces. 'Melchior's Dream' introduces us to the mysterious, older male figure that is a staple of the space across here stories. The squabbling and grumbling of the household's children is not stopped by their parents, but by their father's visiting college friend who, as we have seen, negotiates creatively with Richard whilst simultaneously creating something powerful and affecting. In Ewing's 'Snap-Dragons' we see a similar male presence – a mysterious guest to the festivities who puts an end to the arguing and 'snapping' of the children by telling thought-provoking, if only half-finished, stories. Indeed, this character is tinged with even more mystery than the one from 'Melchior's Dream'. Just before the 'magical' happenings of 'Snap-Dragons', when the tongues of fire from the burning brandy pot turn into actual dancing dragons and teach Harry a purgatory-like lesson, we are treated to a scene dripping with undertones of incantation and witchcraft. We are told the guest sits, smiling grimly, by the fire, taking in the disagreeable family and servants. He begins to chuckle quietly, but the sound is described with repetitive and odd words: "St! St! At it! At it!" (1888: p. 32) And, as he says (or even mumbles or chuckles) these words, "it seemed as if the voices of Mr. and Mrs. Skradtj rose higher […] and the children's squabbles became louder […] whilst the snap-dragon flames leaped up and up, and blue fire flew about the room like foam" (p. 32). Indeed, when we couple this description with the illustration of the scene (Figure 6), we get the feeling that the family is stood around a witch's cauldron or pagan fire creating mysterious potions under the watchful eye of the stranger. These are certainly the 'queering' educators referred to above, but also ones who recognise the potency of fantastical experience and seek to bring them about knowing that they will take the shape that is necessary for the child without them having to force it into a certain form. The simply facilitate the experience.

Figure 6: Illustration from Ewing, J. 1888. Snap-Dragons and Old Father Christmas, *London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, p. 31, illustration by Gordon Browne*

The reason they emerge at Christmas, however, is that they recognise its focusing potential. The cover of Ewing's 'Snap-Dragons' (Figure 7) and the illustration to its companion story 'Old Father Christmas' (Figure 8) both show children locked into imaginative experiences in front of dancing flames and shadows. Particularly in the latter illustration there is a very definite border separating the world and beyond the fire-side captivation and from their own, focused imagination. Even in the first illustration, however, there is no world beyond the fire, no worldly interruptions. There is only complete focus on the flickering shapes at hand. These are experiences facilitated by childlike teachers but they are ones only entered into because Christmas is both mysterious and safe. The children enter into the darker and more mysterious side but can only do so because they have the time and joviality to allow for engagement with fantasy and magic.
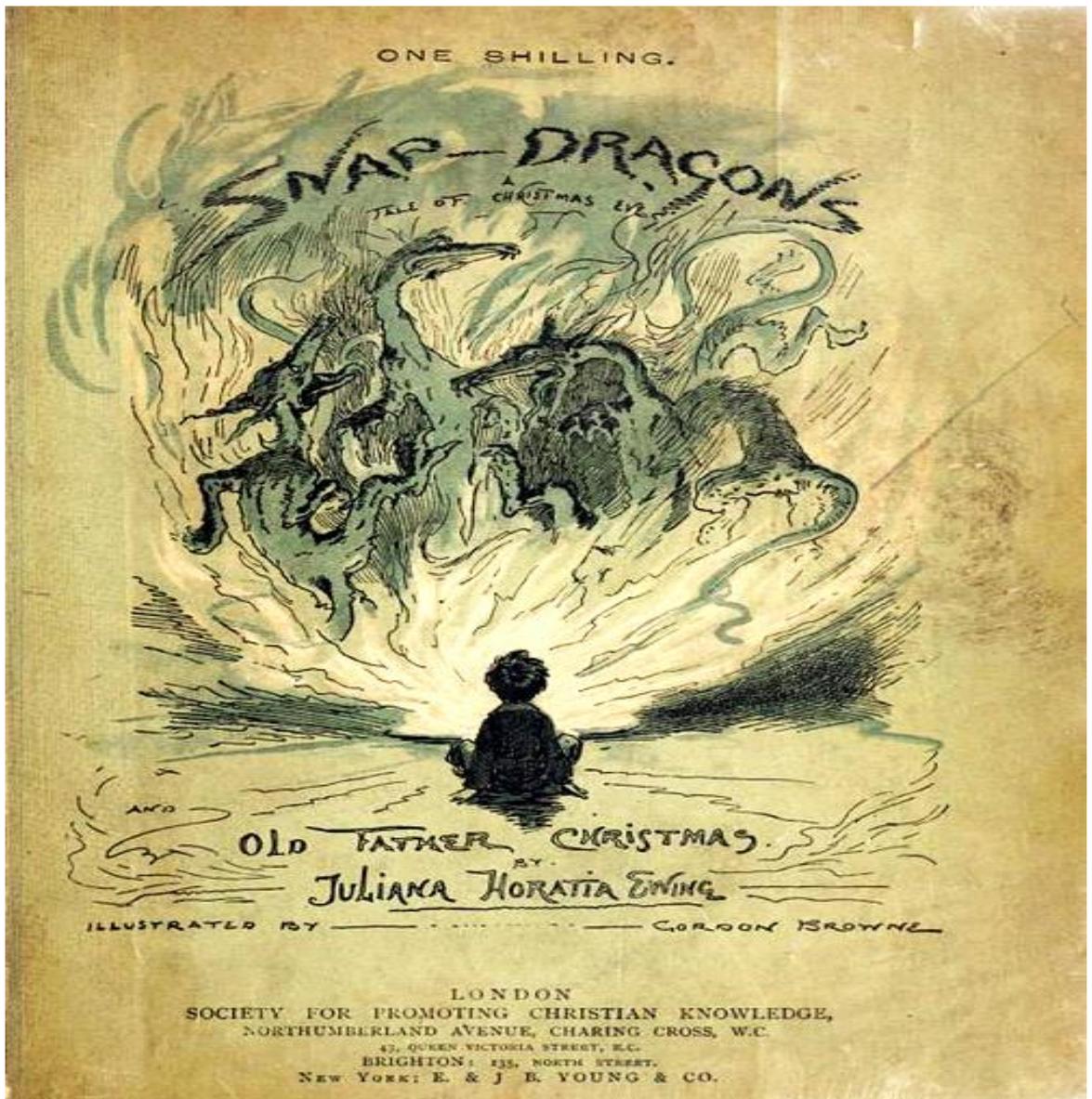
Figure 7: Cover of Ewing, J. 1888. Snap-Dragons and Old Father Christmas, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, illustration by Gordon Browne

Figure 8: Illustration from Ewing, J. 1888. Snap-Dragons and Old Father Christmas, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, p. 52, illustration by Gordon Browne

Both the snap-dragon and the old, mysterious male figure also make an appearance in Ewing's most enigmatic Christmas tale, 'Christmas Crackers'. This is an unsettling but enchanting tale that depicts the drug-addled or magically-intoxicated guests of a Christmas dinner engaging in visions of their respective hopes and fears. The mysterious male figure, here an 'old tutor', is once again present and he is suspected of casting some sort of hallucinogenic or magical powder onto the fire that brings about the guests' visions. In this story we see the 'queering' teacher who creates experiences within a primed space in their darkly playful extreme, and the full potency of flickering shadows and restless flames as catalysts for individuated self-reflection is revealed.

Many of the experiences of the guests are positive however and their after-effects, despite having their roots in a drugged and hypnotic state, are treated with childlike humility. For example, under the influence of the smoke, the pastor at the gathering is transported to the sighting of the star of Bethlehem. His gusto for his Christmas Day sermon and faith had become stale and tired but this vision brings back to him

a rekindled fire of belief. The young visitor at the dinner is initially presented to us as an exemplar of a philosophical mind and one governed by "disinterested feeling" (p. 148). He is poetical and articulate, full of technical and warranted feeling, but only at the expense of his vitality, sincerity, and expression of true, lived emotion. In his fantasy he flounders in impressing his love until he makes a simple speech that invokes memories of childhood. He is thus reminded that the family hearth, the memories created, and genuine, natural feeling, will stay with him longer, and serve him better than the 'disinterested feeling' of the academic. The daughter keeps her end of the cracker after it became her grandmother's wedding-day brocade in her vision, and the young twins see themselves in their future desired professions. The grandmother finds herself holding her old wedding-veil which invokes positive memories of her past and is then comforted by a figure with "beauty not doomed to wither" (p. 160) after seeing her future deathbed. Even the dogs dream of their favourite playful roughness: "growling a warlike manner through their teeth, and wagging peaceably with their little stumpy tails" (p. 162).

Yet the story is not entirely positive in its description and language. The tutor is described as "grotesque-looking", "lank and meagre", with skin like stretched old parchment, and eyes that glare green (p. 145). On the other hand, this description is not a consistent one. The only character in the story to experience the tutor negatively in reality is the widow's son Macready (or "MacGreedy" as he is known for most of the narrative). The tutor scares neither of the other boys, nor the animals, and whilst the daughter recognises an air of the magical about him she stresses his generous, intelligent, ingenuous nature, and his "kindly" use of these positive characteristics (p. 148). Other descriptions of him also depict him as mischievous rather than demonic. For example, when the daughter's dream is over we are told his shadow "scrambled on the wall like an ape upon a tree" (p. 156). MacGreedy experiences the tutor negatively, however, not because the tutor is a sadistic or evil character, but because of his own nature. MacGreedy may not have a vision – he is too busy stealing crackers, too selfish, and too greedy to care about the smoke or others – but his reaction to the tutor is subjective to his nature all the same. MacGreedy is often caught by the tutor trying to steal raisins from the children who have earned them by fishing them from the flaming snapdragon, and is shocked by him into dropping them or swallowing them whole (p. 146). MacGreedy is

continually caught doing something he knows is wrong, and will probably be punished for. As such, his adverse experiences of the tutor come as a reflection of his guilty conscience, not from the tutor's own nature. He is a "half-scared mouse" under the tutor's gleaming "cat" eyes (p. 146). The only participant to have a horrible vision is MacGreedy's widowed mother. Her adverse experience in her vision is also one that reflects her troubled mindset. She sees herself as the bride of fairy-tale character Blue Beard, and is caught revealing the secret cupboard where he keeps his dead wives. Blue Beard, assuming the shape of the tutor, brandishes a scimitar, ready to kill her. The widow is in mourning and burdened with a troublesome son and it is also suggested that she is a nervous person – she "squeaks" at the cracker's snap (p. 160). She is a woman overwhelmed by doubt and concern so it is no wonder then that her smoke-induced vision is one of confused terror. Where everyone else has fantasies and visions, she has "horrible dreams, light nightmares" (p. 161), and is besieged by the terrifying image of Blue Beard and his cause, the tutor.

'Christmas Crackers' goes beyond Ewing's usual Lockean proclamation that a tale's moral must be wrapped up in pleasant layers. It is completely ambiguous as to whether it is a 'nut worth cracking' at all: "whether it contained an almond or not, remains a mystery to the present time" (p. 163). If a character or reader takes a moral lesson with them, it is because they put it there. In the self-reflective state promoted by the tale, we and the characters see and magnify what was already within us; it is truly a shadowy creation with the most mysterious of educators. What one makes of the positive and negative effects and whether this educator is truly childlike or irresponsibly childish is a point of contention but, even if one, like me, comes down on the side of the former, it offers warnings that these experiences need to be handled with care by those who create them, for whilst MacGreedy may deserve his conscience pricking, we cannot be sure his mother does. We can only hope that her return to the safe space of Christmas is enough to help her work through the vision or forget it. Yet, is the Christmas space truly safe for her given her mental state and background? Is any educational space truly safe enough if one comes with enough baggage? Although this space is being painted as ideal for this kind of learning, does it too not have its chinks if the one entering it is already on unsure footing? These are questions which Ewing and the authors do not seek to

address but they are questions I will return to when I discuss designing my own educative spaces in chapter four.

An aside on childlike obedience

Before moving on, the problematic necessity of the divine in the above conceptions of the childlike must be returned to. For all of the agency given to childlike figures by these authors, obedience and intuited faith are still virtues for them and their texts educate for them. For example, MacDonald directly addresses childlike obedience in *Unspoken Sermons* and declares it to be obedience to the truth and what is "beheld and known." (p. 8) He appeals to some internal compass, not unlike Aquinas' *synderesis*, which directs us towards what the divine wants of us and we will somehow know its quality and should follow it. In 'The Gifts of the Child Christ' the character Phosy is full of wonder and ready to attempt to believe anything if she feels it has a divine source, and in *The Princess and the Goblin* Irene's ball of string is a powerful emblem of faith (a guide that is felt but not seen) but the following of the string is an act of blind obedience to a woman for whom Irene only has an intuitive feeling. In *At the Back of the North Wind* Diamond wrestles with his emotions and understanding of the divine North Wind and despite seeing her as a wolf and being unfazed by the screams of those who drown in her natural disasters, concludes that he will continue to love and serve her because he *does not, cannot, will not* believe that she is cruel (p. 348). Similarly, it is only through learning to show complete faith and trust in what the unmistakable divine fairies teach him that Tom can start on his road to salvation at the end of Kingsley's *The Water Babies*. Ewing, has been interpreted by some as turning away from or subverting religion in pursuit of female empowerment through intellectual pursuit (Auerbach and Knoepflmacher, 1992; Sebag-Montifore, 2001) and it is true that religion is not as overt in as large a portion of her corpus in that of other authors. However, other critics such as Keen (1994) provide compelling evidence for reading Ewing in a largely conformist way and her own sister writes of the mutual support Ewing and the Christian community gave each other and that all were "conscious that Julie held her talent as a direct gift from God, and never used it otherwise than to His glory" (1885: p. 76). Similarly with the *Alice* books in which,

for all their perceived lack of morals, Alice is *not* a childlike figure. When placed against *Reverend* Charles Dodgson's life whilst it may extol and free and childlike disposition, it was likely meant to be read alongside a higher moral realm that exists outside of the text.

I want to flag up that I am not taking obedience of this kind to be a virtue as, to my mind, it removes some of the worthwhile agency and activity that are being built up around it. I here simply acknowledge that I am leaving something out of my reading of this period's childlike. I could simply secularise this and maintain that obedience to some sort of internal compass and meaning is enough. Indeed, an awareness of oneself as being guided by and committing to a moral code may provide many with a sense of a worthwhile life via having a purpose or being part of something larger, but I cannot bring myself to say this must hold for everyone and, at least as I experience it, the search for such a virtue cannot be at the core of my conception of the virtuous life and classroom.

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The virtues of playfulness, a capacity for wonder and intellectual humility all allow for experiences of *being-with-worth* insofar as they fill our objects and state of existence with possibility rather than limit, and they increase agency rather than moves towards stasis and passivity. They also do so in a way that shifts our experience of an epistemic life to that if a vivified and exciting search rather than a desperate escape from lack. They gave to these authors and, hopefully their audiences, a sense of the world's grandeur and majesty and a perspective that was at once humble and powerful. These writers tried to awaken this in their audience by creating wonderous shadows of their own and modelling the humble behaviour of the childlike teacher in safe but strange spaces. It is my hope that I can do something similar in my own teaching (minus the appeal to divine obedience), but that must wait until chapter four. For now, I want to turn to three case studies of how my understanding of lived epistemology and virtuous epistemic activity might be applied to discussions concerning the cognitive value of literature, the worth of nostalgia, and how we interact with the testimony of others.

Chapter 3: Nostalgia and the Epistemic Value of Literature

This thesis has thus far been underpinned by a weak, radical virtue epistemology. Although the epistemic concepts of knowledge, belief, justification, and so on, have their analytic dimension, this thesis has focused on avoiding the potential for that tradition to "look death" into those concepts by ignoring their dramatic and lived side. It has sought to revive them and has addressed how reflecting on the personal experiences associated with them, as well as a playful, wonderous, and humble disposition, might help with this by reinvesting the world and the search for meaning and understanding with potential and vigour. As was argued when discussing playfulness, even if one returns to the traditional epistemic project after reflecting on lived experience, playing with meaning, and opening oneself up to alternative routes to understanding, the return is one that has given a new lease of life to a project that may well have become stilted or has heightened the project's potency by reaffirming its place in one's world-view.

What has motivated this thesis and provides the virtues with that virtuous status, is that an epistemic project so conceived is one which is conducive to achieving an undeniable and internal good to one's life: experiences of *being-with-worth*. However, whilst experiencing the world through a lived dimension invested with possibility is a key part of seeing one's life as having worth, the experiential dimension of epistemic concepts and the virtues of playfulness, a capacity for wonder, and intellectual humility and open-mindedness cultivate it in another way as well: they increase a sense that one's voice matters and that one has creative potential, and they cultivate agency. As the first chapter revealed, traditional epistemology has been derided for attempting a disembodied project which side-lines certain voices, but a lived understanding of epistemic concepts allows for the exploration of all voices through their recounting of experience. The second chapter then highlighted virtues which give creative power and agency to the individual.

What this chapter will do is test this approach and its claims against two areas of epistemic inquiry and, in doing so, defend the role of nostalgia in our epistemic life and maintain that literature has a prominent status in those endeavours and artefacts we understand as having epistemic value. I tackle the nostalgic experience and

attempt to recover its epistemic potential because it is a hard case. Nostalgia, and the literary modes that have nostalgic appeal, are the target of severe epistemic criticism. The distinctiveness of my position is revealed in part through how I can re-think even such an apparently distorting form of experience.

Nostalgia

As was laid out in chapter two, a nostalgic image of the Romantic child was powerful and prevalent coming into the nineteenth-century and it undoubtedly still held some sway even in the texts I discussed. Indeed, children's literature and the feeling of nostalgia appear to be necessarily entwined even today insofar as most of us are, at least sometimes, nostalgic about our childhood and the texts that evoke or depict memories of it. Many of us often romanticize the events of childhood and see it as a time of freedom and frivolous innocence, and some instinctively warm to the children around them because they project this understanding onto them. It is also a common experience to wistfully remember and idealise the characters from those stories which brought us joy during this time, and to extol their virtues and repeat our own tales of the way in which they affected and shaped our lives. We cling to tattered copies of books hoping that the artefact will anchor us to a better time or we buy new copies hoping to pass our experiences on to the next generation.

Some of this may be deemed harmless and natural, and it is not controversial to say that the above interpretations of childhood or recounting one's attachment to childhood texts are generally seen as normal and socially acceptable. Yet to be called 'nostalgic', a 'romantic', or 'sentimental' in the fields of children's literature studies, memory studies, or analytic philosophy could easily be interpreted as a slur on one's academic character.

However, what is precisely so intellectually repugnant about being nostalgic for an idealised notion of childhood is rarely clarified, and it is, more often than not, taken as a given that being nostalgic and creating such an idealised image is a bad thing. As such, this section will begin by bringing philosophical and psychological literature to bear on the notion of nostalgia to help locate and explain clearly what

is deemed objectionable about it: namely, its violation of an ethics of memory; its sacrificing of the object of emotion for self-gratification; and, in children's literature specifically, the attempt by the adult-author to unjustly impose their nostalgic vision on to the child-reader. However, once this has been demonstrated, I will go on to show that underpinning such a denunciation is a highly traditional and detached epistemology which, whilst raising interesting and pressing concerns, is apt to overlook other implications relevant to epistemic life and education. Approaching the issue using a childlike virtue epistemology allows for a much more open approach to the role such phenomena can play in our lives and in constructing experiences of *being-with-worth*.

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Johannes Hofer first used the term 'nostalgia' – an amalgamation of *nostos* (return to the native land) and *algos* (suffering/grief) – in his 1688 medical dissertation to label a disease which was befalling soldiers who had been away from their homeland for too long. Those stricken suffered an "afflicted imagination" (1934: p. 381) and lost control of their reminiscing. They became haunted by their memories of home to the point of melancholia, listlessness, irritability, sleeplessness, heart palpitations, racism, zealous patriotism, and even fever and death (pp. 386-387). Hofer argued that this could be cured simply by allowing the soldier to return home (p. 382). Hofer's nostalgia has more in common with our modern use of homesickness and has been medically classified as "vanished" (*Anon*, 1976: p. 857). In contemporary usage, nostalgia has retained the characteristic of uncontrolled longing for return but has taken on a different conception of what one is trying to return to and refers to a bittersweet emotion and mind-set rather than a physical malady. The contemporary nostalgic subject no longer necessarily wishes to simply return to their physical homeland. Rather, they often yearn for a more psychologically complete sense of 'home': a state of existence, from their own past or taken to be symbolic of a historic period, which contains some characteristic they feel is not currently being fully expressed or is not accepted by the society they are in. In other words, they desire to live in a time and place where a version of themselves they see as more complete or happy exists. As such, the bitter side of nostalgia is captured by the realisation of the impossibility of achieving such a

version of existence, whether this be because an exact past cannot be recreated or because what one longs for is an image that has been shaped into an unobtainable ideal that never truly existed and is unlikely to ever exist.

