

Attention and Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

Informed by Iris Murdoch's concept of attention, this thesis argues that economic and scientific discourses within early childhood education misrepresent and neglect essential moral aspects of pedagogy. Early childhood education is built on particulars, the small and incremental attentive moments between individuals. Attention, described by Murdoch as 'a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality', improves the moral imagination and enhances the ability of teachers to see and respond to individual children in educational settings.

The concept of attention is utilised to critique neoliberal approaches to early childhood education and to question the increasing application of neuroscientific explanations of the child in educational policy and pedagogical practice. Standardisation, objective empiricism, and limited measurements of teachers and children are problematised for the ways in which they attempt to delineate 'fact' from 'value'. Attention fosters a critical understanding of how teachers' everyday pedagogical practices can be appreciated as an 'inhabited' philosophy of education.

Attention is explored in relation to the Māori concept of aroha. Aroha, as a generous direction of focus to the divine breath within another being, is helpful in developing a deeper understanding of attention. Together, aroha and attention prove synergistic in efforts to promote an approach to education that moves beyond the empirical, quantifiable and scientific. Together, these concepts support another way of understanding the 'intentional' teacher through acknowledging the importance of intuition in paying attention to children. Underpinned by humility, aroha and attention are orientations to life that see education as a moral and ethical undertaking. Seen in this light, education informs rather than limits rational investigation.

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Introduction

Iris Murdoch (1919-1999) was a philosopher who sought to deepen our understanding of human morality. Responding to the increasing influence of scientism within philosophy and the lack of realistic depictions of the human, Murdoch sought to reconceive the ideal moral agent. According to Murdoch (1998), as philosophers cannot help but promote an ‘idealised’ version of the moral agent, they should be motivated to portray a worthy ideal. A central question motivated Murdoch’s philosophical ideas: “How can we make ourselves better?” (p. 364). From this drive, Murdoch developed the concept of attention, which she succinctly describes as “a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality” (p. 327). The concept of attention supports an understanding of education as an ethical encounter; in responding to the moral task of the ‘just and loving gaze’, educationists can uphold aspects of education that, if irretrievably lost through the prevalence of neoliberal ideas, would deform the act of education. The focus of this study is to resist the dominance of neoliberal strategies that foster these limiting interpretations of education. Attention will be discussed at length to describe how the ‘just and loving gaze’ offers a unique opportunity for people involved in education to reconsider morality as a fundamental aspect of human life, to reflect upon ways to enhance moral vision, and to develop a pedagogy based upon humility and love.

Early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand is unique. Including early childhood education into the wider educational reforms of the 1980s shaped aspects that still impact upon present-day experiences. Neoliberal ideas produce dominant discourses of a world driven by fiscal concerns. Within neoliberalism, humans are scientifically measured, described in economic terms, and governed to maximise the potentiality of an enterprising, entrepreneurial, and competitive public. Neoliberal discourses are pervasive, adaptable, malleable, and presented as the only way of viewing and engaging in the world; the ‘there is no alternative’ approach (Fitzsimmons et al., 1999; Olssen, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Peters, 2011; Roberts, 2004, 2014; Roberts & Peters, 2008).

Yet early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand started from philanthropic concerns and a strong community ethic remains today. Although neoliberal ideas are a part of the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education experience, there are many local scholars who argue against an economic vision of the human and who question the ‘there is no alternative’ approach (Duhn, 2012; Farquhar, 2012; Ritchie et al., 2014). Criticisms centre on the positioning of teachers and children as ‘knowable and measureable’ units and education as a technical enterprise. Varying areas of resistance attempt to reconceive

education as difficult to quantify, positioning diversity and complexity as a strength rather than a weakness. Education is a complex endeavour; it is a uniquely human experience in which two or more individuals are endeavouring to hear and see each other and respond accordingly (Biesta, 2004; Moss, 2019; Rinaldi, 2004). The bicultural nature of the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017, hereafter *Te Whāriki*) is identified as ‘both witnessing and resisting’ neoliberal desires (Tesar, 2015). What does Murdoch have to add to these perspectives?

It is important to question how the ideas of a mid- to late-20th century philosopher can respond to issues in contemporary times. The English setting where Iris Murdoch developed her vision is far removed from present-day early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. At present, neoliberal ideas predominate. Although Murdoch wrote philosophy in a similar time-frame to writers later identified as informing neoliberal ideas (Hayek, 1948), she wrote prior to its broader implementation in governmental policies worldwide in the 1980s (‘Reganism’ in the United States of America, ‘Thatcherism’ in the United Kingdom, and ‘Rogernomics’ in Aotearoa New Zealand).

This thesis argues that attention speaks directly to contemporary times. Attention is a way of enhancing the moral imagination to see others in the world and defend the complex ambiguity of human life while enhancing our personal appreciation of it. Attention offers the opportunity to reclaim the critical role of the attentive teacher within the educational relationship. Economic and scientific discourses within early childhood education misrepresent and neglect essential moral aspects of pedagogy. Attention offers a novel depiction of the role of the inner life to support an appreciation of education as an ethical encounter.