The nostalgic subject's tendency to idealise has been noted from as early as 1821 when Dominique Jean Larrey, a French military surgeon, noted how the nostalgic patients he studied underwent an "exaggeration of the imaginative faculty" and thought of their homes as "delightful and enchanting, no matter how rude and poverty-stricken they may be" (cited Rosen 1975: p. 348). Since then, the issue of idealising what we wish to return to has been a staple of nostalgia. The nostalgic subject is regularly depicted as one who spends their time wistfully sighing over a lost past which often never quite existed in the form they are envisioning. However, whilst we may externally note this about the nostalgic person, they do not usually fully recognise that the ideal never existed, for that would be to negate it. Instead, their experience of the bitterness of nostalgia is regularly based upon the alternative realisation that the past is gone and unrecoverable, or they blame the world for being too corrupt or changed to be able to contain their ideal. The nostalgic subject can thus, if they are not careful, suspend themselves in longing and fail to recognise the present in any meaningful way as they oscillate between the pleasurable image of an idealised past and mourning the fact that the present will never contain it. They may take the first steps towards freedom from this oscillation by recognising the idealised nature or non-existence of that which they are nostalgic about, but this is often not something they are willing to do due to the pleasure the ideal is bringing about.

The idealising tendency of the nostalgic subject gives rise to some of nostalgia's negative connotations as it is that idealisation which allows the subject's longing to often be defined as "sentimental" (Wildschut et al. 2006: p. 976). We can be sentimental in many ways, but these always involve the selfish creation and propagation of a falsity. For example, we describe someone as sentimental when they become too emotional too easily and display a level of emotion well beyond what we would reasonably expect a situation to induce (Richards, 1960). We call them sentimental, as opposed to merely over-sensitive, when they indulge in this emotion for the sake of enjoyment (Campbell, 1987) or try to project "a gratifying

image of the self" via that emotion (Savile 1995: p. 224). The sentimentalist is either trying to present an idealised version of themselves through this emotion (that they are the kind of person who can respond deeply and emotionally to certain stimuli) or is responding to a simplified, exaggerated, or idealised version of the events that are in front of them. In either case, they are expressing what they want to be real and who they want to be, and they display the emotions that accompany such a reality rather than responding to what is the case. This suggests the sentimentalist is limited in some way; they need to replace the real with the ideal as there is often something within the real that is too frightening or distressing to approach. This may be some deeply traumatic event or it may simply be that they are not the person they wish to be. Reality needs to be softened for the sentimentalist.

We thus label as sentimental a work that panders to the softening of reality by using rhetorical and artistic devices to create either an idealised vision that ignores many aspects of reality for the sake of inducing emotion or an emotional response disproportionate to the object it is depicting. Such works encourage people to "acquire oversimplified beliefs and act on these oversimplifications" (Newman 1995: p. 232). Even those who are aware enough to recognise the manipulation afoot may still feel the emotion or act because of it, but they also feel as though they have been controlled or flattered; they cannot become emotional or act in this situation "without also believing [they] have done something wrong" (Butler 2004: p. 38). As such, the sentimental work and audience "achieve a kind of gratification by false-colouring" (Savile 1995: p. 225) whilst creating an unjustified base for belief or action.

It is the false and unjustified idealisations of the object of the emotion or oneself, which are then used for the sake of self-gratification, that make sentimental emotions such as nostalgia "essentially defective" (Savile 1995: p. 223). In such emotions, the emotional reaction, an idealised version of the object, or a deceiving version of oneself takes precedence rather than the attempt to respond in a way that accurately reflects the nature of the object and subject as they are. The real object and a reasonable emotional response are therefore betrayed for other ends. It is this betrayal that is arguably an immoral, or at least irresponsible, act, and this betrayal is found in the sentimental idealisations that apparently lie at the heart of nostalgia.

Additionally, nostalgia can be viewed as immoral if we presuppose an "ethics of memory" (Walder 2005: p. 423). In other words, when engaging in sentimental or nostalgic recollection we are flouting an inherent responsibility to try and remember correctly or to do justice to the reality of past occurrences. It seems intuitively plausible that we can at least start to build such an ethic. Walder (2005) argues that we could not have social practices such as promising without this type of ethical system. If no one was under any obligation to remember the truth, then how could we trust a promise or why would we believe anyone's testimony on past events? In everyday communication and processes we simply take it for granted that people will try to remember past events correctly, and it appears that it is necessary for people to do so for a functioning society. It also intuitively feels like we owe at least some memories a certain degree of respect. For example, the narrator of Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) somewhat bitterly talks about the sensation of being touched by some of Hitler's portraits: "they reminded me of my childhood. I grew up during the war; several members of my family perished in Hitler's concentration camps; but what were their deaths compared with the memories of a lost period in my life, a period that would never return?" (p. 4). If we negate such monumental historical or personal memories for our own selfish and sentimental gratification, it seems that we detract from the dignity of those who lived that memory. We intuitively owe it to those who suffered in the Holocaust, for example, to remember their suffering correctly, or else we appear to disrespect them, their memory, and the event.

However, maintaining that accurate memory is necessary for society, owed to certain situations and people for the sake of their dignity, or that nostalgia's sentimentality is inherently deceptive and indulgent, does not necessarily nullify those situations where we sit alone to nostalgically reminisce about a single, seemingly banal memory. These situations do not affect those around us or do an injustice to some great historical memory; in these situations it does not appear as if we owe anyone anything. Indeed, the 'sweet' side of nostalgia and the often enjoyably indulgent nature of sentimentality bring with them many positives. Much psychological research suggests that nostalgic recollection and memories can be used as a type of terror management. They provide a "reservoir of meaningful life

experiences to draw upon" (Routledge et al., 2008: p. 132), an "enhancement of the self, support of the cultural world view, and a bolstering of relational bonds" (Sedikides, Wildschut & Baden, 2004: p. 206) that act as defences against existential worries concerning mortality and meaning in life. Nostalgic memories and objects also create anchors that allow us to maintain and foster a sense of continuing identity in the face of changes such as moving, re-locating, married life, and growing up (Holak and Havlena, 1992; Sedikides et al., p. 2008). Nostalgia helps you feel better about yourself (Arndt et al., p. 2012), results in a "heightened energy for living" and an "increase [in] subjective vitality" (Routledge et al., 2011: p. 645), and allows you to become less self-serving and defensively aggressive when your life's meaning is threatened (Routledge et al., 2011). Nostalgia additionally makes you more likely to be empathetic and charitable (Zhou et al., 2011), and it can even increase your resistance to cold temperatures as it creates a feeling of physical warmth (Zhou et al., 2012).

The accusation of softening reality is therefore challenged by potential psychological benefits. Ira Newman takes Little Nell's deathbed scene in Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* (one of the most oft-attacked scenes of sentimentality in literature) and argues that the apparently mawkish description is an attempt to shroud a painful memory in a "melancholy pleasure" which allows for an ability to make "oneself vulnerable to the pain of memory, rather than injuring oneself by refusing to dwell on it" (Newman, 1995: p. 238). If we cannot face the reality of a memory, why, Newman asks, should we not clothe it in nostalgia in order to find a release from it? Indeed, Coveney (1967) argues that this is precisely what many of the authors of the Victorian Golden Age were doing when they clung to nostalgia even as they problematised the parameters of the Romantic child. They, like everyone experiencing nostalgia, were trying to relieve the tension which existed between their understanding of what gave life meaning and what they felt was being imposed by society upon them: in their case, a scientific, rational, empirical, industrialised understanding of a demystified world.

Newman initially claimed in his essay that he would challenge the notion that being sentimental was to be false to the world. However, he ultimately argues for a much weaker position; "there is more to sentimentality than personal insincerity,

hypocrisy, or fantasising" (1995: p. 236). Arguing that there is more to sentimentality is not akin to arguing that there is no falsehood involved at all. As such, Newman's argument, and the psychological attempts to validate nostalgia purely by showing the positives involved in such a self-deception, may well leave the sceptic unremitting. Living a lie, reaping some psychological benefit from it, and acting in accordance with it may get you so far, but eventually the lie, like most lies, will have to be exposed and faced. These benefits are created and maintained only at the expense of continuing to live the lie. For all the immediate 'plastering' these examples may do in terms of self-identity, terror management, and bereavement they can never heal the impossibility of return, bring about the existence of the ideal, or fully remove our existential worries. They simply avoid facing them. Hints that this is the case are already apparent in the scientific literature cited above. For example, Wildschut et al. (2006) found that nostalgia can only fight depression when the individual already had relatively high self-esteem, thus it only worked "for persons who are inclined to repress rather than acknowledge negative affect" (p. 983). Sedikides et al. (2008) also speculated that nostalgic recollection made the present seem bleaker to those whose happiness was already low; the deception was having a negative effect that the truth would not. Ultimately, the terror-management of nostalgia and sentimentality are acting only as a "buffer" against these negative thoughts (Routledge et al., 2008: p. 137), and, just as when we lie, the deception will often come back to haunt us if it is not fully exorcised. We owe the memory, whether for an inherent moral reason seen above or our own psychological health, an accurate representation and the control to not indulge in an idealised lie for too long.

With regards to children's literature, authors or readers engaging with the nostalgic or sentimental depiction of the child, can easily fall into the undulation between the bitter and sweet sensations of nostalgia and the deceptive idealisation of sentimentality as they neglect the fact that childhood often was and is far from perfect, innocent, and carefree. They arguably do so in order to gratify themselves by maintaining that such an ideal existed in their personal past and shaped who they are, or that it was part of a historical past and can be used to reveal faults in contemporary society. In relation to the latter tendency, Fred Inglis asks what exactly is wrong with presenting nostalgic joy as "a way of berating the present for

not having lived up to the intense purity of longing and the unrealisable aspirations which childhood set as a standard for the adult world?" (1981: p. 131). The answer apparently lies, as we have seen, in the fact that such idealisations are unrealisable and impossible, and by indulging in them we all too often permit the reality of childhood to slip away when writing children's literature. Of course, that this nostalgia exists has not gone unnoticed, as the last chapter's analysis should show, as well as the fact that many authors have been derided "for producing escapist literature that failed to engage with the complexities of contemporary life and promoted a static, highly idealised picture of childhood" (Gubar, 2009: p. vii). However, despite this critique the nostalgic impulse arguably still prevails and critics such as Maria Nikolajeva (2005), Perry Nodelman (1992), and Nodelman and Reimer (2003) maintain that children's literature continues to largely reflects an adult's nostalgic visions of childhood and so tells the child what constitutes their childhood or how it should be, rather than reflecting or exploring how it actually is. There is a real worry for these critics that adults have or will colonise childhood by persuading children of this image, when, in fact, they are just being made to be what adults need them to be. This is a charge clearly aimed at the Romantic and innocent conception of the child which arguably still exists today, but could be levelled at any author who depicts children in a way that is meant to guide children to conform to a nostalgic image which the author remembers and needs. Indeed, in these idealisations and forms of nostalgia the author rarely even has a moral reason for imposing this image upon the child and thus is seen as completely unjustified in their colonisation; they are simply using the nostalgic image for their own gratification, regardless of the consequences this has upon the child reader.

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Before turning in earnest to understanding how the childlike, virtuous agent might interact with nostalgia, I want to address whether my own understanding of the childlike is nostalgic. Is my account tinged with the same issues that are highlighted above? By appealing to an image so rooted in a whirlwind of Victorian sentimentality, have I become caught in it and am I not too 'colonising' childhood by painting an idealised image of what it is and who the child *should* be?

Firstly, childlike characteristics are not depicted as a *necessary* part of childhood or a child's life. Virtues such as a capacity for wonder and playfulness may present themselves as regular features in children and childhood, and consequently are apt to be depicted in child figures, but there is no claim to them *defining* childhood, nor are they necessary or sufficient criteria of being a child. Similarly, the adultlike depiction it is juxtaposed against is not considered to be a descriptive definition of adulthood. Childlike and adultlike qualities appear in characters from opposite ends of the age spectrum. Unlike with the romanticised child, those who depict the childlike are not saying this *is* what childhood is or even that it necessarily clarifies its essence.

Secondly, as the childlike image is presenting a set of characteristics and dispositions rather than a complete and defined picture of what the child is, it also falls short of being an idealised and impossible image. These characteristics *do* exist. We *can* have a wondrous, humble, and playful epistemological disposition. However, the proponents of the childlike need not say that the childlike figure exists in separation from any contravening vices, such as childish naïveté. They are only maintaining that these are some of the epistemological virtues of one with a childlike character. The childlike characteristics are not presenting themselves as the ideal either. The ideal would be the combination of them with other virtues not fully explored in this thesis, although gestured at below. This ideal balance, however, is not the object of any nostalgic reflection we may encounter in relation to the childlike. Ultimately, although critics and authors may drift into talking about the epistemological wonder and humility at the heart of the childlike quite romantically, they are still real and achievable qualities that do not attempt to be the necessary and sufficient conditions for any idealised image.

Thirdly, because childlike characteristics *do* exist and *can* be returned to after they are lost, the impossibility of return is negated and the overwhelming sense of loss that pushes us to create and propagate an ideal, rather than face reality, is shunned. As such, the childlike state *exists*, *can be returned to,* and is *not an ideal* and is, therefore, not a nostalgic one.

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Nostalgia is a powerful emotion and, as was demonstrated above, clearly has positive aspects. Indeed, given that I have constructed a virtue account based upon experiences of life's worth via an existence full of potential and agency, nostalgia should have the capability to be a virtue in itself if it can, as the above research claimed, create a heightened energy for living and investing one's identity with something meaningful. However, the criticism that any use of nostalgic emotion is defective insofar as it is founded on, at least, a pseudo-fiction and involves a confusing amalgamation of reality and fantasy is a pressing one. Such a basis for one's actions and sense of worth appears to be unstable and constantly near collapse, and, even on a lived account, it seems like seeking experiences of worth in nostalgia is reckless.

The feeling of epistemic guilt at the above process, however, is built upon a leftover adherence to the notion that our epistemic lives should be built upon eternal and immutable truths. As my thesis is developing on a weak, radical basis I cannot deny that if one's life-goal and philosophical pursuit is objective and verifiable truth, and one believes actions should be grounded upon this, then I cannot deny the problems with nostalgia. However, closing oneself off to the nostalgic experience for fear of its deceptive capabilities is precisely the narrow-minded, disembodied problem of traditional epistemology as laid out in the first chapter. A childlike capacity for humility and openness to novel routes of experiential and lived knowledge necessitates looking further and harder at an area dismissed because of its central fantasy. What happens if we put aside judgement of that fantasy and take a more careful look at nostalgia's potential benefits? In doing so we can see how nostalgia can help us create worth through what it allows us to see in ourselves and the world. We only lose this worth if we become lost in nostalgia or surrender to its frustrations, rather than by merely engaging with it and its results at all.

When it comes to a lived experience of epistemic concepts, what we know and believe, and the potency and justification for these states, are experienced in flux. What I feel to be resisting doubt one day may, through lack of use or importance, sink into only *being-without-doubt* the next. Rather than being something I would be willing and able to passionately defend, it is now simply part of my every day

experiences, my *being*. I may not even notice this has happened, but when I call it back to mind expecting a surge of *being-which-resists-doubt* I find only the memory of it resisting doubt and no understanding or feeling of why or how it was so. I may continue to experience it as *being-without-doubt*, but if the reason for calling it to mind is because the knowledge has been challenged I may well find that it quickly crumbles past *being-without-doubt* into *being-with-doubt*. Take, for example, my childhood knowledge that turning my friends into the teacher when asked about wrongdoings ('telling on them') was to be avoided in all cases. I vividly remember holding this as true beyond doubt at one point in my life, even if cannot remember and can only guess as to why. However, this knowledge was not tested for a long time and even though I may have repeated the proposition in discussions or social situations, looking back I can identify that the experience of 'telling' being categorically wrong was leaking potency for, one day, it was tested and failed. I was summoned to the headmaster's office to discuss the matter of why the entire year 6 class was covered in mud after they had been banned from going on the field while it was wet. I called upon my knowledge to give me the strength not to 'tell' but as I dug it out I found it was not attached to anything. There was nothing concrete, no resolute image, experience, feeling or argument grounding it. Under pressure, the knowledge was doubted and then gone. In this sense, I do not come to know something or experience it as known only to have it 'banked' as knowledge for the rest of my life. "Ever the thing known sinks into insignificance." (MacDonald,1895: p. 5) Similarly, I do not always experience a justification as in fact justifying, and my beliefs can fade or change undetected.

Yet certain images and experiences have found at least a partial defence against this state of epistemic flux by clothing themselves in nostalgia and burying themselves deep in one's memories and identity. States of *being-without-* and *being-which-resist-doubt* that are founded upon nostalgic memories are reached for and discovered to still be potent, even if any articulable link to reasoning has disappeared. Even a state of *being-without-worth* can be turned around by a nostalgic link to a previous, even if artificially polished, memory of *being-with-worth*. As such, when attached to the virtues, nostalgia becomes a powerful force for allowing one's virtuous existence to continue. For example, as has been discussed, a capacity for wonder is considered a virtue on my account as wonder

transforms the world around us into one that buzzes with excitement and potentiality. It enacts what Fred Inglis calls "a re-enchantment of the universe" (1981: p. 61). Nostalgia can help cultivate a life-long sense of wonder by anchoring us back to those objects which caused wonderous experiences in the first place and allowing them to retain, if not their own capability to elicit wonder, then the capability to remind us to open ourselves up to wonder. The object and experience of wonder, by becoming an object and experience of nostalgia, thus helps keep alive the capacity for further wonder as it grants some access to the experience itself. When I experience nostalgia in relation to, for instance, the mountains of the Lake District part of that experience is my memory of my childhood state of wonder at their might and magnificence and their potential for adventure. Then wonder became wondering and I began to learn about them. I grew accustomed to them and I explored them and similar features of the world. As such, I can no longer feel wonder at those mountains in the same way. Nostalgically recollecting my previous relationship to them, however, reminds me that wonder is a state that is valuable and worthwhile and that I should not just be lost in the nostalgia of mountains but should look to cultivate my capability for wondering at other objects.

Those texts in the previous chapter which not only promote but attempt to instil wonder are, when successful, able to tap into this potency and create a moment worthy of nostalgic recollection. Just as the scene of reading *Alice's Adventures Underground* to Alice and her siblings is stored for Carroll in his recollection with a vivacity denied to many other memories, so he may well hope that he can use the story and its playful nonsense to create a wondrous experience which might gain the same status for his listeners and readers. The bestowed story and reading experience are arguably intended to "lay where Childhood's dreams are twined/In Memory's mystic band" (Caroll, 1965: p. 14). Of course, these writers were not guaranteed to create wondrous moments, and, even if they did, there was no certainty of these moments becoming nostalgic, but they attempt to achieve this by appealing to what they know about themselves, their society and children. They attempt to place images that capture the wonder, play, creative agency, and other virtuous experiences, into the time-proofed fold of the nostalgia so that they might be awoken in adult life to remind them of those childlike emotions and situations. And they do so "though the envious years would say forget" (Caroll, 1965: p. 128).

Peter Hollindale (1974) issues a legitimate warning of romanticising the reading process and notes that we may not all be as profoundly affected by texts as many children's literature authors and critics present themselves as being; we may not all describe our lives as being entirely changed by childhood textual experiences, for example. However, whether it comes through texts or not, a great many of us can recognise a childhood blaze of intensity and enthusiasm towards a particular object, person, or activity that then transforms into the warming glow of nostalgic memory in adulthood. Whether tied to texts, landscapes, relationships, toys or whatever else, these moments stay with us and "lie at the very brim of consciousness, ready at the right touch […] to be released into the rapid, electric currents of my present thought at any time" (Inglis, 1981: p. 62). Thus, these stories, images and experiences retain the ability to revivify the world and the potential to bring about a sense of worth once again where it has been lost or reduced to simply *being-with-sensation-and-emotion*. Ewing's 'Christmas Crackers', as discussed last chapter, reflects this excellently in the experience of the characters and the sense that, armed with artefacts from their experience, they will remember there night of troubled safety for a long time to come.

There are potential issues with this model. Despite nostalgia's potency and ability to shield virtuous experiences for future use, it is not a virtuous emotion itself. As such, one might wonder whether it is susceptible to both deliberate and accidental vicious use. For example, the advertising industry has a long history of using nostalgia to sell products by capitalising on contemporary issues that threaten an individual's feeling of identity or security (Unger et al, 1991; Holak and Haylena, 1998; Wildschut et al, 2006) and by appealing to, particularly, moments of cultural history which invoke collective nostalgia (Baker and Kennedy, 1994). These need not be worthwhile or life affirming experiences, they are simply experiences that have been commodified and attached to one product or another regardless of their potential to enhance one's life. Nostalgia might also shield destructive aspects of one's life from scrutiny. The trappings of an unhealthy or abusive relationship may well be removed from view when reflecting on and wistfully wishing for positive aspects of that relationship, even to the point that nostalgia paves the way for unadvisedly re-entering it.

Even in these negative scenarios, however, there is something to be said in defence of nostalgia. Firstly, other studies demonstrated that it is not as open to manipulation as one might think. They have not only pointed to the creative difficulties of successfully capturing nostalgia in advertising campaigns but have also indicated that nostalgic advertising cannot be built upon complete fabrication. There must be something genuinely positive to reflect upon from the past. For example, nostalgic cleaning adverts are highly unsuccessful as cleaning simply *was* harder in the past (Unger et al., 1991). What is more, although nostalgia can increase positive response to a brand, because of the 'bitter' element of loss in nostalgia it can also lead to a decrease in brand awareness (Muehling and Sprott, 2004) and can even cause an increase in levels of self-reflection when the viewer personally rather than culturally identifies with the nostalgia (Muehling and Pascal, 2012). Nostalgia, despite its potential for fantasy, is thus resistant to complete lies and, when entered into by the epistemically virtuous person, can be conducive to moments of clarity as to one's own life and identity. In addition to this, succumbing to the issues of nostalgia due to one's current state of mind and needs *is* an experience which can be reflected on and analysed but which is a difficulty faced by any would-be virtue. We saw this in the Christmas space of the last chapter via the figure of MacGreedy's mother in 'Christmas Crackers'. As such, this is not an issue for nostalgia itself, and it should not be cast aside because of it, but is one for any virtue theory to explain more broadly: how can one overcome the difficulties inherent in such emotions as nostalgia in order to reap the rewards? The answer is, in many ways, highly Aristotelian: search for and embrace *all* the virtues at once to allow them to give guidance and support to one another through trickier waters, identify one's virtuous friends so that they might hold one accountable for one's behaviour in recognition of your mutual search for *being-with-worth*, and accept that practical wisdom in these matters may not be arrived at through sheer reasoning but must involve experience and testimony from others.

The Epistemic Value of Literature

The above analysis of the emotion of nostalgia has demonstrated that an experiential and lived epistemology aimed at experiences of *being-with-worth* does not deny the traditional epistemic project its claims and concerns – such as scepticism concerning emotions founded upon a potential fantasy – but it does indicate that epistemic activity so conceived is apt to overlook or down-play positive elements of such experiences through fear of losing touch with the search for objective truth. What I attempted to indicate was that assenting to the account provided in the first chapter of this thesis concerning the possibility of an alternative conception of what is valuable in epistemic life, alongside the childlike virtues and potential others, allows a much more nuanced interaction with emotions such as nostalgia to the potential benefit of our experience of existence. What I will do now is provide a similar overview and deconstruction of another issue, one that is even closer to the heart of my own epistemic life: the epistemic value of literature. This seems fitting given that it was literary examples and a study of literature which provided this thesis with its understanding of the virtues and, as was suggested in the introduction, it was experiencing the collapse of a perceived binary between epistemology and literature that stimulated the current shape of this thesis.

One could be forgiven for reading the analytically-inclined philosophy of literature as an area of study hostile to the claim that literature has epistemic value. For every attempt to explain literature's ability to offer a "special insight that cannot be put into words" (John, 2001: p. 329) or "emotional renditions of subjective human experience" (Swirski, 2007: p. 9), there is a denunciation of the attempt to derive knowledge from literature as either a mystical or misplaced endeavour which offers little more than "slight, obvious realities" (Stolnitz, 2004: p. 322) and "generalities about human nature of a numbingly banal kind" (Lamarque, 2006: p. 129). Even in what should be the most obvious case of knowledge transmission via literature, non-fiction, there are those who remain sceptical and claim that for all its promises to lead us to a justified belief, this is trumped by its aesthetic status and the invitation to believe is not one we can simply accept (Matravers, 2016). Of course, the field of

epistemology has its sceptics and its debates about, for example, the knowledge-providing potential of testimony, but the lay of the land in the philosophy of literature feels different. If one reads through collections of essays like John and Lopes' *Philosophy of Literature: Contemporary and Classic Readings* (2004) or my own and Selleri's *Literary Studies and the Philosophy of Literature* (2016), one cannot help but feel that the default position taken up by pro-epistemic-value proponents over the past 30 years is a nervous and defensive one, perhaps taken ever since Plato infamously condemned poets and their craft in *Republic*, and that scholars from literary studies often cast a sceptical or even condescending eye on the technicality of the attempts to prove literature's epistemic worth. These inquiries kill their object in their attempt to defend it from an accusation that they perceive as holding no weight. One need only read a speech-act theory account of fiction making, such as Garcia-Carpintero's (2013; 2016), to get a sense of how sublimely detailed and compelling but also how detached from the form and essence of its source material such analyses can become. It is no wonder that literary academics like Catherine Belsey (2016) maintain such scepticism over whether their discipline and the philosophy of literature really have anything to say to each other about the epistemic import of their mutual object of study.

The situation is perhaps not quite as dire as the above depiction suggests, and ultimately almost all of the academic writing in these fields is highly sympathetic to literature. Scholars commonly take interacting with literature to be a good and undeniably life-enhancing experience. They also accept that we are affected and changed by literature in interesting and profound ways, and there is a lot of positive movement in the field concerning literature's ability to develop our cognitive capabilities. It is undoubtedly the case that reading literature improves our literacy if for no other reason than practise makes perfect. Yet, like most skills, literacy still requires a certain type of interaction and guidance to become proficient rather than merely able and so, the sceptical argument might go, literature is not teaching us the skill, it is the training ground for it. The same goes for those who would claim that literature makes us better people on either a moral or spiritual level. The requirement that one reads in a deep or spiritual fashion, for example, implies a practice beyond the

immediate text. Additionally, there is a further challenge here, infamously laid down by Greg Currie (2013), to provide hard, empirical evidence that literature does indeed bring about the changes its proponents claim it does rather than simply assenting to the 'common sense' view or shared intuition. As such, for all of the positives underlying and emerging from the field concerning the cognitive value of literature, literature – as an object and as a practice – still does not stand in good stead amongst those embarking on "epistemology proper". This can be understood in more detail when we look to Lamarque's understanding of literature's opacity and the literary "game".

In his book *The Opacity of Narrative* (2014), which draws together many of his previous philosophical works on literature, Peter Lamarque defines a game as a series of rules and accepted practices which allow for the performance of an activity to fall under an umbrella term. Lamarque, like MacIntyre in chapter one, turns to the example of chess to help explain his understanding of games, rules and practices. A person can only be considered as playing chess if they are following the rules and practices conventionally understood to be part of chess. If they begin to break those rules by, say, moving their knight four squares forward, they have ceased to play chess and must take the move back or accept sanctions in order to re-enter the game. Rules can, of course, be broken while allowing one still to be playing the "game" if, for example, breaking the rules is considered a standard practice. Take the game of water polo. Due to most of the player's body being submerged and out of sight of the referee, it is considered standard practice to kick, pinch, pull, and so on, even if these things are against the rules. You may get caught, you may not, but you are still playing water polo as these activities are deemed to be part of the practice even if they are outside the rules.

Literature, as a game, may have very few (if any) clear rules, as chess and water polo do, but, according to Lamarque, it is still an activity-based practice. Indeed, it is necessary to consider it as such *because* it does not have many rules. Without communally accepted dictates as to what literature should look like and what constitutes a literary object there is a corresponding lack of attributes that could bind literary objects together. However, there is still a

community of practitioners who can determine when one is or is not at least attempting to 'do' literature and play the literary game. Lamarque argues that a key part of this is found in literature's "opacity", namely, the essential connection that the form of a literary work has to its content and that quality of literature that necessitates that one looks *at* the work rather than through it onto the world. Authors, he continues, write in a way that capitalises on this connection and create works which draw attention to their own opacity and to how the form should be shaping the content and imaginative response of the reader. In addition, readers are drawn to literature because of its opacity and enjoy gazing at it – like any other work of art – and feeling how their imagination is being directed in its activity by the form of the work.

Literature's definitional opacity stands in stark contrast to philosophical epistemology however, which on Lamarque's account has the search for truth as its key criterion of an epistemically responsible activity. Where literature deliberately creates opacity, philosophy has developed a *transparent* form to help it achieve its goal. It searches for "the standard kind of truth with a time-honoured connection to knowledge", namely, "to say of what is that it is, and to say of what is not that it is not" (2014: p. 127). Literature may have its own kinds of "poetic truth" such as 'ringing true', sincerity, clarity, being true to oneself, being true to human nature, and so on. However, none of these are part of the same search as philosophical, historical or scientific paradigms, and any claims to truth that they have are hollow because of literature's opacity. The very thing a work of literature is meant to do, be opaque, causes it to be "a poor relation in the battle for ideas […] [it] cannot compete for the high-ground of truth to which human cognition aspires." (p. 127)

What Lamarque is expressing here is something which many philosophers of literature have struggled with and, as alluded to, many literary theorists have shunned philosophers for not doing; in whatever account is being given of the value of literature the "literary constraint" must be satisfied. In essence, a satisfactory account of the epistemic value of literature must identify such value not via the translation or reading of literature in some other form – most commonly, by rendering the work into clear propositions or reading the text as

an extended, philosophical thought experiment – but in the *literary* features of the text and in what makes literature different from other forms of human creation and expression. However, if the very "game" of literature is one which involves opaque techniques which necessarily disassociate it from a philosophical search for truth, knowledge, justified belief, and so on, then any account is doomed to failure. The experiences I expressed in my introduction are seemingly mapped onto this; literature broke the rules of philosophy by *deliberately* placing pictures in the glass, and philosophy did not do justice to literature as it strove to look through it rather than at it.

As with nostalgia, there appears to be an underlying issue of compatibility due to the conception of philosophical epistemology prioritizing the demand to chase objective truth, allowing a constant war to be fought with literature's ability, if not implicit promise, to deceive, and imaginative literature's explicit attempt to create non-existent entities and realms. When considering truth, certainty and knowledge – particularly of the propositional kind – literature simply undermines itself due to what are understood to be the paradigmatic literary and philosophical "games". In other words, what defines literary and philosophical epistemology as activities renders them incompatible. There are a lot of issues that could be tackled here but I want to appeal to the work laid out in the previous chapters to make two points about literature, epistemology and this divide. Firstly, whether a reader achieves truth, knowledge, understanding, justified belief, or another ideal of a traditional epistemological goal (whether traditionally defined or not) *has* been shown to be a central practice, and not just a side issue, for at least one practice of literature – children's literature. Secondly, the opacity of literature does not place literature on 'low-ground' when it comes to epistemic activity but, when taking into account a lived conception of epistemology, places it on at least an equal footing with traditional philosophy.

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John Gibson directly asks: "what aspect of literary works do we point toward that justifies treating them as players in the pursuit of knowledge? What do we

find in works of literature that even entitles us to think that they wish to be read for knowledge?" (2009: p. 467) The answer, given what I have discussed in chapter two, is that the literature and at least some of its communities of practice said and demonstrated that they cared, and this is of the utmost importance. For, as Lamarque's analysis gestures towards, literature doesn't care about anything, authors and readers care and they, ultimately, determine what the practice and activity of literature is about.

As was demonstrated in the last chapter, overt moralising and teaching was not uncommon leading up to and even during the Golden Age of children's literature. The fact that there was such an interest in conveying morals and information should, by itself, be enough to indicate that not only did a large portion of the literary community at the time consider themselves to be playing the game of literature whilst passing on truth, but that they would not consider their works a complete success – even as literature – unless this truth was passed on to at least the child reader. The enjoyment of the reader was growing in focus and importance, but the child believing the moral of the story was not a by-product of success, it was still necessary to it. For all the intended aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment in the world, the predominant sentiment remained, in words already cited, that "a story without a moral is like a nut without a kernel, not worth the cracking."

Even putting aside any overt and obvious moralising as being at odds with the literary game, there can be no doubt that the texts of chapter two had a focus on epistemological concepts and end goals, and this was embedded in the way the stories were told. Their authors and their readership – both child and mediating adult – cared about how children learned and what they learned. They were highly concerned as to whether children arrived at the truth of the matter after their literary experience. They depicted knowledge and knowing in very specific ways and they made it abundantly clear that there were certain ways of going about getting to truth that were better and more responsible than others. They wanted children to experience the text in such a way that they took something epistemologically valuable with them; they created their literary shadows for this exact purpose. They also wanted what the child took from it

to, like Scrooge's Christmas' experience, "haunt their houses pleasantly" (Dickens, 2003: p.44) and, as already stated, become bound up in "memory's mystic band". Even more than that, they desired to get them to a better state of being and to be living a more worthwhile life through the learning that their texts provided. The authors also had one eye on adults, hence the concept of the child*like*. They also cared about how grown-ups interacted with knowledge and truth and how they justified their understanding of the world. They wanted to model for adults what to educate their children in and how to do it, and they modelled play, wonder and intellectual humility *for the sake of learning, knowing and understanding*, not just because they were part of enjoyable aesthetic experiences.

Indeed, MacDonald did not just stop at depicting and inciting the childlike's epistemic life, he also extended the childlike to the realm of reading. He says as much in 'The Fantastic Imagination' when he declares that he is writing for those who read "in a right-minded fashion" (MacDonald, 1976: p. 5) As one might expect by now, the ideal reader read to find something of epistemic value in literature. Rebecca Ankeny has constructed a clear and compelling theory of what it is to be this 'true reader' based mainly upon MacDonald's novel *Mary Marston*. She argues that the childlike reader (or, in her terms, the 'true reader') is one who reads the texts "so as to understand them appropriately and experience them fully, and who allows those texts to change the way he or she interacts with the world" (1996: p. 228). This ideal reader, according to Ankeny's reading, also displays an ability to have their own being revealed to themselves through literature and a drive to re-read in order to understand what they have experienced. The reader experiences being "under the enchantment of […] literary joy" but works to arrive at a stage where the work can "touch her heart" and "understand what she has heard" (p. 232). We may also look to how the narrator ends 'The Wise Woman' to see the kind of thing Ankeny has been discussing: "I could tell you a great deal more […] but I have already told more than is good for those who read but with their foreheads, and enough for those whom it has made look a little solemn, and sigh as they close the book." (p. 303) This is not a *sad* solemn sigh, however, it is the solemn sigh of a reader who does not just "read with their forehead" and take the obvious, literal

interpretation of events (the kind likely to dismiss the book as *just a fairy-tale*), but the solemn sigh of one who recognises the lessons and thoughts that are worth pondering in the story and one who has allowed the events to affect them, to 'touch their heart', and to inspire them to work at understanding what they have heard. In contrast to the true/childlike reader Mary, the good reader Godfrey, although more intellectual, remains an inferior reader for he is not really open to new experiences, he only reads in order to confirm the theories he already has (Ankeny, 1996: p. 233) and "he does not listen with his heart, coming as a humble pupil" (p. 236). Once again, we see the ideal, childlike figure displaying the virtues of intellectual humility and open-mindedness in a way that others do not. This time, their humility has allowed them access to what is hidden from those who arrogantly dismiss stories as mere fairy tale, or those who cling to what they think they already know with a closed mind.

Indeed, this care for learning, truth, knowledge, and so on, is perhaps more typical than the turn towards the aesthetic dimension of literature advocated by so many philosophers and literary theorists. To take Hirsch's argument somewhat out of context, these texts were written as literature before there was a need to defend literature as a subject with its own special and appropriate methods. This modern defence of literature *as a discipline* is what has led to giving the word literature "a predominantly aesthetic flavour […] In order to narrow the word in this way, we were hurled into endless attempts to define literature to suit its special claims as a form of art" (2004: p. 50). Before this, the understanding of the literary "game" was much broader. Indeed, that there is something to be learned from literature, and expecting this to be part of the literary game, is something I have experienced anecdotal evidence for even today. As I have written elsewhere (Gaydon, 2015), I have now run versions of The Philosophy Foundation's 'What is a story?' session (Worley, 2014: pp. 99-104) when teaching philosophy to 8 to 11-year olds many times in diverse types of school around the country. To my great surprise, each time the children expressed the belief that a story needed a moral, message, or meaning. They intuitively decided that something was not really a story if it did not have one. Many of them surrendered this as a *necessary* criterion for a story as the session went on, but their desire for a story to have a meaning that did not originate

within them was retained. They are part of the literary community and they desire truth and meaning, and there are many authors ready and willing to give it to them and to do so opaquely. Much of the previous chapter could be used to demonstrate this, but I want to briefly return to Kingsley's narrator in *The Water Babies* in relation to the philosophical question of testimony in order to demonstrate it once more.

The narrator of *The Water Babies* is a wellspring of knowledge and advice throughout the text. He bestows upon the reader: nuggets of cultural knowledge, such as the fact that "brave boys" will agree that you cannot be swished over the face (p. 23); advice on the world and physical upkeep, like how three o'clock on a midsummer morning is the most pleasant of times and staying out all night will spoil the nerves (p. 9); images for the reader to keep with them for future interactions, such as lawyers having teeth like sharks (p. 23); an explanation of what to do and expect when one is exhausted with life and down-and-out (p. 32); the maxim that readers really should know their Bewick (p. 78); what phrases to learn and live by in the future, for example, '*Victrix causa diis placuit, sed victa puellis*' (p. 186);[6] and a great deal more that the narrator thinks Tom ignorant of and that the reader really ought to know (p. 38). There is also an abundance of moral lessons; thirty-seven or thirty-nine apparently (p. 213). I will not search for all of them (if they all exist) but suffice it to say they are depicted as being of the utmost importance given that the reader is told they can only go "home" to the most beautiful and indescribable of places (p. 141) once they learn, understand, and believe certain things about goodness, morality, and the world. To take just one example, we are given an extensive instance of intellectual arrogance and fragility to help us see and understand that: "wise men know it is their business to examine what is, and not to settle what is not." (p. 48)

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[6] "The victorious cause pleased the gods, but the vanquished cause pleased the girls." An adjusted version of a famous line from Lucan's *Pharsalia* which has been adopted as something of a motto by those who seek to lost causes stoically. The original line is: "The victorious cause pleased the gods, but the vanquished cause pleased Cato." In *The Water Babies*, Kingsley leaves the phrase untranslated and its meaning is thus only accessible for one who is at the relevantly learned stage in life and capable of reflecting on it correctly.

However, all of this appears to simply be telling, in the same way that any person or non-literary document could simply recount facts. Where is the opacity? It is in the personality of the narrator. The voice of the narrator is undoubtedly an opaque feature given that it is the voice of the text; if anything, the voice of the narrator *is* the glass. Not only this, in *The Water Babies*, the voice draws attention to itself and to the fact that a story is being told and so creates a metafictional awareness of the status of the work as a deliberately constructed tale.

By issuing propositions, such as the above, the author, via the narrator, is at least creating the *possibility* for both speaker and hearer testimony. Jennifer Lackey (2006) defines the former as a speaker testifying to a fact regardless of the needs of their potential audience, which, given that the author is only working with an implied audience at best, seems apt. Charles Kingsley may have presumed to know something about the spiritual need and educational lack of a potential audience when he penned the narrator's words, but he could not be *sure* that any intended individual would ever read the book, he did not know what state a future audience would be in, and he could not be sure that his readership would treat a narrative voice as a legitimate source of such testimony, but this does not negate the fact that the author has *potentially* testified via the narrator. Hearer testimony, however, is where the hearer reasonably takes the speaker's act of communication as conveying information in virtue of the act alone; it is not necessary that the speaker intended to convey the information. Given that the reader is working with a fictional narrator and an implied author this too seems apt. The reader only needs to *believe* that behind the text stands an author attempting to convey information via their communicative act: creating a fiction. The key question here appears to be, can a reader reasonably believe that a narrator has testified? Is it reasonable to think that the narrative act is one intended to convey information? Many accounts would have you think not, especially those in the long history initiated by Plato and most commonly attributed to Kendal Walton of counting fiction as *mere* make-believe, but the account provided in chapter two would suggest otherwise. Further, that there is a whole community of practice in children's literature should give one pause to think that we may well be being *told*

something – what that something is might not be as clear as the propositions appear to be, but we are being told and, as with any telling, there is what Edward Hinchman (2005) calls an invitation to trust. Telling simply is an invitation to trust, and, when it comes to literature, this invitation can be accepted or denied based upon how certain qualities are *embedded* in the literature.

The childlike reader does not deny or provide their trust outright – as a virtuous epistemic agent should not – but they are willing to treat the text as a mode of telling and look *at* the text in its opacity to try to determine what is being told and what can be learned about the narrator in order to garner whether they will accept the invitation to trust and take on board their testimony. Kingsley's text deliberately draws attention to all the difficulties inherent in telling and trusting, both in the real world and the text itself. Behind all of the gobbets of knowledge stands an interactive and vocal narrator who delivers an experience akin to the turbulence of life when it comes to others' testimony. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the whole text could be read as one long exercise in helping the reader (re)consider whom they should trust and what routes they should take to truth, but to do so playfully, humbly and with an open mind.

The developing sense of trust in the narrator does not primarily come from the apparent affection found in him repeating "my dear little boy", his sympathy with Tom's terrible climb to Vendale, or his attempt to create a space which welcomes questions by modeling them. It comes primarily from the narrator's personality, enthusiasm and vibrant nature, as discussed in the previous chapter. As I wrote, some critics take the voice of the narrator to be its weakness, whereas I read its high-energy, flawed humanity as endearing and trustworthy; it is this "voice of wonder and assurance" (Lerer, 2008: p. 176). Despite these qualities, the narrator remains chaotic and even paradoxical, and *The Water Babies* and its principle voice have been seen as severely fragmented in their presentation of facts and knowledge and, "like Mother Carey's creations, Kingsley's story is one that seems to be making itself up as it goes along." (Alderson, 2013: p. xxxv) Indeed, Cunningham also believes that Kingsley recognizes this in himself in *The Water Babies* and "the finale's

throwaway tone indicates that even Kingsley can't muster much confidence in his own resolutions." (1985: p. 145) For example, the zealousness with which the narrator seems to want to make a point about the wonder of nature causes them to over-reach spectacularly in some places and the playfulness in fact seems to make it worse by making it seem silly and just nonsense – even for a child. We could make similar points about the supposed "*one true, orthodox, rational, philosophical, logical, irrefragable, nominalistic, realistic, inductive, deductive, seductive, productive, salutary, comfortable and on-all-accounts-to-be-received doctrine* [...] that your soul makes your body, just as a snail makes its shell" (Kingsley, 1994: p. 56), and the initial reasons for not throwing things at efts (p. 213). Indeed, Darton (1982) senses nothing but a patronizing tone in these kinds of lessons and their lack of reasoned argument. Even if we do not agree with this, how can we trust anything that comes from a narrator who proclaims solemn earnestness and truth to us one instant before pulling the rug from beneath us and telling us we are not to believe a word they say the next, no matter how human and endearing their voice is?

Let us take the most obvious issue we may have with the narrator's reliability first: the fact that he ultimately maintains that he is not serious but is relating a fairy tale that is "all fun and pretense; and you are not to believe one word of it, even if it is true" (Kingsley, 1994: p. 51; 214). This can be set firmly in contrast with those times the narrator assures us that some of the stories we are being told are "quite true" (p. 63) or that they are speaking "in serious, solemn earnest" (p. 139). For example, the narrator tells us that the story given by the last gairfowl, "strange as it may seem, it is every word of it true" (p. 160). Interestingly, this combination of truth and fantasy is precisely what goes on in Kingsley's telling of the story – we are being told an embellished story by a fantastical creature, but the story is not too far from the truth of the extinction of the gairfowl (or Great Auk). Indeed, Alfred Newton in his *Dictionary of Birds* "praises the happy exercise of poetic fancy with which Charles Kingsley was enabled to introduce the chief facts of the Gare-fowl's extinction" (cited Alderson, 2013: p. 226). It is not easy to denounce either the claims to truth or the claims to being "all fun and pretense". Are we thus left with an unreliable narrator and a text which we must, by default, shelve as educationally

worthless? No, and it is the reasons why not that are *The Water Babies'* true educational message and that dulls the sharpness of the didacticism commentators have thus far found unpalatable in the text.

This turbulence and paradox of thought in relation to the truth and testimony reflects the choices that the reader will at some point have to make in the world. Any search for truth in life is going to be based upon navigating the waters between truths, lies, and any number of combinations or interweaving of the two. Not only this but they are going to come from a variety of sources and at some point, if one is to begin believing in any deep sense, an evaluation will have to be made as to which sources to begin and continue with. The text appears to be telling, and demonstrating opaquely, to the reader that they will have to find their way out of the maze of testimony and experience as to what is true and false in the world. That muddle and the requirement that at some point they will have to draw their own conclusions and take responsibility for doing so, is something the narrator is attempting to leave the reader with. The narrator may well occasionally try to point out a lesson or moral to be found in a story or nature but they often retract their interference after they've given it with such claims to falsity as already seen or of the kind that everyone knows their own business best (p. 214). Indeed, even though the narrator may be a kind soul genuinely trying to impart something they believe to the reader, there are lessons that they recognize that we, like Tom, can only learn for ourselves "by sound and sharp experience, as many another foolish person has to do" (p. 59). This foolishness is not too harsh a criticism, however, for, in being human, we all entertain it at times and its upshot, when done in moderation rather than as a rule, does seem to be a deeper understanding of certain things. Indeed, the reader is explicitly told in relation to why Tom could not recognize the water babies when he saw them that this is something "if you will read this nine times over, and then think for yourself, you will find out why. It is not good for little boys to be told everything, and never to be forced to use their own wits." (p. 116) Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid when questioned by Tom on why people want to know about the backstairs – a metaphor for the route to truth – also responds: "That I shall not tell you. I never put things into little folks' heads which are but too likely to come there of themselves." (p. 209)

The narrator does attempt to temper this autonomous learning with some warnings as to what counts as responsible learning, but these are not particularly prescriptive. They seem only to ask for openness and humility. For example, the narrator, in one of his more fantastical moments, argues for the existence of fairies. He presents the argument and then removes himself somewhat: "You don't see the logic in that? Perhaps not." The narrator does not appear to judge you for not seeing the logic, in fact in terms of common sense we may think this argument flimsy and we *should not* see the logic and the narrator allows for this too, he only asks that if you do not then "please not to see the logic of a great many arguments exactly like it, which you will hear before your beard is grey." (p. 40) The plea is not that we should believe exactly what he is saying or that he is giving the reader something necessarily true or correct, but that there are certain things that may trigger a certain change in our logic and we should assess their validity rather than dismiss them outright. To do so is to become somewhat conceited in what you think you know. It is to believe you have found a shortcut through the presentation of argument to the truth, to have found the back stairs to the truth. This belief is apt to create intellectual closed-mindedness. The narrator clearly does not discount all logic and reason in making this point – although he might and we perhaps should evaluate whether that is a possible end of his point – and he still maintains a certain rigor in arriving at the truth, but the scenery of the route and nature of the journey is for you to decide. If you come to understanding and revelation through a fairy tale then so be it. Let your own feeling guide you – if yours is a "sad and solemn" reaction to a story, even if it is one where men devolve to apes and so cannot be true because they still have hippopotamus majors (p. 96), or a "sad and awed" reaction to a painting that you do not understand (p. 19), then take that and see if you have a reason for feeling so rather than discounting it on the basis that it may, by other logics, be false. Indeed, it is the emotional reactions to these things that will keep you grounded to the truths we experience and hold life-impact at a much more intuitive level. When we turn from them and walk through the world we are, like Tom's inability to see the way to the Other-End-of-Nowhere when he is not looking into Mother Carey's eyes, apt to forget. We need immediacy a lot of the time, and if not immediacy,

then a conduit – in Tom's case the dog, in our case whatever object of inspiration or emotion might reveal these things to us. Indeed, if there is no inconsistency to the thinking and no harmful impact upon others, then who are we to take these revelations or conduits away from another, particularly in the formative years of childhood? And once again the narrator defers on this front, for just as he expects the wise and sensible to not interfere unjustly in the learning of others, so he does not expect everyone to like and listen to his story; after all, "it takes all sorts, they say, to make a world" (p. 53).

Perhaps the best thing we can do then is to cast a few lessons out there, show our passion for those lessons unabashedly and with as many types of logic as possible, show the fact that we care about those we are testifying to and want them to do well, but then withdraw into the admission that ultimately they will have to make up their own mind as to who and what they believe. The form of the text then is not the clumsy authority and paradoxical didacticism critics of Kingsley believed it to be; it was a passionate recounting of a mix of facts and fantasy which reflect the turbulent nature of epistemic life and force decisions upon the listener as to who and what to trust. The text unabashedly embraces this through the metafictional voice of the narrator and so whilst playing the literary game also plays the epistemological one, drawing the reader into both.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

As with nostalgia, what has been shown is that putting aside the scepticism of the traditional approach to the issue at hand can reveal how and why we take literature to have epistemic worth *as literature*. Namely, because the community of literature – those who shape its practice – have in the past and still do look to literature for truth, knowledge, understanding and epistemic experiences. Contemporary academic contentions that the literary activity does not look to knowledge but looks only to aesthetics is, like traditional epistemology, an unduly narrowed view claiming universality. In the above case I focused primarily on how one might turn to a narrator for information and go through the process of gauging their trust. The very opacity of that narrator means that they are a figure who can and cannot be worthy of trust. In

the above instance and, I have no doubt, in other texts, the narrator is intended not only to be an enjoyable voice but to be assessed in this way by the reader. This very assessment suggests there is a mode of communication going on in the author-text-relationship that has a *deliberate* epistemological bent.

What does all of this say in general about the epistemic value of literature and why does literature's opacity not mean that it must reside on a lower rung of the search for knowledge and truth? What philosophers like Lamarque emphasise is that a literary work should transmit propositional knowledge if it is to have epistemic vale, but the example of *The Water Babies* illustrates how it is not really the content of the knowledge that is transmitted. Instead, it opaquely emphasises the lived experience of being an epistemic agent and this is a much more sophisticated impact with life-long potential and certainly cannot be denounced as lesser in the search for epistemic goods. These texts give us lived experiences of epistemic concepts that can powerfully impact upon the way we live our epistemic lives and search for *being-with-worth*. What literature can do for many people – including myself – is make issues *live*; it is the opposite of that type of abstract philosophical epistemology which "looks death into everything". Literature makes epistemology exciting, risky, relevant, immediate and it brings its concepts to life in a way that is *intended* to be, in many cases and particularly in children's literature, informative and educative.

The most powerful example of this that I experienced whilst writing this thesis was reading Louise O'Neill's 2014 work of teenage dystopian fiction *Only Ever Yours*; a dark and coarse story about a future world where baby girls are no longer born naturally but are bred and trained in schools only for the sake of pleasing men. The stakes are high in these schools as failing to come top of the class means a future as a concubine or a celibate and derided teacher for future girls. The book is a tour-de-force of social commentary, but it was the interactions between the women forced into a desperate struggle with one another that struck me the most. If I try to reduce what I learned to propositional form it comes out as, in Stolnitz and Lamarque's term, numbingly banal and a slight, obvious reality: words can hurt. Yet no matter how obvious this

statement might seem, no matter how many times this truth has come up in discussion, philosophical reading, or life, I cannot remember a time when I have had such a harrowing experience of *being-which-resists-doubt* that words can hurt. The reason I was able to do this was precisely because of the way in which the characters were drawn and their words were shaped, and it was only by looking *at* the text that I could experience this. Additionally, even if it turns out that there was no speaker testimony, I certainly experienced hearer testimony as to this message. I experienced a telling and invitation to trust that this experience was worth having and that this was the truth of the matter and, for whatever reason, I believed. On a lived epistemology and with childlike virtues in mind, that is permissible and it is part of the epistemic worth of literature.

The opacity of texts is not just about aesthetic experience, it is often also about directing the reader towards a certain kind of epistemic life and in this sense literature can open up 'other' dimensions of epistemic thinking, particularly the dimension that focuses on lived experience of our epistemic concepts in order to put it alongside – and, for some of these authors – triumph over traditional scientific paradigms. For, as Nietzsche says, "art is more powerful than knowledge because it desires life" (cited Levine, 2002: p. 1). This is the epistemic value of, at least, a legitimate part of the activity of literature.

To be able to treat a text and its narrator as part of a testimonial relationship, to be able to respond to the experience that a text may well know something that I do not without worrying about how ridiculous that sounds, to embrace the fact that literary fiction is "a form of lying which is never entirely safe from the charge of telling the truth" (Wood, 2009: p. 64), are humble and playful acts which have the capability of leading to experiences of profound epistemic value. Undoubtedly, such a project is risky and comes with issues. Opacity is, by definition, not transparent. The glass needs to be looked at carefully rather than fleetingly, we must be wary of what Lamarque terms the aestheticizing of life (2014: p. 30). There are undoubtedly a number of problems with the text as testimony and communication model (Dixon and Bortolussi, 2001; Garcia-Carpintero, 2016). However, as with nostalgia, these can be tempered with

other virtues and practices, and to stand in fear of engaging in the literary process for epistemology's sake because of them is to neglect the lived side of epistemology and to forget that, ultimately, knowledge *deserves* a story.

<u>Chapter Four: A Virtuous Education</u>

I take education to be the epitome of applied epistemology and its very existence in a mass form is predicated upon a widespread understanding that knowledge and learning are of such importance that a substantial portion of one's early life, if not one's entire life, should be dedicated to their pursuit. Its goals and methods are often contested in the fiercest possible fashion as people recognize its potential to shape the lives and character of those in its care and it involves the creation of spaces dedicated to transforming the minds and experiences of those involved. There are few who cannot be drawn into a passionate discussion about why and how children should be educated because education is bound up with realising our deepest ideals. Indeed, as I said at the start of this thesis, I now see myself as, first and foremost, a teacher and have dedicated my professional life to facilitating the creation of the ideal that this thesis has helped me give form to: a virtuous education. It is this understanding of education as building spaces and relationships which support ideals that also makes it inherently political and, as Matthew Lipman, the founder of the P4C method, maintains, education is often a battled ground because it "more than any other social institution, is the manufacturer of the society of the future, and virtually every social group or faction therefore aspires to control the school for its own ends." (2003: p. 9) This chapter is an effort to articulate where and how I want to enter this battlefield.

Before continuing, it is important to note that this was not a project where I read and studied educational theory, practised and reflected on certain aspects of it, honed a clear and consistent set of goals before deliberately using the classroom to see if they were achievable and implementable. It was a much messier process than that. When I undertook this thesis, when I began my teaching, and even as my passion for teaching grew, I did not expect to be writing this chapter. I have not studied for a PGCE and I began teaching, like many postgraduate students, with only the smallest amount of formal training (1 hour to be exact). My teaching philosophy and practice, as well as my studying for this thesis, have shaped one another in a constant symbiosis that is still ongoing. As such, I cannot claim that my observations can form a rigorous empirical and experimental basis for generalised conclusions about the nature and methods of teaching. However, if

education is to succeed in the aims outlined below it must, as my understanding of lived epistemology does for epistemic experiences, "seek out and give more credence to the stories of students and teachers about the phenomena of teaching." (Noddings, 2011: p. 417) This is the vein in which I place the below account. It is the story of a single teacher, and I can only echo Robert Roberts' words in his attempt to analyse intellectual humility in education: "Even in the absence of controlled empirical support, I think my suggestions will have enough plausibility to warrant giving them a try in the daily world of living, learning and teaching." (2016: p. 184)

The Story So Far

Central to understanding my educational approach is my definition of virtuous activity and the virtues as activities and acquired human qualities the possession and exercise of which enable us to directly or indirectly achieve experiences of the internal good, namely, *being-with-worth*. Upon my conception then, a virtuous education is one dedicated to creating immediate and future experiences of *being-with-worth*.

I have argued that several things can facilitate and develop this in meaningful ways. Firstly, embracing the living, lived and experiential dimensions of epistemology in order to mitigate against traditional epistemology's tendency to "look death into everything", to disembody the human subject, and to disenfranchise certain voices. My educational philosophy is thus bound up with the attempt to create spaces where, as I expressed in chapter one, *I* meet *you* rather than spaces where our intellects meet nowhere. It is also focused on understanding and helping students to articulate how they are experiencing those goals which they are told are the epistemological ends of education (knowledge, truth, understanding, and, in my case, *being-with-worth*) as well as legitimising their voice and experiences within the tapestry of meaning which will inevitably arise from such an attempt. It is also focused on, to revive Lamarque's terminology, looking *at* the tapestry and its constitutive stories as much as looking *through* them and onto the world in an attempt to witness an objective 'truth'. Indeed, the first steps towards legitimising

the other may well come from weaving them into the tapestry but the second step must come from acknowledging the tapestry's opacity.

Secondly, my educational model is based around cultivating and modelling, at least, the three main childlike virtues which I extensively characterised as having the tendency to create and prolong experiences of *being-with-worth*. They have this tendency through providing learners with a sense of the world as full of potential, their own agency and creative power, and investing our experiences of epistemic life with vivacity and excitement. Epistemic activity is thus an exciting search rather than a desperate escape from lack. These three core virtues are:

1. Playfulness as the disposition to identify existing rules and structures, challenge them or create new ones, and to operate within the new paradigm.
2. A capacity for wonder as an openness to and search for experiences of motivating incompleteness. Cultivating this capacity facilitates experiencing the world as brimming with the potential to surprise and drive us to inquiry.
3. Intellectual humility and open-mindedness as the ability to engage deeply and carefully with the fallibility of one's own views and remaining open to alternative explanations of and routes to understanding and knowing the world as presented by others and by the world itself.

Discussing nostalgia and the epistemic value of literature helped exemplify how one can model these virtues and engage in an open and positive response to even previously derided emotions or unusual claims to where epistemic worth and validity, and learning experiences, might arise. The discussion also highlighted how there is an underlying need to be sensitive to the workings of other virtues in the space to help guide and keep virtuous activity on the correct path. For example, trust, friendship and *phronesis* (wisdom in and sensitivity to practical considerations, particularly concerning implementation of the virtues).

Thirdly, the models of the childlike teacher and spaces must also be carried over into this chapter. The childlike teacher appears to be one who: engages in the playful and creative process in good faith; challenges and invites the learner to take an

active role in meaning making and narrative tasks without forcing them to; plays the role of "fairy" and attempts to make the world wondrous and strange; genuinely acts as humble co-explorer with the learner; and embraces their role with vivacity, emotion and their humanity on display. Those childlike spaces that are apt to facilitate the above virtues and the proposed end goal of *being-with-worth* are those that are simultaneously safe and shadowy, that destabilise without scaring, and that follow the childlike teacher in their queering of the world, inviting and motivating participation without forcing it, and leaving room to be "hit rather hard".

This model of education emerged from my studies of alternative epistemologies, the philosophy of literature, and nineteenth-century children's literature. However, alongside these inquiries, I not only taught but began reading and studying education. I now want to place the model as it has so far been conceived within two contemporary trends in the philosophy of education in order to give it context and to develop it further.

Intellectual Virtue and Education

As Jason Baehr (2016) succinctly but compellingly maps out, discussions of how education might be orientated towards and built around intellectual virtue has a long a tradition in Western philosophy and it is currently experiencing a welcome resurgence alongside the rising profile of virtue epistemology. The first chapter of this thesis gestured towards how my understanding of a lived epistemology might be understood in relation to the revival of virtue epistemology, and I now want to explore where my educational project does and does not overlap with the current field of educating for intellectual virtues.

I have undoubtedly been inspired in numerous ways by the works of Baehr. Not only is he leading in the field of virtue epistemology, but he has sought to realise many of his theoretical points about intellectual virtue in a thoroughly practical manner by helping found the Intellectual Virtues Academy of Long Beach California. The Academy's mission statement is to offer an education based upon

an intellectual virtues model and "to equip their students to engage the world with curiosity and thoughtfulness, to know themselves and to live well."[7]

On this practical note, Baehr (2013) gives a compelling account of how an education orientated towards intellectual virtues can give us a better framework in which to: (a) understand the nature of lifelong learning due to its ability to root learning in the qualities of the person and their motivations or psychology, (b) find a balance between academic rigour and student-centred education, and (c) do justice to the intuitions of vocational teachers and those student who experience moments of inspiration and intrinsic reward through education. Overall, he maintains that "a good educational aim, when properly pursued, will give teachers and students a lively sense and better understanding of the value of education." (2013: p. 255) This is something which an intellectual virtues approach can do due to the virtues' status as "thick concepts": "they are, on the one hand, richly detailed and descriptive" (2015: p. 26) and they are "strongly evaluative – they pick out something attractive, compelling, and action-guiding." (2015: p. 27) It is my hope that my own depiction of the virtues in the previous chapters and the motivation for them, as well as the figure of the childlike learner, has managed to attain this status of a thick concept in a way that can fulfil precisely those roles Baehr lays out.

Baehr (2013; 2015) also offers several conditions and guidelines for embedding and achieving a virtues-based education which I have attempted to realise in my own practice where possible. Firstly, he maintains that teachers must help and reflect with students on what they take the end goals of education to be and to continually revisit with students what the significance and value of what is being taught and discussed is. Secondly, the virtues themselves must also be visited early and often in any subject which seeks to teach them and be discussed in depth. Next, self-reflection, self-assessment and teacher-assessment should be modelled around the virtues. Perhaps most importantly, teachers must focus on the social dimensions of the classroom and seek to establish trusting and caring relationships with the students, as it is only in that kind of environment that change and growth can readily

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https://www.academylongbeach.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=500671&type=d&pREC_ID=1047503

occur. Penultimately, there must also be a concerted effort to put forward a united teaching community within the school which clearly embraces the intellectual virtues model. Baehr rightly identifies that if such an education is to truly be embarked upon it must figure prominently in how the school conceives of itself and how it presents itself to the world:

> it will bear upon the school's official mission, hiring and support of faculty, development and review of curricula, public relations and fund-raising campaigns, the stump speeches of top administrators, admissions standards, recruitment efforts, the speakers and other outside voices that are invited to campus, and so on. (Baehr, 2013: p. 257)

Although taking the word of a school's website is not the most rigorous way of measuring such a thing, if we take The Academy as being held to its own standard of honesty, then this is something it appears to be doing excellently and all these measures will help orientate the school, staff and students to the necessary mindset. Finally, alongside giving students frequent opportunities to practise and repeat the virtues and their characteristic actions, and being formally and informally assessed for them, the students *must* see the intellectual virtues modelled by teachers and other school leaders if they are to be motivated to internalise them beyond the school's boundaries. All of this will help formulate those positive patterns of behaviour, thinking and interaction that, Baehr (2015: p. 12) articulates as the end goal of an intellectually virtuous education.

As Kidd (2016) notes, there are those who maintain a healthy scepticism in relation to such a virtues-based education due to the unwieldy nature and accounts of the virtues. For instance, The Academy currently has nine master virtues, Baehr's (2016) edited collection on the intellectual virtues in education touches upon seven more merely in the titles of the papers, and Roberts and Wood (2007) work through at least eleven intellectual vices whilst trying to negatively define the virtue of intellectual humility. How is anyone meant to pick between the virtues and can any complete and workable account ever be given? There is no obvious answer, and the difficulty or perceived, but unproven, impossibility of the project should be no

reason to cease the attempt if it is a worthwhile one, believed in; that would certainly not be the intellectually brave or tenacious thing to do in this situation. Hopefully my argument is not an intellectually stubborn or blind one in this instance, but instead of concerning myself with the issue of those areas where grey abounds and so pessimism ensues, I will focus on two ideas that seem to perforate the contemporary literature and give some hope for stability. The first is that whatever account of a virtuous education we give, as Baehr argued, the virtues *must* be modelled by the teacher. This does not need any more explanation here but is undoubtedly fundamental to my own and almost every educational model even outside of intellectual virtue. The second is that intellectual humility seems to have secured for itself a place amongst the virtues.

Humility has been conceived in a variety of ways in contemporary literature on intellectual virtues. For example, as a state where one is so comfortable in one's own skin and has such a strong sense of self-worth that one can freely acknowledge one's limitations and mistakes without fear of other people's judgement or the need to control their vision of oneself (Baehr, 2015: p. 79); as "a well-regulated or calibrated confidence that is integral to a broader structure of regulative activities that is constitutive of a good and flourishing life" (Kidd, 2016: p. 56); or as a lack of vices such as "snobbishness, vanity, domination, hyper-autonomy, pretentiousness, self-righteousness, arrogance, haughtiness, envy, conceit, and possibly others" (Roberts, 2016: 185; see also Roberts and Wood, 2007). In all events, whatever the subtle differences of these accounts, they all give humility a central role and, as Whitcomb et al. (2017) discuss, they certainly depict it as a far-cry for those historic accounts of humility as a vice of underestimating or deliberately feigning a low estimation of oneself, psychological models which see it as a forgetting of the self and a turn towards others, and paradigms of Christian self-sacrifice and subservience. What appears to unite them is an active participation in recognising and shaping a complete and honest understanding of oneself and the other in order to create a legitimate and *educational* relationship for the betterment of oneself. As English (2016) argues, when engaging humility, the other is recognized and legitimized as one I can learn from and be affected by. Humility, however, stops there and it is left to other virtues to motivate me to actually learn from them and to provide a mirrored disposition to recognize when

and in what way I can teach and affect the other in a positive fashion. Education then, according to Kidd (2016), can contribute to the cultivation of intellectual humility by informing, inspiring and inducting students into the disposition and equip them with necessary tools to recognize their "confidence conditions" and to honestly and rigorously regulate their self-appraisal, their attitudes or beliefs, and their ambitions. What it must also do, however, is find ways to motivate one to then act upon recognised deficiencies in knowledge, and, ideally, create a community of mutual support in this humble but active learning.

Intellectual open-mindedness, as it does in my account, often accompanies discussions of humility. Where they appear together, open-mindedness tends to take a secondary role in discussion, but it does have a literature of its own. Riggs (2016) excellently surveys this and notes that it is paradigmatically characterised as "the ability and willingness of one person to consider fully and conscientiously the viewpoint of someone else with whom they initially disagree, in other words, to take seriously the possibility they are wrong." (p. 22) As such, it continues the theme of humility which is the correct recognition of one's own epistemic standing to the other. The thematic combination of humility and open-mindedness under the trend of seeing intellectual humility as central to an intellectual virtues account of education is undoubtedly a tradition my educational embraces and builds upon. Where it strongly emphasizes something different to this tradition, however (apart from the larger, structural point made below) is that it is not just humility and open-mindedness in relation to the other and to alternative structures of understanding that are necessary, but also humility and open-mindedness to the *experiences* the world has to offer which neatly brings us on to a discussion of the capacity for wonder on an intellectual virtues account.

Wonder as an emotion does not have the same status as humility in the contemporary literature on intellectual virtues and education, which tends to focus, instead, on curiosity (Ritchhart, 2002; Baehr, 2015; Porter, 2016). This is possibly because wonder is associated more with a childish, naïve and romanticised emotion than one of serious intellectual heft; understandably so given how I derived my own account of it. Unfortunately, it retained this vein in some of the more prominent defences of it in education last century (Heubner, 1959; Carson, 1965; Parsons:

1969). However, just as wonder has been attached to childishness, so curiosity has been historically attached to the problem I alluded to in my discussion of virtue epistemology in chapter one: that the curious person is not sensitive to when they should not know. For example, in his discussion of epistemic restraint Manson (2012) analyses how curiosity has often ignored the virtues of not knowing and of faith and has been interpreted as a symbol of intellectual pride or the inability to control oneself; they have unadvisedly surrendered themselves completely to their will to know. Greco-Roman writers also felt that curiosity is, more often than not, tied to detestable rather than worthy objects (Gray, 2005) and Enlightenment philosophy often warned against curiosity's insatiability (Gelfert, 2013). Curiosity, after all, is what killed the cat. However, whilst it is advisable that one recognises that both curiosity and wonder have the potential to fall into vice if they are not used correctly, this should not come as a surprise and should do little more than reaffirm the place of a virtue akin to *phronesis* as an overarching ability to mediate and correctly implement the virtues. Both curiosity and wonder *are* virtues at the core and their core is highly similar: a propensity and motivation to explore the world and seek to understand it, usually following a positive note of surprise or delight at something's strangeness. Where wonder still takes precedence on my account, however, is in the implied strength of surprise and the ripple effect it has on one's view of the world in general. Where I still experience curiosity as referring to a response of "how interesting" – perhaps in the tone one might read Alice's utterance "curioser and curioser" (Caroll, 1969: 23) – wonder comes with an almost overwhelming sense of "oh my goodness!" which borders, but does not tip over into, amazement or awe. In an experience of wonder, it is as if neither oneself nor the object of wonder can contain the vivacity of the emotion and so it spills out from the experience to enliven everything else around it. Perhaps curiosity is the natural toning down of wonder that happens as one becomes used to the world, but then, to make a parallel to a tired but sweet adage, like aiming for the stars but still hitting the moon, I am happy to promote and aim for wonder but settle for hitting curiosity.

What should be noted as a potential addition to or incorporation into the virtue of wonder, however, is Watson's (2016) understanding of inquisitiveness. Watson characterises the virtue of inquisitiveness as being "characteristically motivated to engage sincerely in good questioning" (p. 43), that is, to care about and seek

improvement of one's epistemic standing in relation to the matter at hand. I am not convinced by her case that inquisitiveness can be distinctly separated from curiosity or, in my case, wonder, by stating that inquisitiveness *necessitates* questioning oneself and others in order to further inquiry where curiosity and wonder do not. It appears to me that either they all do or they all do not. However, what is important is that she draws out that for these to become fully-fledged virtues in relation to epistemic improvement, they cannot be revelled in as emotions but must be acted upon and motivate inquiry.

Of my three central virtues, only playfulness now remains to discuss in this context. Play has a long history in educational theory and social anthropology, much too long to fully recount and cite here.[8] However, I have rarely seen playfulness depicted as an intellectual virtue in contemporary literature. My intuition is that this is because of play's tendency to be discussed as an activity that is good in-itself or taken up non-instrumentally or, at the very least, for the sake of fun. For example, Betrand Russell responded negatively to the Montessori school of education's claim that children should not be allowed to turn their educational apparatus into things they are not – such as trains – for fear of causing 'disordered imagination' (2010: p. 76). He felt that this not only did the intellect of the child a disservice, but it denied play its fantastical and enjoyable status, subjected play to fetishized notions of analytic truth and knowledge, and even had the potential to bring about laziness through quashing the will to power that play healthily expresses. Putting aside this final claim, a contemporary reader might similarly baulk at John Dewey's claim in *Democracy and Education* that playful activity is necessary but should be subordinated to skills learned for later usefulness and education, "that is, intellectual results and the forming of a socialised disposition." (1930: p. 231) Yet, whilst I sympathise with those who seek to protect play as an activity that is conducted *for-play's sake* or merely for enjoyment, I am highly sceptical of such positions as far too limited in their understanding of play. In any case, these concerns should not stop a thorough inquiry into and account of playfulness as an epistemic virtue, or play as an epistemically virtuous activity, from being pursued.

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[8] Bateson and Martin (2013: pp. 7-9) provide an excellent and brief summary of notable thinkers on play in education and development.

A virtuous account of play is precisely what I sought to provide in the previous chapters and I find no reason to qualify or move away from the definition already provided. I have put my name to slightly different definitions of both play and playfulness elsewhere (Fisher and Gaydon, 2019) but I do not think those definitions trouble this account too much, they only serve to emphasise even more the issue I have with defining play non-instrumentally. However, what should be noted here is that the *practice* of play and playfulness can be distinguished from what I want to term the *virtue* of playfulness here. In our paper, Fisher and I discuss how our exploration of the practice of play and playfulness in The Dark Would (an exploratory learning space and approach discussed below) led us to an understanding that: (a) play can extend to almost all forms of activity insofar as very few activities are bound by *necessary* rules and must thus involve some form of created and maintained system by which one is *playing*, (b) play can be forced just as conformity to rules can be forced, (c) that play can be solitary and even selfish for legitimate reasons, and (d) that play does not have to be fun, it can be difficult, tiresome and risky. However, much of this is not incorporated into the *virtue* of play as I conceive it here which should be mediated by, once again, such a thing as *phronesis* which will recognise the *appropriate* structures for play within the search for *being-with-worth*. Although it is not definitive of the practice, freely-chosen play is almost always preferable to forced play in its virtuous form, as is making sure that one does not rule out either communal or solitary play or neglect the fun and potential seriousness of play

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Thus far I have placed my developing educational philosophy and practice in the context of an intellectual virtues approach to education, drawn out some of the valuable advice I believe Baehr has to offer about how to realise my educational end goal, and situated my three key virtues in relation to other accounts of those virtues in the field in order to clarify their education and virtues-based embodiment further. However, I now want to highlight where I depart more vigorously from the intellectual virtues approach of Baehr so that I might scaffold a move towards another large trend in the philosophy of education which underpins my approach.

In defining virtuous activity, Linda Zagzebski (1996) lays down two conditions which many virtue epistemologists have followed with varying qualifications since: the motivational component and the success component. The former necessitates that to have a virtue, a person must have "a persistent tendency to be moved by a motive of a certain kind" (p. 132). The latter stipulates that "a person does not have a virtue unless she is reliable at bringing about the end that is the aim of the motivational component of the virtue" (p. 132). However, Baehr (2015) develops a different three-tier structure of a virtue. Namely, that an intellectual virtue requires: (a) an account of what makes it distinct from other virtues, (b) the motivation to enact the virtue, and (c) appropriate sensitivity to and judgement about when the virtue should be exercised. What they share, however, is the motivation condition – that one be motivated to enact that virtue and, as Zagzebski makes immediately clear and what Baehr goes on to state, that one hold a motivation of a *certain* type. For Baehr and others, the ideal here is to be motivated to enact the virtue because "one desires to reach the truth or acquire a deeper understanding" (2015: p. 22) or from a love of distinctly epistemic good and goals. It is this, Baehr argues, that keep the intellectual virtues distinct from the moral virtues. Baehr's motivation for keeping them distinct is clear insofar as he wants to stay away from the tricky territory that has previously been associated with character or moral education. He recounts how such models have repeatedly faced charges of heavy-handed state intervention, paternalism, indoctrination, a lack of enthusiastic backing or commitment, and, for whatever reason, wide-spread failure. However, as practical a move as this might be for pitching an educational model, it is not a move I make because there can be no doubt that as much as one might wish to separate oneself from representing an intellectualy virtuous education as separate from a moral education, it cannot be. Any account of the virtuous – whether intellectual or not – will necessarily say something about the good human life and we should avoid perpetuating what Clare Jarmy (2017) has termed "the myth of the neutral school." Baehr might attempt to hide behind statements about intellectual goals and goods, but they are not goods in themselves insofar as they play a role in the good life. Baehr occasionally gestures towards the virtues remaining anchored in human flourishing but – like so many of the intellectual virtue theorists already mentioned – this concept is left largely nebulous and unexplored except via an inconclusive

historical account of the concept. Although my conception of the good life being rooted in experiences of *being-with-worth* may still be open to criticisms of vagueness and intuitionism, it is at least more concrete than what Baehr and other intellectual virtue theorists appear to be working with. As I put forward in the introduction to this chapter, education is, at times, a political, ideological and moral battleground, and intellectual virtue theorists need to begin picking sides and articulating more forcefully and completely what anchors their understanding of the good life and motivation.

I also wish to return to my understanding of a lived epistemology to distinguish myself further from a dominant trend in the intellectual virtues movement. My account of a lived epistemology attempted to escape "looking death" into epistemological concepts by appealing to individual experiences and narrative accounts of how they are lived and experienced in not just their cerebral form but their *embodied* one. My lived epistemology is about recognising what Louis Reid beautifully called "the indivisible unity of the make-up of the complex human person" (1986: p. 126) which extends not only to our mind but to our bodies. It asks for a personal account of how epistemic concepts and virtues *permeate* and shape us even at the level of physical sensation. In this sense, my teaching is very much tied to the use of embodied practices to explore theoretical concepts, such as a method created at The University of Warwick known as 'Open-Space Learning' (Monk, et al., 2011; IATL, 2015) or developing mindfulness and meditation practices in education which seek to reintroduce the student's body to their mind in a holistic exploration. However, intellectually virtuous accounts, at least as they are currently discussed in relation to education, seem to be leaning back towards the death of those very virtues in their depiction and discussion of them. Perhaps these practitioners are bringing their ideas to life in the classroom not just in the minds of their students but in their bodies and physical understanding of themselves as well. My inclination, however, is that the spirit of the field is still too weighted toward a traditional and deathly conception of its practice.

The general inability or unwillingness to reject or endorse the more revolutionary potential of the intellectual virtues movement, to take a firmer stance on the good life, or to embrace what the intellectual virtues look like beyond the cerebral is what

has led me to call these *epistemic* rather than intellectual virtues in the earlier sections of this thesis and to separate myself from the field. As I have argued, epistemology can be a lived and radical practice and it is distinct from what appears to be the purely *intellectual* and, relatively, safe activity above. However, the second trend which I see my educational philosophy as a part of is anything but safe.

Education as Emancipation

Hopefully, what has become visible in the account I have been putting together in this thesis is an understanding that at the heart of experiencing *being-with-worth* and one's life as worthwhile is an awareness that: one's experiences are legitimised and considered equally alongside those of the other members of your community; one has the power to identify and change the rules which governs one's life; and, the world is experienced as a place of potential. Much of this sentiment has been instilled in me by my own experiences of teaching and learning and has been developed somewhat haphazardly through my practice, as evidenced in brief below. However, it has also been heavily influenced by reading the educational theorists I wish to do due diligence to now. It should be noted that I have not yet undergone an attempt to bring myself in line with their broader theories and corpus of work to measure where my understanding of an emancipated education might differ from theirs. I intend to do so in future work and fully recognise the value of doing so, but I do not see it as a current lack or problem. The very freedom expressed within their texts is the reason that I feel legitimised in taking from them somewhat isolated sentiments in order to create a model of emancipatory learning which is rooted in their words and yet in my understanding and context. To return to the tapestry metaphor, I have plucked threads from each of these thinkers' patterns to create an entwined, multi-coloured ball of my own to be thrown around and played with in my classroom and, like the old man from 'The Golden Key', to cast shadows with.

My first deep moments of inspiration came from reading Jacques Ranciere's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991). Ranciere rallies against the myth that the world must be divided into the knowing and the ignorant and that never can the developing

catch the developed. The knowing teacher, the developed expert and master, is precisely the one who has thrown a veil of ignorance over everything by insisting that they have recognised the distance between the taught material and the person being instructed. They are thus the ones who have created the gap by suggesting that they are in control of and aware of the start and end points and, because they hold the tools to dismantle it, the student's state of lack. Everything in this student-teacher relationship has been manufactured by the expert to exist in the form it does, including depicting the inferior intelligence and the superior one, and they force the student to submit to "a hierarchical world of intelligence" (p. 8).

Contrarily, a liberated and emancipated pedagogy is based upon "the method of equality" and the understanding that "one could learn by oneself and without a master explicator when one wanted to, propelled by one's own desire or by the constraint of the situation." (p. 12) There remains a master in the story which Ranciere recounts in his text, Jacatot, who issues the order to pass the course to the students. Jacatot, however, teaches without expertise in the subject the students wish to learn and must teach by stepping aside and allowing the student's intelligence to meet and wrestle with the book he has provided. This lies behind Ranciere's famous dictum that: "one can teach what one doesn't know if the student is emancipated, that is to say, if he is obliged to use his own intelligence […] The ignorant person will learn by himself what the master doesn't know if the master believes he can and obliges him to realise his capacity." (p. 15) What this is supposed to reveal is that every human being can be made aware and capable of using their own dignity, their own intelligence, for the ends which they see fit. What the emancipatory educator must do is reveal intelligence to itself. They must bring the student to the realisation that they have an intelligence that is of the same and equal nature as everyone else's and that it is theirs to direct. They must then help them find a direction and motivation for it. This, in possibly the most childlike description in his work, "is what opens the way to all adventures in the land of knowledge. It is a matter of daring to be adventurous, and not whether one learns more or less well or more or less quickly." (p. 27)

Ultimately, there is only one dictum in Ranciere's philosophy of education and that is to "learn how to be equal men in an unequal society" (p. 133). The use of "man"

here is saddening in its irony of course, but it indicates what work there is still to do in achieving the legitimisation of voice and the emancipation of the classroom and reminded me that if I wanted to achieve the humility of the emancipatory teacher, one who motivates by revealing the student's dignity and capabilities to them, then filling the world with potential and allowing the students' intelligence to pick the direction, that I must be sensitive to my own prejudices and, where Ranciere attempts to remove expertise, perhaps remove even more of myself as I discuss below in relation to the 'absent' facilitator.

I took further inspiration from someone who also marks out Ranciere as a pivotal figure: bell hooks and her work *Teaching to Transgress* (1994). hooks argues that education should go well beyond the sharing of information and extend to caring for the wellbeing and personal growth of the students. An essential component of her teaching practice is that one should teach in a manner "that respects and cares for the souls of our students" (p. 13). This appeal to the 'soul' might sound religious or ethereal but even in a secular context it powerfully captures a sense of well-being beyond the physical and the pleasurable. For me, this attachment to the 'soul' of the student is reflected in my concern as a teacher for the student's sense of *being-with-worth*. To care for it is to attempt to help them locate their most honest and intimate self (or selves) and to help them navigate an understanding of the world which brings not only a peaceful relationship between that self and the world but one which reaffirms the worthwhile nature of their existence and its potentiality. This, as I read hooks, was what struck me as my secular conception of the 'soul'. This conception can help replace the idea that the soul is to be understood in relation to and to be guidance by obedience to the divine; a point I said I would return to after exploring it in chapter two.

For hooks, and for me, this tending to the soul of the student requires them to be liberated from the boundaries and oppression of standardised, ritualistic, formal, test-driven education and involves paying attention to their peculiar voice through dialogue. This paying attention to the voice – particularly, in my instance, through lived accounts of the very epistemic concepts that constitute the traditional goal of education – is the simplest and most effective method we have for crossing the boundaries and tearing down the barriers that keep the student and the teacher

locked in place and which keep separated those who, as it stands, merely exist within a classroom. As such, hooks sees it as a fundamental responsibility of the teacher to acknowledge the power they have in the classroom to silence and legitimise and to make sure they wield this power to liberate each student and not impose a judgement upon the classroom as to which voices have more or less legitimacy. They must also stay *engaged* with the classroom space and recognise its fluidity and its transitions, and to make sure these are continued in order to remind themselves and their students that "learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility." (p. 207)

I then discovered Noam Chomsky's *On Anarchism* (2014). I was compelled to read more upon seeing Chomsky's claim that at the heart of his understanding of anarchism was the idea that freedom was the vital and concrete possibility for every human being to realise their full power and potential (p. 2). Of course, this merely rang true with what I had already started to believe about an emancipatory education, but he further describes his understanding of anarchy as being based on a single, powerful precept: that the burden of proof for any exercise of authority is on the person exercising it and "if they can't justify it then it's illegitimate and should be dismantled." (p. 33) This revolutionised the role I saw play and playfulness taking on in my philosophy and practice. Playfulness was no longer just about creating a state of freedom and power for the student, it was also the very tool with which they could challenge or overthrow me, my philosophy and the space they were in. It forced me to see that in defining playfulness as a virtue and inviting it into the classroom I had introduced the very element that could destabilise me. The emancipatory teacher should not be afraid of this, however, but should embrace Chomsky's understanding of anarchism and should always be in a classroom which contains the potential for their removal should their authority no longer be justifiable. If they are running the classroom in a legitimate way, playful activity should never need to subvert the teacher in this way; a moment beautifully and powerfully realised for me in a lesson where the students were attaching sticky notes to those things which limited their power in some way and I ended up covered in them; the end-result of a series of serious, risky and truthful acts conducted in a spirit also filled with collegiality, laughter and good-will.

This building in of structures to undermine one's teaching practice and authority is a concept which is alien to even the most liberal classrooms I have visited or read about, and I am yet to conceive of it in fully practical terms, but playfulness had concretised its importance in my thinking, and this was only enhanced upon reading Raoul Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (2012). Vaneigem identifies play as a potential practise of revolutionary freedom that can be found in everyday life if we are willing to give ourselves over to it and let it permeate even the most commonplace of our activities. Indeed, this playing, if it can be extended to our social roles, is the means by which we can be reconciled with ourselves. Those social roles are, in Vaneigem's terms, "nuclei of alienation embedded in the flesh of lived experience." (p. 110) One cannot help but call Sartre's waiter to mind here, separated as he was from his *being-for-itself* by playing the role of the waiter too precisely (1969: p. 59). It is here that play collapses itself, where it becomes a game so serious and entrenched that it is over. One is no longer playful if one forgets one is playing, and it is only by calling to mind and becoming aware of play again that one can re-find the game and one's free, dignified, emancipated self. This must be remembered in the classroom, for the death of playfulness occurs in the classroom when it is forgotten that the role of teacher and student are, like the waiter, these "nuclei of alienation". We can become 'lost in play' when engaging with the game of education, and this is a worthwhile experience in many ways, but the experience of becoming lost should never be complete. It is like the boundary between the dream that one is *just* aware of being a dream and the one that there no realising it is a dream; we must endeavour to remain in the former. For Vaneigem, it is only through giving oneself over to the passion for play that the current, alienating organization of life can be destroyed and a new society constructed based upon real participation and genuine self-fulfilment (p. 231), or, in this case, a participatory and emancipated classroom where the roles of teacher and student are held before the class as enacted roles with the potential for instability if authority is deemed to be illegitimate. In his study Vaneigem is achieving something deeply Freireian in his analysis of play as he has located one beginning for a pedagogy of liberation: "By studying our lack of freedom we can learn how to become free. This is the dialectic of the liberatory class." (Freire and Shor, 1987: p. 14) As I have defined it, the virtue of playfulness begins with the disposition to identify the adaptable

rules around oneself. The first step to playful freedom is thus to find where it does not exist and that is very often in the roles of student and teacher.

The capacity for wonder also holds potential for emancipated learning insofar as it links to the Rancierian conception of finding motivation within the learner. If a teacher can create chances for and scaffold these moments of wonder, they can find with the learner those objects which instil in them a passion to inquire into the nature of the world. However, even more than that, Genevieve Lloyd (2015) argues that, despite wonder's potential for stupefaction because of the boundary it shares with awe, the hardening of thought that comes with ceasing to wonder puts us "at the mercy of received opinions" and dupes us into "mouthing prevailing platitudes that come to be regarded as obvious truths" (p. 80). Indeed, she goes on, "when we find ourselves wondering at our collective stupidity [in doing so], that can itself in turn be the beginnings of new-found wisdom." (p. 80) As such, not only does wonder itself reinvest the world with potential and place us in a self-motivated – and thus emancipated – relationship with the world, if this wonder is turned upon ourselves we can come to be free of those very things that bind and stupefy us.

Humility and open-mindedness also have their role to play in this model of emancipated learning insofar as they lead one to free oneself from precisely the knowledge hierarchies suggested by Ranciere, and allow the emancipatory teacher to create the balanced and dialogic classroom of hooks. Indeed, in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Ranciere attempts to embody this very attempt in the form of his work by telling the story of Jacotot. Storytelling, according to Ranciere, is a symbol of equality as it is the placing before the student of the story and nothing else. It is to acknowledge the epistemic power and legitimacy of the student and their interpretation. We must not assume that we have anything more to give them except the implicit suggestion that the story being provided – or, in childlike terms, the shadows that are created – are ones that are worth their time contemplating. As Ranciere asks, why would one take the voice of the lecturing teacher over the book or story itself when the former dissipates but the latter is inscribed forever? (p. 5) The book, the story, or the shadow, remain open to interpretation and reuse, the master's voice attempts to resist this and, in doing so, attempts to dominate and

cage the learner rather than free them. The childlike, humble, emancipating teacher must fight this at all costs.

Emancipating via facilitating

In my own practice, how to enact this emancipated model of education and teaching was learned and borne out in my work as a philosophy facilitator for the charity The Philosophy Foundation, and I have come to see facilitation as a cornerstone of emancipatory practice. 'Facilitation' has commonly come to stand for a particular style or method of teaching whereby the teacher attempts to bring students to an understanding of the topic at hand through the use of active questioning and tasks rather than simply the provision of methods and answers. Brockbank and McGill (2007) discuss how facilitation can sometimes be depicted and interpreted as a form of teaching where the teacher encourages the class to contribute to discussion but ultimately tells them what to learn, how to learn it, and how it will be assessed. In this sense, the teacher may well achieve an increase in student engagement simply through allowing and encouraging students to answer broad questions or engage in activities, but control of the knowledge, module, and outcomes still firmly reside with the tutor. This model is inadequate. Whilst it may promote discussion, learners will still tend to be isolated and estranged from each other as they attempt to access the teacher's subject knowledge rather than truly and deeply engage with each other or even the tutor *as a person*: "The seminar teacher may be skilful in questioning and stimulating discussion, but while primarily taking the role of expert or implicit banker, cannot enable dialogue. Students may remain passive and disempowered by the yawning chasm between teacher knowledge and their ignorance." (Brockbank and McGill, 2007: p. 212) Facilitation should, instead, seek to allow students to share and engage with one another's thoughts in as free a space as possible and where *I* might meet *you* rather than our intellects meet at a space of nothingness created and bound by the omnipotent teacher.

What occurs in an emancipated facilitation method instead then is that the teacher recognises their immediacy and power in the room and seek to remove themselves as much as possible. In Philosophy Foundation sessions this, as Ranciere indicated

to be fruitful, might first be achieved by presenting a story, puzzle or question in a way that allows it to speak for itself before opening it up for discussion, a discussion which the teacher tries to remove themselves from as much as possible, except to keep discussion going or to invite more voices into the tapestry being created. In these kinds of spaces, argues Maggi Savin-Baden (2008), learning trajectories and stages are not pre-set by a tutor but defined-as-they-are-created by the group. These spaces, she continues, often occur "in the process of role transition, such as shifting from the role of a lecturer to the role of a facilitator of learning" (p. 20) where the tutor surrenders power and control of the direction of learning and allows students to manage the knowledge for themselves. Andrew Day applies the same ideas to his facilitation of primary school maths and philosophy lessons: "The lesson needs to be powered by the children's curiosity, not an externally imposed target. At certain decisive points you will direct the class's attention towards something – but not decide it for them" (2014: p. 14). Within secondary schools, David Birch (2014) also argues that facilitation of learning and enquiries, where speaking and listening are promoted by the teacher rather than the receiving of knowledge, develops relationships in the above fashion: "Children spend little class time speaking and listening to one another, yet the best (and worst) thing about school is the opportunity to make friends and discover new people […] Schools harp on about respect and the necessity of boundaries without also promoting the pleasures of togetherness" (p. 1). Listening, speaking, and thinking about one's own and other's ideas is at the heart of facilitation and, on the above conception, an emancipated education.

However, Brockbank and McGill argue that this does not entail that facilitation means abandoning one's own expertise and authority. Indeed, they claim that "facilitators in higher education also need to be subject specialists, having a firm grasp of the content part of the teaching session" (2007: p. 216). They give their own advice on how to walk this line in their book *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*, especially chapters 10 and 11, but where we can distinguish their approach from other types of facilitation – it certainly seems as though they are retaining the mantle of the expert rallied against by Freire – is in their acceptance of Socratic questioning. They deem this to be "a powerful way of highlighting errors without pointing them out" (2007: p. 222). It appears that for Brockbank and McGill

it is acceptable for a facilitator to feign ignorance on a topic in order to allow space for the students to explore ideas and use questions to guide students towards answers – as Socrates is often interpreted as doing to the slave he questions in Plato's *Meno*. However, the ability to be an expert and a facilitator, and the legitimacy of such feigned ignorance and Socratic irony, have been challenged – necessarily so in my eyes if one is to maintain an emancipated education. In relation to the tension between expertise and facilitation, Olyer's (2015) empirical study into expert teachers' contributions to the quality of arguments in classroom dialogues revealed that whilst the facilitators' familiarity with the arguments surrounding a topic helped them identify important and interesting contributions – whether this be in line with or directly addressing current literature – one of the three facilitators studied "thought that this familiarity with the underpinning topics led him to manipulate the discussion in ways he later regretted" (p. 203). Indeed, depending on the weight you give his intended outcomes, we might also listen to Racière's similar argument that an emancipated form of learning is only hindered by expertise:

> Is a highly skilled, very learned master necessary to perform this [the demanding of speech in order to manifest a student's intelligence and the verification of a student's attention when doing so]? On the contrary, the learned master's science makes it very difficult for him not to *spoil* the method. He knows the response, and his questions lead the student to it naturally (1991: p. 29).

Rancière also rejects the method of Socratic irony as perhaps being a path to learning facts but not as a path to allowing for an emancipated student. The slave in the *Meno*, he argues, demonstrates knowledge but also demonstrates his powerlessness insofar as his supposedly autonomous answers rely on Socrates' knowledge and ability to ask the correct questions. Peter Worley (2011b) further rejects Socratic irony as part of facilitation when it is in this 'feigned ignorance' form: "It seems disingenuous and designed to trap an opponent - perhaps not what you should be doing with your pupils." Both see the facilitator, instead, as needing to engage in a *genuine* disavowal of a claim to knowledge: "If a teacher says 'I

don't know' [and is genuine], this motivates students to seek the information the teacher doesn't know". Of course, continues Worley, you should not say 'I don't know' when you do, but rather you adopt a position of defeasibility and openly recognise that what you think you know is open to being wrong or to correction. It is this surrendering of one's own certainty and a recognition that although labelled as tutor and student and with varying levels of experience both are "voyagers of the mind: an intellectual subject participating in the power common to intellectual beings" (Ranciere, 1991: p. 33) that Rancière sees as key to an emancipatory pedagogy and lying at the heart of a facilitation approach to teaching.

How 'present' the facilitator should be continues to be a troubling issue though. Should they, like MacDonald's childlike teacher, be a fully-present co-learner, or should they, recognising they are necessarily bound by power attempt to remove themselves as much as possible? Interwoven into this thesis are opinions from those working at all levels of education, but one thing that does seem to change as the age and maturity of the students goes up is the possibility for the tutor to become 'present' in the session. For example, in talking about higher education, Brockbank and McGill's model of facilitation allows for the interjection of the tutor both as a "flexible resource to be utilized by the group" (2007: p. 210) and as a participant who can share their feelings and thoughts with the group – so long as they have surrendered their expertise (feigned or otherwise). However, Worley, working more in primary and secondary schools, describes how the facilitator should be like Princess Ariadne. Ariadne provides Theseus with tools to navigate his own way out of the minotaur's labyrinth and, for Worley, she is crucially *not there* when he has to use them. Whilst providing tools and information to help children navigate discussions and enquiries in the classroom is key, good facilitation on Worley's model, is about the extent to which you are *not present* as much as it is about your *effective presence*, and the art of facilitation resides in being both present and hidden. One reason for this is that by re-entering the space as a participant you often run the risk of taking control of the session and the knowledge again, particularly with younger children as they continue to adapt to challenging your ideas as an adult and tutor.

In terms of practical advice on this, Day (2014) and Birch (2014) both highlight the importance of showing patience when facilitating a class, the creation of a space where students feel free and safe to speak, as well as asking questions of students that encourage them to give and elaborate on their reasons for holding an answer. Restructuring the classroom into a horseshoe or circle to allow for discussion and collaboration recurs in the literature, as does the simple technique of repeating the central question if a group goes off task. Day also suggests looking out for key moments when facilitating:

> What you should be looking for is moments where a [student] is fascinated, frustrated or foxed. Instead of trying to end or avoid this state by steering [students] to an answer, you should be trying to exploit it, by getting the [student] to reveal what is bugging her or asking her to suggest solutions and test them out. (2014: p. 10)

Worley's *The If Machine* (2011a) and *Once Upon an If* (2014) contain a host of facilitation techniques. Worley (2012) contains examples of how to be absent when facilitating even to the point of not asking questions, and his 'Question X' (Worley, 2013) is a simple yet effective way of conceiving of questioning which fundamentally changed my classroom practice and those I have since taught it to. We might even turn back to Ranciere and, although his text is not brimming with practical advice, look to his indication that "the student must always respond to a three-part question: what do you see? What do you think about it? What do you make of it?" (1991: p. 23) Why not try running an inquiry on a subject you know nothing about armed with little more than these three questions? You will at least discover a lot about yourself and your class.

What is potentially most important, however, is the mindset one holds when asking these questions and the environment that has been created. This has been called the "Open Question Mindset" by Worley (2015): that one must genuinely care about revealing what is in a student's mind rather than operating by asking a question to search through a student's mind for the answer you are looking for. Schein (2013) instead calls it "humble inquiry" and describes it as "the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of

building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person." (Schein, 2013: p. 2) Hogan (2015) highlights the importance of creating "venturesome learning environments" where it is considered *safe* to venture thoughts without fear of belittlement and there is "a shared expectation that such contributions will be freely and purposefully ventured." (p. 134)

In all events, emancipated facilitation leads to the removal – as far as is possible – of the hierarchies of educational authority and it leaves a space of inquiry led by the students, their own, negotiated interests and even newly negotiated rules for how discussions and inquiry should be carried out. It is also predicated upon the sharing of ideas, of hooks' dialogue, and it is a space where all kinds of expression are welcome as the repressive force of grades fall away. Although the space will, of course, never be entirely free, just as life will not, the facilitated classroom and teacher-as-facilitator model is a promising first step on the road to the emancipated one.

<u>Spaces and Sessions for a Virtuous Education</u>

I now want to provide six examples of my own practice from the past few years to indicate how I have attempted to bring about spaces of learning which serve as vehicles for the educational philosophy discussed in this chapter. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, it is difficult to draw generalised lessons from them as my teaching has not yet formed a steady practice and I would not wish to mislead anyone by making broad claims on what essentially amounts to anecdote. However, it is important to include some examples and reflections not only because doing so constitutes the defended form of sharing personal narratives and experience, but it also does justice to my experience of the PhD process. As this thesis and my professional development have progressed, the success of the endeavour has been measured in my own mind not just by the gaining of a doctorate based upon the quality of this document, but in terms of how it has allowed me to find my vocation and begin to realise its ideals. The ideas, sessions and resources suggested here are thus a large part of what I deem to be most worthwhile and constative of my ongoing journey towards success in the life-goal revealed to me by the process. As such,

alongside reading this as a thesis, I hope I can invite you to follow the links and look at the appendices in order to critically reflect on the examples not just in terms of an academic thesis, but in the following light: do these sessions and ideas sound *to you* as though they plausibly allow for an increasing sense of or ability to achieve emancipation, the childlike virtues, or, most importantly, *being-with-worth*?

1. *The Dark Would*

> *I was sceptical of what I would get out of The Dark Would [....] I was unprepared for the path ahead. The Dark Would has renewed my passion for teaching - or rather, exploring with students. My year of teacher training gave me a toolkit and a map covered in warnings. "Do not enter." "Here be dragons." "This way to level 7.". Two days in The Dark Would gave me a backpack with survival essentials and a map covered in doodles. "Uncharted." "Goblins (friendly?)." "Last sighting of unicorn."* The Dark Would event, 2015, participant feedback

Undoubtedly, the largest project I have been engaged in during my time at Warwick is 'The Dark Would'. A collaborative project with three other members of Warwick's Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning, The Dark Would sought to create a transdisciplinary space and explore transformative and playful experiences in Higher Education. A wealth of material on The Dark Would, including its various iterations, its forebears and heritage, it aims, and so on, can be found online (Clarke, et al, 2017a). The Dark Would team also created a 'Playbox' (Clarke, et al., 2017b) with sessions and ideas based around how one can be more playful in one's teaching. As already mentioned, Rebecca Fisher and I are also publishing on the playfulness of The Dark Would project. However, I wish to draw out a few central tenets of the project briefly here to help understand how some of the features of The Dark Would spaces might help others create learning experiences aimed at facilitating wonder and the kind of emancipating or subversive play I have argued for in this thesis:

- *Emerge.* Entering a Dark Would space was always designed to be in an unusual and emergent fashion, such as pulling back curtains or crawling through tunnels. This aided immeasurably with creating the sense of surprise necessary if one is to experience wonder and to facilitate the participant's ability to remove themselves from the world they had come from and engage fully with the space.

- *A blank canvas.* Although The Dark Would spaces are filled with an array of objects, in its untouched form these objects are resting as potential tools for creativity. This was modelled on Yi-Fu Tuan's claim that "what begins as an undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (1977: p. 6). Although it is tempting to signal permission to play by having some pages already drawn upon or Lego models already made, playful and creative spaces like this should present as space ready to become place through the activity of the participants. In Savin-Baden's language quoted above, these spaces should be defined-as-they-are-created.

- *No authority in the space.* Whatever the temptation to go inside one's own space, unless there is a real need to do so, try to avoid it. You have curated the space and if participants are aware of that and your presence then you will present as an authority and change the dynamics. There is no discursive facilitation to be done and you should not need to facilitate interaction with space if it is created in an ambiguous but permissive enough way that the participant feels safe and motivated to do so.

- *Costumes.* The ability to change identity through costumes, make-up and so on is invaluable for play as it allows participants to create a buffer between their identity outside the space and that within it. As such, they are given further implicit permission to do things they would not normally do as they are no longer wholly themselves. However, having prompts to reflect upon their old or new identity within the space creates that tension between the safe (the buffer of the costume) and self-reflection (being faced with what putting the costume on means) that was found in the Christmas space of chapter two.

- *Do and Do Not.* Some of the most playful moments came from the presentation of contradictory rules which forced participants into making a free choice just to see what would happen. For example, hanging tags that had "Do not touch" or "Do not draw" on one side and "Touch" and "Draw" on the other. There is no definite rule and they cannot appeal to implicit rules for explicit, contradictory ones exist. They must choose which rule they thus want to play by.

- *Hand over the space to someone else.* By early-2015 we recognised that, as a team, we had started to allow rules for the space to concretize simply through repeated practise and declining creativity and, as such, our own wonder at the spaces we were creating was waning. During the 2015 two-day event we created an iteration of the space for the first day but then handed the space over to a team of unknown students and set-designers for the second day. This helped us reconceive of the space and what its playful possibilities were.

- *"I wanted to break everything."* Not everyone responded positively to the space. For example, one student created an anti-Dark Would as their devised piece of assessment, one staff member tweeted during the 2015 event that he wanted to immediately smash and break everything in the space, and another called it "middle-class, wishy-washy rubbish" during feedback. As with the discussion of MacGreedy and his mother in chapter two, people entering such spaces do so with their own concerns and when such a space stimulates self-reflection and threatens/invites the possibility of disrupting boundaries, what the result will be is unknown and can only be facilitated as supportively as possible. As was also mentioned in chapter two, this could also be perceived as a privileged space for those who exist in institutions with the money for such projects amongst those with enough time for cosy, naval-gazing, idleness and regressive tendencies. Perhaps, and this is a charge that has certainly stuck with me and one that warrants further reflection I have not had the chance for yet. I can only offer an intuitive response based upon the previous point: carefully consider who one hands the space over to next.

2. Playing with traditional spaces[9]

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|

All eyes fall on me

I'm called upon to answer a question

"But I didn't put my hand up."

|

|

Six

Fifteen

Undergrad

Tutor

|

|

We're all occasionally stumped.

|

It was something akin to the above that participants in Warwick's Learning and Development Centre's Social Sciences' Teaching and Learning Showcase, 'Reflecting on Innovative Practice', arrived to: a familiar environment broken up by suspended, mobile-like stories and other stimuli laid out to prompt reflection on innovative teaching.

S0.19 is a standard small, tiered lecture theatre (Figure 9). It has a whiteboard, computer and projection technology at the front, its walls are adorned with 'no food', 'no smoking', and 'lecture capture' signs, and the rows of desks perfectly fulfil their dual purpose of aiding note-taking and creating a buffer between student and lecturer. The desks are also slightly slanted towards the student, presumably in an attempt to dissuade them from bringing in banned food and drink by forcing

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[9] Following from Gaydon, 2016

them to hold their paper or laptop in place in order to take notes, thus leaving no free hand to do the same with contraband.

Figure 9: Layout of room S0.19, Warwick's Social Sciences Building

For this event, however, in the spirit of innovation, I decided I would attempt to disrupt the all-too-familiar space in order to create a playful and subversive feel which could be used to stimulate discussion around innovation. Alongside the aforementioned mobiles and desks covered in stimuli, Blu-Tacked down to avoid sliding, I also created a distinct path through the room with waist-high masking tape in an attempt to shepherd participants past the material before they could find the safety of their seats. My fellow organisers and I had thought to ourselves that the group would *have* to acknowledge the pedagogically-relevant material that lay around them as they would not be able to take their seat *without* engaging with it and would thus be invited to see a familiar space afresh. Little did we know that the layout of the room and building were tougher opponents than we had thought.

Having an event in Warwick's Social Sciences building necessitates breaking the rules and bringing food into the room unless you want to block a busy corridor bustling with students. As such, participants grabbed some food and hurried into the room. However, because they were awkwardly balancing an enticing and full plate alongside bags and coats many of them quickly ducked under the tape to find

a seat. Gone was the illusion of a pathway and new space; remaining was S0.19 with some inconvenient bits of tape and paper in odd places. Perhaps more people would have gone back to read the stimuli had the slanted desks not required them to remain seated to stop their food from ending up on the floor and the tape not now made the return journey look arduous.

Irony abounded. I had attempted to subvert the traditional rules of the space and create others to facilitate a different style of interaction and prompt innovative thought only to be thwarted by the very things that were supposed to aid focussed learning in the first place: slanted desks and guiding tape. Worst of all, I, frustrated, chastised the group (hopefully without too harsh a tone) for ignoring the pieces and new dynamic that we had set up. As if I had a right to admonish their ignoring our new rules when we had been so cavalier with the old space's rules or as if the participants' breaking the 'taped' rules was somehow worse than the organisers ignoring the rules of the space as it originally was or attempting to enforce our will under the guise of play.

However, all of this was fertile ground for reflection, both practical and theoretical. What strikes me as I re-read what I have written above is the word "shepherd". Although I felt I was *guiding* people in an interesting and stimulating direction and *inviting* them to engage freely, what I actually ended up doing was attempting to *control* the room and the participants in quite a heavy-handed fashion. Some control may well be needed in teaching contexts, but, in this instance, I retained too much control and, like the desks, attempted to force engagement and learning where I should have, instead, invited it. Attempts to disrupt familiar and regular teaching spaces can be even more difficult than creating new ones and one must tread carefully and hold the attempt to strike a balance between controlling, guiding, and inviting firmly in one's mind.

3. *Embodied Experience*

Space was also a key factor in my co-convened module and project 'Sport, Philosophy and Practice'. As can be seen from the websites and outputs (Gaydon,

et al. 2016), this module and event involved, alongside traditional seminars, curating a 'gymnasium' space for students to explore and interact with materials, a field trip to a gym and martial arts class, a "phenomenological walk" to the sporting sites on campus, and a variety of physical activities. All of this was designed to enhance student experience of embodied knowledge and lived epistemology. The concepts discussed as part of the module – play, beauty, competition and so on – were all deliberately *experienced* first-hand and reflected on *as experiences*. The students were engaged in, for example, reading Stephen Conor's (2011) discussion of the experience of sports kit and asked to attempt to articulate their own experiences of the objects. Similarly, they were given extracts from Damon Young's *How to Think About Exercise* (2014) which attempted to give a phenomenological account of swimming before attempting to articulate to each other similar accounts of their own sporting practices. The module sought to stress how academic study could be combined with these holistic understandings and that their physical, co-curricular existence was not distinct from their cerebral, course-based one. In some instances, it was highly successful in this and in others it was not. What separated success from failure, as obvious as it sounds, was those instances where the 'training wheels' of the kind of account we were looking for were in place – namely, the aforementioned passages from Conor and Young. Expressing one's experience of these concepts can be an incredibly hard and frustrating thing to do and it requires much in the way of scaffolding and facilitated questioning to help students achieve. The trickiest thing, of course, is getting enough scaffolding to help without creating so much that they are 'copying' and relinquishing their freedom of expression to the rules of the examples.

4. *Wonder Workshop*

During my teaching on the module 'Applied Imagination' which sought to explore definitions and experiences of the imagination from a variety of different perspectives, I taught a week that focused solely upon wonder. I attempted not only to introduce students to a theoretical understanding of wonder and how it relates to the imagination, but also to go beyond an academic or philosophical consideration of wonder and create a specific pedagogic intervention that allowed space for

students to engage with a more emancipated form of learning and to develop the epistemic virtue of the capacity to wonder – if not directly experience it. See Appendix B for a lesson plan.

In relation to achieving moments of wonder, the everyday must be subverted in order to awaken the necessary sense of surprise in the student and for the objects around them to come into focus rather than simply be part of the mundane and unobserved background. This was aided by the fact that the module was held inside a drama studio space rather than a standard classroom. In terms of session design, however, it contained an immediate, student-focused, reflective task that has participants on their feet and interacting with a board; not the traditional start to a lesson. Additionally, students were asked to engage in dramatic tasks (such as the tableau), sit in a comfortable and school-like setting to listen to a picture book before colouring with wax crayons, presented with packs of images and quotations to make their own theories, and so on. The fact that such changes to the learning environment and instances of unconventional teaching methods happen throughout the session kept this sense of possible surprise and unfamiliarity active.

In addition to the possibility for surprise, students must also feel safe enough to engage with the experience. Much of this work was done in the opening week of the module – which, incidentally, was a team-building activity followed by a visit to The Dark Would. However, the safety in this session comes from the relief brought by the creation of a physically and emotionally comforting environment with pillows, lighting and so on, during the reading of a childlike and playful Dr Seuss text and, hopefully, my own demeanour during teaching.

Wonder is found in different places for us all and reveals something telling about our relationship to particular objects in the world. It cannot be predicted. As such, there must be a variety of materials in the classroom in order to maximise the potential for creating wonder and the space must be student-focused. In other words, the teacher/creator of the space may make an educated guess based on previous experience or research as to what will elicit wonder from students and where the potential for wonder lies within the theme of the session, but they should not impose these in a forceful way and the potential prompts should be spread

amongst a broad array of other material with openings for the students to also provide their own. For example, this session opens with a collection of the student's own wonders and wonderings and returns to use these as the basis for the tableau task, the questions asked about the homework reading are very much about the student's own experiences and creations in relation to the texts, and the theory building packs contain a mixture of pictures, quotes, and things which I feel may bear no direct relevance but which the students may be inspired by or find a relationship with.

There is no doubt that the ability to experience wonder is heightened by a 'childlike' mindset and so links to childhood can greatly aid the bringing about of such experiences. However, they need to be made in a way that does not risk their collapsing into childishness. If they do, then the tasks may be scoffed at or the memories of them cast aside as enjoyable but otherwise quaint and frivolous. As such, in this context, whilst the tableau task can be playful and imaginative in a childlike fashion – and often is insofar as many of the 'wonders' and 'wonderings' are questions that have gone unanswered since childhood or are symbols that have retained a childhood potency of the kind discussed in chapter three – it is closely followed with a discussion as to purpose. The 'storytime' and colouring alongside *Oh, the thinks you can think,* which is the task with the most potential to be misconstrued in this fashion, is embedded into the next task by including the images in their developing theories and some of the images in the theory building task were deliberately chosen to potentially draw out this link to childhood so that the 'childlike' nature of some of what has happened during the session may be reflected upon.

Surrounding these moments of wonder are also invitations to critically consider the experience and objects of wonder. In other words, to begin wonder*ing* and to capitalise on at least some experiences of wonder as learning and exploratory opportunities rather than merely surprising instances of pleasure and amazement. The session contains many moments for reflecting on what exactly is going on. Not least of all during the theory building task where students can, in a sustained fashion, discuss and critically analyse unseen, stimulating, but accessible material. In this sense, this safe, childlike space can also contain the critical element that was

discussed earlier in the thesis in relation to the Christmas space in MacDonald and Ewing's stories.

Vital to then creating a developed and resurfacing capacity for wonder is a careful balance between understanding the accessibility and regularity of wonder and its triggers, being able to identify and capitalise on moments of wonder as opportunities for learning, as well as being able to experience these moments in an unanalysed or unaware sense to the point that the pleasure is not ruined. As can be seen from the lesson plan, this session attempts to avoid favouring any of these but switches between them to create a more true-to-life, cyclical pattern of experience, recognition, and reflection that lays the foundations for a more ingrained capacity for wonder and critical reflection.

Much of this session has also built into it the student-centred and self-guided learning that Rancière felt necessary for emancipatory learning; the student's own wonders and wonderings are included from the start, used to ground later tasks, discussed by the group, and so on. However, as discussed earlier in the chapter, even more fundamental for Rancière was the recasting of the relationship between teacher and student as it was and is often understood in education – the former being the intelligent master and keeper of knowledge and the latter the ignorant initiate – to one which embodied the recognition that there is an equality of intelligence and capacity between the two. It may appear that within this session there are moments where I have created a bolstering of the former rather than brought about the later. For example, in sending out my notes after the session I perhaps run the risk of inciting the students to think "he had the answers all along" and viewing me as a Socratic ironist as opposed to Rancièrian interlocutor, or I could be seen as taking the position of an 'adult' storyteller whilst the class adopt the position of 'children' on the carpet in front of me during the reading of Dr Seuss. Perhaps I have retained a larger part of the authorship of the session, set targets and boundaries (however linked to virtues and virtuous activity they may be) and so have limited the freedom of the students and hindered their recognition of themselves as intellectual equals. The response to this can only be that I accompany my questioning of students and my correspondence with them with a continual undercurrent of genuine interest in their ideas, encouragement to challenge my conceptions, and a firmly held belief

that whilst I have some knowledge to give and I am always forthcoming with it when it is relevant, that I know nothing beyond exactly what I am giving them and what they discover and present is of equal validity to whatever I may think. My drawing attention to my teaching methods by sending my students my lesson plans with the prompt to consider and analyse how I teach and why I might teach that way after the above session is my response to such strong scepticism.

5. *Flipping metaphors*

A technique that has emerged from several sessions that I have run is the idea of 'flipping' metaphors. This has worked for sessions on teaching and learning, representations of death in picture books, models of sports coaching, and more. The basic idea is predicated upon taking whatever the central concept of the session is and asking students to complete sentences such as: "Death is…", "A teacher is…", "Coaching is…", and so on. I then ask students to separate out which of their suggestions are metaphors – an interesting discussion in itself. I then usually introduce students to the work of Lakoff and Johnson here and their exploration of metaphors that underpin our everyday practice, such as "argument is war", and their understanding of metaphor as "imaginative rationality" (1980: p. 134). I then continue with the idea that metaphors can ripple through and underpin our behaviour. As such, I ask them to return to their metaphors to map out the implications of at least one of their metaphors. For example, if they choose "A teacher is a fairy" they would have to articulate what this means for how a teacher must act, how a student must act, what a school is like, and so on. Already the students are heavily engaged in their own creative and playful activity and taking it in directions which they find stimulating. However, the most playful part of the session follows when I ask them to "flip it". In other words, think of a metaphor which stands in opposition to the one they have just been working with ("A teacher is an ogre") and cash out the new metaphor before comparing the implications of the new one with the old one. This playful technique appears simple, but not only does it lead to playful and novel results, it has the potential to destabilise the meaning and image of the central concept of the session. Where students were probably working with quite familiar conceptions in the first part of the session,

they now must revisit and rethink from an entirely new angle what that thing might mean. For Lakoff and Johnson, this was like the transformation of "argument is war" to "argument is a dance". In this session, playful practice comes from the developing ability to see constrictions even in the most basic tenets of language and become emancipated from them.

6. Confidence Conditions – 1 to 5

As was discussed above by Kidd (2016), one way to achieve intellectual humility is to draw the student's critical attention to the conditions which underpin their confidence in their own beliefs, arguments and abilities. However, this can be difficult to maintain alongside discussion for students and to keep track of in real time as a teacher. External symbols help all participants and my most frequently used one is taken from an experience I had with my father after accompanying him to his weekly quiz league to fill in for a missing player.

The best way to accumulate points in their matches is simply to answer the questions given to you. Two points are awarded for answering your own question. However, if a player thinks they cannot answer their own question they may select another player on their team to pass it to. One point is awarded for answering another team member's question for them. No conferring is allowed whilst answering your own question, nor is it allowed when deciding who to pass your question to or while that team member tries to answer the question. As such, in order to signal to a player how confident you feel in answering their question you hold up a number of fingers. One finger indicates something along the lines of: "I have a vague hunch." Five fingers signals: "I am absolutely certain."

As such, every now and then in my secondary school lessons I "sense check" the class or a particular speaker when they make a claim and ask them to hold up their confidence rating in what they are saying and explain it. This has created an increasing amount of humility in classes where I have manged to implement this consistently (four fingers) and has helped reduce the tendency of classroom debates to rest upon students simply stating opposing intuitions (five fingers).

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A humble aside

After telling my fiancée about this practice, she looked at me and with a straight face and said that from now on I should do this whenever I answered her questions with a statement. Unbeknownst to me I apparently sound like I am confidently asserting a truth even when I am hypothesising. Given intellectual humility's role in this thesis, it seems only fitting that I hold my hand up now. In many ways what I have offered in this thesis is an account of the experiences, activities and ways of approaching epistemic concepts which have allowed me to experience *being-with-worth*. I think there is something in the routes I have taken to these experiences which can facilitate others in experiencing the same (four fingers). Chapter two involved deriving an account of the virtues via an analysis of the Golden Age of children's literature and chapter three involved an appeal to a lengthy discussion of narrative voice in *The Water Babies*. I can state with a full five fingers that my experience of these texts was a positive and worthwhile. However, I find literary criticism and the untangling of the historicity of a text, let alone a whole literary period, extremely difficult, and I found the large generalisations and competing accounts about the epistemic and other forces that were at work in the period incredibly frustrating. As such, as much confidence as I have in the output, I want to make sure I hold up a tentative three fingers for any of the historical and literary claims that have sounded like a confident statement of fact in what has preceded. Any pattern I have espoused or analysed is likely overlooking, in Dennett's terms, 40% noise (the remaining two fingers) which I could not grapple with successfully or account for given my limitations as a scholar and the amount of time and room available to it in this thesis.

Assessing a Virtuous Education

Assessment is a cornerstone of education and so no discussion of education would be complete without a note on it. This is perhaps one the most practically radical and intuitively-driven conclusions this thesis contains: do not assess in anything remotely like the form that is currently prevalent and simply put aside standardised assessment as a practice. One might attempt to assess virtuous education virtuously via seemingly positive means such as collaborative presentation and debate, creative and student-devised pieces, journaling, peer assessment, and so on. Indeed, Cotterill identifies the hypocrisy of academics who talk about treating students as equals only to "adopt a teacher-pupil dynamic to assess the degree to which the academic feels the student has learnt what they should have" (2015: p. 404) and presses for a model of interactive and live discussion around whether the assessment criteria were met. Even here, however, for all its attempt to promote student engagement and power, assessment cannot escape the central issue of the expert-novice rhetoric. Even Ranciere did not recognise that this dynamic was still present in Jacatot's command to *pass* the course. The very attempt to pass is to engage with some externally set standard, to fix it, to become enslaved and beholden to it, and to put one's own sense of worth in the praise and validation of the expert assessor. In assessment, there is no way to keep the rules playful and plastic and there is no way to fully legitimise the student voice, for the assessor must always maintain their role as gatekeeper.

On my understanding of the virtuous education, the only standard that matters is one's own reflection upon the questions: Did I experience any increase in the worth of my life during the learning journey? Do I experience my existence as any more worthwhile than I did before the learning experience? If further assessment criteria *must* develop then let them do so from this alone. Let them arise in the same way that we might assess one's favourite mug, the decision to wake up at 5am in order to experience a sunrise, paying to fly rather than take the train from London to Glasgow, or one's first kiss. Let it be done immediately, in situ, and in relation to one's life. Or, as I perhaps gestured towards when defending including practical examples of my teaching, emancipated assessment might be conceived of as a process of helping students to shape their own model of life's success and

facilitating their reflection on how their education journey is comparing to that model. If so, however, it must be done in full recognition that experiences might shape the assessment criteria as much as the criteria must assess the experience, and the criteria must always be held subject to the same anarchistic model outlined as part of the emancipated education section above.

The Warwick Handbook of Innovative Teaching: Practical advice and reflections on embedding and structuring for playful and experimental teaching

As far as this thesis is concerned, innovation is the embedding of novel responses to a problem or set of issues, and innovative teaching is teaching which engages with this process. That innovation requires novelty or originality suggests that it is interwoven with creative and, potentially, playful processes (Bateson and Martin, 2013). On my understanding, innovation is a form of directed and practically-realised creativity often underpinned by playful activity. As innovative practice responds to particular issues, it is not to be understood in the same way as some of the above examples, which were more akin to free or minimally-directed play set upon for the sake of engaging in playfulness as a virtuous activity. However, playful activity is used in innovation insofar as it allows for 'outside the box' thinking and experimental activity which the innovative process needs to gain traction. On the other hand, one might argue that what has already been discussed *is* innovative insofar as these lessons and approaches were responses to the issue of how to create a virtuous education. I would maintain that even if that is the case, the above account has not yet achieved the status of 'innovation', for whilst it may constitute the beginnings of an educational philosophy with examples of its practical implementation, my practice has not yet been fully formed and disseminated in a way which allows it to be followed and replicated. In this sense, it has not become *embedded* in any teaching community or even in a consistent and thorough way in my own teaching given its still-developing and embryonic form. In teaching, ideas such the aforementioned 'Open-Space Learning' or 'Question X' are closer to innovations insofar as they are responding to a particular issue and have a clear and distinct philosophy, method and practice in place that is embedded in particular

teaching communities and packaged in a way that makes it easily transferable elsewhere.

One might ask, why should a teaching philosophy or approach seek this type of status or formulation? Is it not enough that teaching be moulded around ideals and beliefs responding to the needs of those immediately in front of the teacher on a day-to-day basis? Is it not for each teacher to achieve their end goal in their own classroom and institution and keep it organic and alive? Does the innovative process not lend itself to more corporate and stale metaphors of "packaging" and "consumption"? For all the good that OSL, Question X, and other innovations do in the classroom, do they also not lead to a necessary reduction and over-simplification of their methods and arguments? Indeed, do these negative connotations and innovation's close ties to at least the rhetoric of the neoliberal, transactional university not put it at odds with my understanding of the virtuous life and the childlike learner? Perhaps, but I cannot see how these concerns can outweigh the potential good that can come from finding ways to articulate and disseminate virtuous activity as responsibly and faithfully as possible. The innovative process only becomes vicious when those who engage in it become vicious and those who practise the techniques do so for vicious ends. The attempt to both claim that one finds a certain method of teaching to be of the utmost value and virtuous and that one would not then desire to seek a way of disseminating this method appears to me to be profoundly contradictory. As such, I want to conclude this chapter with the contention that a disposition to innovate is also part of what constitutes the virtuous teacher, that all teaching institutions should be set up to facilitate innovative processes for the sake of their community, and with some advice on how best to structure an educational institution to allow for classroom innovation.

My contentions here draw upon the work done during my thesis on *The Warwick Handbook of Innovative Teaching* (Gaydon, forthcoming). *The Warwick Handbook of Innovative Teaching* was proposed by me in the belief that the highest quality thinking around and realisation of innovation in pedagogy was 'out there' in the teaching spaces of the university, and that it was being created daily in response to the special demands and circumstances of students and teachers 'in the field'. The

collection aimed to find those passionate, creative and dedicated individuals who were pushing boundaries at Warwick to achieve the goal of an excellent educational experience, and to locate a common stock of ideas and shared knowledge that could be presented to the wider teaching community for inspiration. On the understanding that innovation arises organically from having access to and interacting with a diverse collection of ideas (see below), one of the main aims of the project was to present insights from staff and students working in a broad spectrum of departments. As such, over the 2015/16 academic year, 55 members of teaching and support staff were interviewed, four focus groups were run with teaching staff, support staff, and students, 13 lessons were observed, four university teaching events were attended, and one event was run. This allowed me to gather information from over 30 different academic departments and university services. Here, I want to present some of the lessons and ideas that were learned from this project in order to understand what is necessary for cultivating not just a playful but an *innovative* disposition amongst a teaching community which, whilst not part of the childlike system as sketched above, does lead to the ability to extend and embed worthwhile practices created by the teacher.

It should be acknowledged that some parts of this section draw from the handbook itself, but whilst I led a team of two undergraduate researchers and another member of staff, the project is accredited to me, the handbook was written by myself and I am acknowledged as its sole author in the forthcoming publication. As such, any passages and ideas articulated here are my own work and conclusions drawn from the project.

1. *Create a teaching philosophy*

Many of us have a vague sense of what our teaching philosophy is, but clearly articulating it is key when innovating as it can give direction and grounding to the process as well as help us clearly articulate to our students our intentions and reasoning – a transparency that is often needed for a trusting relationship between staff and students. Appendix C is the list of questions and prompts that I created for teachers trying to formulate their own teaching philosophy. However, as can be

seen there, it is important to recognise that a teaching philosophy is not a static thing and it is rare to be able to hold a single, entirely coherent ideal. The interpersonal relationships and shifting context of the classroom often make that impossible. As such, trying to frame a teaching philosophy in terms of generalised, immovable maxims can be problematic. Uncharted territory can regularly lead to goals being called into tension or new situations presenting problems for even the most fundamental of ideas and a teaching philosophy needs to be continually revisited throughout any innovative process. My practical prompts for teachers trying to innovate attempt to reflect this. Where the first section suggests an attempt to articulate core principles to make the teaching philosophy wieldable and implementable, the second suggests destabilising it where necessary. Just as you cannot simultaneously know the location and speed of a particle, so you cannot simultaneously use your teaching philosophy as an anchor and have it reflect the instability of central concepts and life.

It must also be remembered that as teachers we innovate within departmental, faculty and institutional contexts and teaching philosophies must be reflected on in relation to the other pedagogic philosophies that exist within one's context and institution if successful relationships and innovation are to happen. For example, when writing this handbook for teachers at Warwick, I suggested that they not only needed to measure their philosophies up against Warwick's official Teaching and Learning Strategy but that they had to enter into discussion with those around them as to what the community's unofficial and perhaps unseen philosophy was. The point of many of the interviews conducted during the project was to find out if there was a philosophy that many of the practitioners in the community were working from and to make these ideals visible so that alliances could be drawn and negotiations opened on better and more transparent terms than were currently on offer. For Warwick, the model of 'student-as-producer' (Jenainati, 2015), the necessity of failure, and a constructivist epistemology were particularly prevalent.

2. Create the right kind of community

Bilton and Leary (2002) contend that that the popular image of the creative genius – a divergent thinker with access to an irrational understanding of the world and subject to spontaneous moments of insight – has led organisations to produce environments that stifle creativity. These organisations overlook the fact that creativity does not regularly stem from an individual making unprecedented and sudden leaps forward in isolation, but is more likely to be part of an incremental and collective process. As such, it is not enough for an organisation to focus upon providing brief hits of funding, time, space, and permission to creatively engage with problems or concepts. If the individual is not situated within an environment which contains a stable and supportive community, one which recognises that the necessary process is a prolonged one, then their creatively-charged state is likely to amount to very little.

Instead, an organisation must seek to create structures and spaces for sharing ideas and materials between a diverse body of people where their contributions can unpredictably collide. Although Bilton and Leary's paper distinguishes creativity from innovation in different ways to how it has been defined here, that terminology can be put aside and the ideas productively translated. Structures that allow for collaboration as well as idea collision and exchange are necessary if innovative teaching is to flourish for exactly the reasons their paper highlights. Innovation, like creativity, is often not the product of individual moments of insight and genius, but of communal collaboration, incremental adaptions, and the unusual moments that occur during such processes.

What can be learned from Warwick's teaching community? The Centre for Professional Education (CPE) at Warwick stands out as one of the university's instances of excellent practice in this area and is directly related to teacher education. After speaking to the teaching fellows for secondary school initial teacher training and Head of Primary Teacher Education Des Hewitt,[10] as well as

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[10] See Hewitt's co-authored book *Innovative Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools* (2015) for a variety of ideas and reflective tasks useful for understanding innovation not only in primary but all areas of education.

observing one of the department's core secondary school PGCE teaching days, it became clear that the ways in which CPE staff work as a team and encourage trainee teachers to develop their own practices through collaboration has created an environment that nurtures individual teaching innovations and supports the innovative process. The core PGCE teaching days are designed by CPE to enable their trainee's development as teachers, but they are also sources of innovation and model outstanding practice in terms of supporting the innovative process. Having regular, dedicated days and forums on which trainees can share their experiences of sustained practices in schools means they can communicate and discuss the positives and negatives of the techniques, technologies, and lesson plans they are using, as well as gather ideas and practices from each other. They are also actively encouraged to select and try new approaches in their respective schools before the next training day, and the trainees are offered continual support as they adjust the materials they encounter for their context. Interdisciplinary collaboration during tasks and presentations on these days also means the trainees and staff are exposed to a variety of discipline-specific technologies and techniques that they may otherwise miss. These tasks and presentations are followed with scaffolded reflection on generalizable concepts and skills. As such, staff and students are involved in the unpredictable collisions within a diverse environment, and even if nothing presents itself as immediately relevant, the process means their teaching toolkit is rapidly expanded in diverse ways. It is this toolkit that can then create avenues for innovation as well as develop the teacher's ability to improvise when teaching. The CPE teaching fellows spoken to during the handbook project also highlighted that a similar process occurred within their team. They team-teach, support each other in using new technologies or techniques, review each other's ideas and practices, and their processes for developing ideas and creating new lesson plans and courses involve collective endeavours. Indeed, it was highlighted by the team that having regular and honest team discussion is a major factor in what allows them to continue to innovate in their teaching. As such, an incremental model of innovation is not only occurring within CPE but the department has created environments which allow for the dissemination of a diverse range of ideas, and the process is supported by the kind of ethos of collaboration and mutual development argued for by Bilton and Leary.

One of the other most successful departments at Warwick for innovation in teaching is Classics and Ancient History. Whether it be through practical workshops on creating mosaics, stone carving, bronze casting, having students create their own lessons based upon museum objects, running a mock symposium using replicated vases and drinking cups, or working with professional directors and storytellers to help them recreate and interpret elements of the ancient world, the department have managed to: (a) increase active and embodied student engagement as an aid to subject understanding, (b) develop a sense of collegiality between staff and students and have the latter identify themselves as empowered researchers, and (c) address any misconceptions students may have that theirs is a purely text-based degree detached from professional development and only alive insofar as it is historically reported. However, in working with this department what was most notable, and I believe to be the foundation of their success in innovation, was the feeling of community amongst the teaching staff. Those interviewed were not only passionate about their own teaching projects but were clearly knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and supportive of the projects being conducted by their colleagues. Indeed, one point the head of the department stressed during her interview was that teaching innovation is regularly discussed during full staff meetings in the Classics department, with postgraduate and undergraduate representatives, and part of their departmental webpage is dedicated to the innovative projects they are engaged in. As such, not only do the staff receive crucial practical and emotional support when innovating but they are exposed to a variety of ideas and approaches which they can draw upon in the future.

This supportive community, one which recognises the importance of the incremental model, should also vocally legitimise translation of ideas into new contexts as innovative practice. For example, Rebecca Johnson adopted the Open Space Learning practice of 'Theory Building' (IATL, 2011) for her 'Mixed Methods for Health Research' module (Johnson et al., forthcoming). In her interview for the project, Johnson expressed that she felt that what she did was not innovative due to it stemming from the innovative activity of others. However, whilst 'Theory Building' may not be Johnson's innovation, I would maintain that her translation *is* an innovation. Translating a session run by another teacher into your own context involves adapting it to address different challenges, moulding it

to suit a new language and environment, and changing it in the face of an entirely different set of students. Although it may bear a family resemblance to its predecessor it also has distinct features because of this and these are innovative in their own right. It is important to see innovation in teaching as an ongoing and collaborative process. As Hewitt argues: "Innovation in general often takes an existing idea or approach and transforms it into something new. For this reason, innovation always builds on what came before." (2015: p. 19) This, alongside other messages surrounding innovation and creativity being a process which can only exist within an intellectual collective, must be promoted if we are to continue to foster such virtuously innovative activity. I suggest that translations such as Johnson's are a driving force in this as they involve the creator increasing their knowledge of and exposure to practices in the relevant 'domain' (teaching) and they allow ideas to be tested against multiple environments for worth and adapted where needed to make them more relevant to a variety of contexts.

Students should also be brought into this process. As was highlighted by a large proportion of the interviewees during the handbook project, and is something of a truism in the teaching community, understanding the needs of your students is crucial to not only framing and "selling" innovation to them but also guiding where innovation needs to happen. However, responding to the individual needs of the student as a stimulus for innovation is not the only role they play within the community. They can be part of that teaching community and bring heightened chances for innovation with them because of it, as well as creating further opportunities for the above understanding of an emancipatory education. This is what I have termed the "student-as-teacher" model. It might occur in widening participation programmes where undergraduates are placed in schools or other learning environments where they must adopt the role of class-leader and teacher or, like in Warwick's Digichamps or 'Adopt a Classs' (Hampton, 2016) projects, they create material and enhance the teaching of their own subject. In the latter case, the project seeks to connect undergraduate language students on their Year Abroad with PGCE trainee Modern Foreign Languages Teachers to enhance the latter's access to cultural objects and insights for their teaching. Students are tasked with identifying and collecting "culturally significant artefacts in their host countries that could be used to enhance language teaching and learning […] and develop them

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into learning resources." (Hampton, 2016: p. 2) Lifting the veil on teaching practices and involving students in them in the above ways can also allow students to offer direct insights on our teaching practice. As Cathia Jenainati explains about her employing of a GROWTH and coaching model within undergraduate dissertation supervision:

> Self-reflection is a powerful tool for educators but it can only reveal to us a limited amount of information. For the past couple of years, I have invited students to coach me, using the GROWTH model, with a specific goal of understanding my own praxis and improving it. Although I have only been coached by two students so far, I have found the process invaluable, enabling, and deeply moving. (Jenainati, 2015: p. 166)

Students should thus be welcomed to be part of the teaching and innovation community.

Finally, innovation – particularly when it is built on playful activity – can be perceived as expensive and risky, and it may seem likely that one's colleagues or institution will not be open to such risks. Indeed, just as there is in playful activity, there is the real potential for subverting the norm and current power structures, and that can be perceived as a direct challenge to established rules and beliefs (Hewitt, 2015: p. 8). Formal education is potentially one of the most resistant spaces to change given its rigid conventions and the high stakes for the students if innovation goes wrong (Sharples et al., 2015: p. 8). Take, for example, the fact that some departments within a higher education system must conform to certain regulations as to what must be taught in order for a degree to be classed as a degree *in that subject*. At Warwick, students from certain subjects would often be reluctant to or even dissuaded from taking interdisciplinary IATL modules, such as those I taught on, because they could not contribute towards their formal degree and so would have to take them as a not-for-credit option or overload their schedule. The supportive network being outlined mediates some of this perception of risk by creating a collegial sense of "being in it together", not just with staff but also with the students themselves.

It is thus necessary in our educational institutions to create collaborative and mutually supportive communities based around teaching – although inclusive of willing students – where they do not already exist. These communities must include chances for unforeseen encounters and different scenarios. Without such united communities it will be difficult to realise not only the virtue of innovation but the underpinning unity of the institution Baehr laid out as necessary for the embedding of new and innovative approaches to teaching, including, once fully formalised, my own.

<div align="center">***</div>

At the beginning of this chapter I outlined what my account of a virtuous education had built towards in the previous chapters. Namely, that a virtuous education seeks to create and facilitate future experiences of *being-with-worth* through: embracing the living, lived and experiential dimensions of epistemology; cultivating and modelling the childlike virtues of playfulness, a capacity for wonder, and intellectual humility and open-mindedness; and enthusiastically and genuinely teaching in a manner and in spaces which promote the learner taking an active, reflective and playful role in meaning making. This chapter has underscored many of these ideas, but it has also added, amongst other things, that:

- A virtuous education is an emancipated education;
- A virtuous education should fully embrace the political and ethical ideals that underpin it;
- The virtuous teacher must always model the virtuous behaviour they seek to bring about;
- The virtuous teacher must continually reflect with students on the end goals of education;
- The virtuous teacher should care for the 'soul' of the students and draw attention to what is dignified and of equal value in them;
- Virtuous educational spaces must be kept fluid and a realm of possibility for as long as possible;

- Virtuous educational spaces should reveal and reflect on its restrictions and rules as well as play with them when possible;

- A virtuous education should reconceive of, if not eliminate, assessment;

- A virtuous institution will maintain an "all in", widely-interactive, mutually supportive, and diverse community that is structured for innovation;

- A virtuous education should contain a strong, anarchic vein as well as the continual possibility of being playfully undermined by its learners.

Conclusion

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Appendix A: Images Victorian Christmas Cards, from Grossman, John. 2008.
Christmas Curiosities, **New York, Stewart, Tabori & Chang**
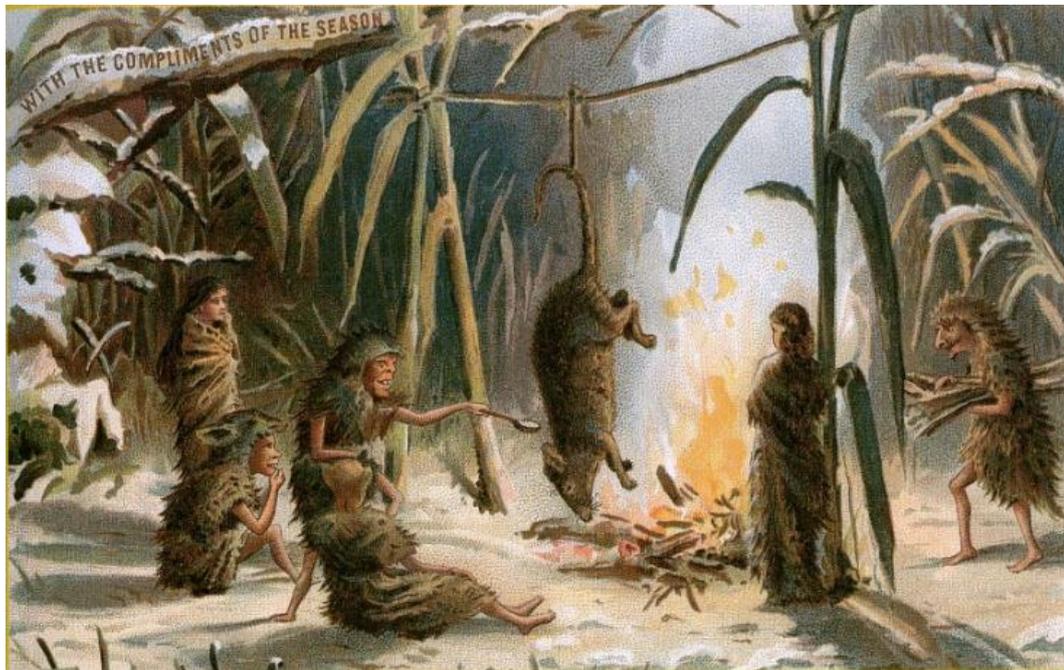
Appendix B: Wonder Workshop Lesson Plan

Time	Exercise	Notes
5 mins	What do you wonder? What makes you wonder?	Students will place post-it notes or use the board markers to write or draw their answers to these two questions - one question on either side of the board.
15 mins	Group and class discussion of responses to homework tasks.	Reading and questions were: • 'The Tyger' (poem) by William Blake. Can you think of an animal or person that captures your imagination or makes you wonder? Can you express why? Do you think your explanation does the thing or feeling justice? • 'Jabberwocky' (poem) by Lewis Carroll. What do you think is going on here? Does the poem mean anything? Read the paragraph after the poem on the scanned copy, do you agree with Alice? • 'How the Whale Became' (short story) by Ted Hughes. Can you think of anything on earth that really baffles you? Can you come up with an origin story for it? • A scanned copy of the first few pages from Michelle LeMieux's picture book *A Stormy Night*. Where would you go from here? • 'Seven Wonders' (essay) by Lewis Thomas. What would your seven wonders be? Why?

		Final questions: How do you think these relate to this week's theme or the imagination? Which stimulated your imagination the most?
10 mins	Tableau	In groups of 4/5. Students will select a wonder/wondering from the board and create a still tableau to represent it. They will then show their tableau to the rest of the class. The questions posed to the class will vary: What do you think this is? What does this make you think of? Which wonder do you think they picked? Thoughts?
10 mins	Discussion	Questions for the students: Which of these pieces and tasks stimulated your imagination and which didn't? What made those more successful? Which then made you want to do something with what you were imagining and which didn't? Is this 'follow-through' important? Explanation to students of my thinking about the task in terms of re-presenting ideas, how the form of something can match or be disassociated from the content, and thinking about how to stimulate thought and imagination.
10 mins	*Oh, the Thinks you can Think*	Students to be sat in semi-circle on floor around me on cushions and with soft/cuddly items and wax crayons and coloured paper in sight. Lights to be dimmed. *Oh, the Thinks you can Think* by Dr Seuss to be read to students. Students then select one thing they have never heard of before and draw it the crayons and paper. These drawings can be incorporated into the next task.

25 mins	Theory building	Students in groups of 4/5 to be given packs of laminated, A4 cards and the instruction to use all the cards to create an explanation of what wonder is which they will talk the other groups through. After this explanation they will give a single sentence that begins "From this we can see that wonder is...". They may lay the cards out in any shape, use different levels, and present them in any way they see fit. At the start of the task students will be told the 'maths wall' mysteriously appeared over-night in Dorset and a prize was offered by the local council to anyone who could solve it. Half-way through the time it will be revealed to students that it turned out it means nothing.
25 mins	Walk and talk	Groups take each other through their theories and are offered the opportunity to ask questions about each other's creations and process.
5 mins	Individual free-writing	Students given 5 mins to work individually and free-write ideas that have arisen during the session. If they pause, students are prompted to just keep writing even if it doesn't make sense.
5 mins	Debrief	Anchor theory building to points about creating theories of imagination in similar ways and trying to build up their own ideas each week before coming to class so they aren't just absorbing the speakers' points but already have their own thoughts to measure them against. Also to their assessed imaginative stimulus and to reflect on where stimulation did/didn't occur. Finish on Howard Parsons' *A Philosophy of Wonder*: "What attracts and holds the wondering imagination is the mystery of quality and

		meaning, dramatically or silently challenging man, waiting to be unravelled. It is this lure of the unknown, this temptation of exploring the hidden labyrinth, which gives to the wonderful its peculiar fascination."
Follow-up	Email to students	Email students with: lesson plan and explanation of thinking behind this, questions to take them further in their reflective journals, and my own understanding of what wonder is with references to secondary reading.

Appendix C: Teaching Philosophy Activities taken from an early draft of *The Warwick Handbook of Innovative Teaching* (forthcoming)

These are just some questions to get you started on thinking about your teaching philosophy. Try to articulate not only what you think but why you think that.

- What is teaching and what is a teacher?
- Why do I teach and what am I trying to achieve?
- What is education for?
- What is a university for and what should it be trying to achieve?
- How do I hope students are different after:
  - Attending one of my lectures/seminars/workshops?
  - Taking one of my modules?
  - Being supervised by me?
  - Being a student in my department?
  - Completing a degree in my department?
  - Their time at the University of Warwick?
- What kind of relationship am I hoping to achieve with my students?
- How do/should I interact with colleagues or students who don't share my philosophy or hold different values?
- Is there a better way of doing what I'm doing and why am I not doing it if there is?
- Have my opinions on these questions changed over time? How? Why?
- Are there other answers to them and why don't I agree if there are?

You may want to summarise and articulate the fundamental principles of your teaching philosophy by looking for recurrent themes and ideas in your responses.

You can test the flexibility of your teaching philosophy by looking for absolute statements in your answers and asking: should I always adhere to this or can I conceive of scenarios that are going to be problematic? Do you need to adapt or qualify your philosophy in response to this?

Similarly, if you come across a significant or difficult teaching moment, note down what happened and what you did. Did you act in accordance with your teaching philosophy? If not, why not? Do you need to change your philosophy to fit with the principle you acted by or do you need to identify how would you could act differently if you still think your philosophy is applicable, achievable and best?

More playfully, you may take the opportunity every now and then to completely rethink your teaching philosophy. Adorning the glass of The Teaching Grid sits Joseph Boyes' words: "To be a teacher is my greatest work of art." Many of us will also have heard some derivative of the famous phrase "Teaching is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire" or the rhyme "Be a 'guide on the side' rather than a 'sage on the stage'". How about Parker Palmer's, "I [have] learned that my gift as a teacher is to be able to dance with my students,"[11] or L Dee Fink's "the teacher [is] the helmsman for the learning experience"[12]? Many of these are metaphors or are informed by metaphor. Take a second now to write down ten different metaphors that begin "teaching is…".

Once you have done that, try to think: "if this were the metaphor I ascribed to, how would that mean I would teach?" Are there are positives to this different approach to teaching you might want to incorporate?

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[11] 1997, *Courage to Teach*, New York, Wiley & Sons, p.72
[12] 2013, *Significant Learning Experience*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, p.278