As an early childhood educator and researcher in Aotearoa New Zealand, I value the unique shaping of early childhood education by the position of Māori as tangata whenua and the bicultural character of the national early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017). I involve this unique positioning within this study to extend my investigation into attention, particularly the notions of love and humility. I argue that attention can reorient consciousness to support bicultural development¹ and suppress the

¹ This study will maintain the view that ‘development’ does not represent a linear progression of capability, consistent with contemporary early childhood critiques of universalizing theories (Cannella, 1997; Ritchie & Rau, 2008). Furthermore, in order to progress ‘bicultural development’, there must be a recognition that change cannot only occur at the level of individuals, but must also involve reexamination and transformation of structures of power and governance, at a local and nationwide level (Ritchie, 2003).

potentially colonising effects of the ‘knowable’ human. Together, aroha and attention prove synergistic in the efforts to promote an approach to education that moves beyond the empirical, quantifiable and scientific. Together, these concepts support another way of understanding the ‘intentional’ teacher through a promotion of the intuition teachers develop from focussed attention to children. Underpinned by humility, aroha and attention are orientations to life that see education as a moral and ethical undertaking. Seen in this light, education informs rather than limits rational investigation.

Murdoch was concerned with the moral-philosophical direction of her time and the promotion of a narrow form of scientific rationality within philosophical ideas. Murdoch was affected by the influence of World War II, both upon the philosophical milieu and her personal life. She argued against many of her contemporaries who presented an increasingly dominant model of moral agent. She criticises this model, labelling it the “ideally rational man”² (Murdoch, 1998, p. 303). The ‘ideally rational individual’ is depicted as a rational decision-maker whose agentic capacity extends to dominion over moral decisions and whose moral character is defined by an external assessment of behaviours and actions. Like the ‘there is no alternative’ of neoliberal ideas, the ideally rational individual was widely considered indisputable, stemming from a Kantian and post-Kantian idea of the human indebted to Hume and Hobbes. The ‘ideally rational individual’ stemmed from the field of psychology and a scientific and analytical approach to morality, endorsing practical moral action. The ‘ideally rational individual’ can divide fact from value and is therefore ‘value-free’ in moral assessments. Murdoch argues that there are many problems with this model of the human, the most crucial of which is the relegation of the moral to the periphery. For Murdoch, morality is not a subsidiary or additional aspect of human experience for it comprises its totality; morality is not a “hole and corner” (p. 380) matter but a part of our whole mode of living.

The segmentation of the moral domain originally stemmed from the desire to preserve moral values from the encroachment of scientific ideas, but developed into a scientific approach to moral philosophy. Scientific ideas promoted an objective view of moral decisions, assessed and determined by the rational moral agent who can to “survey all the facts, then use reason” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 26). The ‘ideally rational individual’ is capable of

² Murdoch uses the term ‘man’ in much of her writing. At times when her text is quoted it is necessary to use the gendered term ‘man’ in order to remain consistent with Murdoch’s writing. However, this is not to say that Murdoch was only referring to the male gender in her arguments. At the time of Murdoch’s writing, using the term ‘man’ was common, consequently the term ‘man’ must be considered according to this contextual usage.

assaying and selecting appropriate moral action as though making a selection from a shop. Murdoch argued that this approach to moral philosophy invoked an unnecessary compartmentalisation, ‘measurable’ aspects of morality were included and ‘unmeasurable’ aspects became superfluous. One unquantifiable aspect was the role of the ‘inner life’. The ‘inner life’ is a term that will be explored throughout the thesis, but can be loosely described at this point as the thoughts, musings, and ‘inner’ deliberations of the individual that bear upon moral decisions and actions. Murdoch’s contemporaries argued that the inner life is a ‘shadowy domain’ and has no bearing upon the rational moral individual. Conversely, Murdoch defended the ‘inner life’ as an essential aspect of humanity that informs moral choices. The inner life strengthens knowledge of moral concepts, preparing people for moral decisions and ethical engagement in the world.

Murdoch contends that the demarcation between ‘fact’ and ‘value’ was never fully explored or understood by philosophers. In the desire for autonomy and freedom from an externally determined goodness, empirical ‘fact’ is promoted over ‘mutable’ value and philosophy lost the metaphysical background to moral decisions. The dangers of a mutable vision of value were understood clearly by Murdoch through her experiences in the war; but she argued what was needed was not the eradication of moral concepts but a deepening and broadening of them. In order to enhance clarity of moral vision, important points of difference need to be explored. Reclamation of the metaphysical background offers the opportunity to develop a richer understanding of moral concepts and a better vision of shared human morality. When value was compartmentalised in order to venerate ‘fact’, the depth and breadth of moral concepts were lost. Opportunities for rich philosophical debate about their substance, to elicit moral growth, were traded in order to satisfy the desire for autonomy over moral choices; freedom, honesty and sincerity, took precedence at the expense of goodness, humility, and love.

Many parallels can be drawn between the ‘ideally rational individual’ and contemporary neoliberal ideas. In contemporary neoliberal forms of governance, the ‘rational autonomous individual’ or the *homo oeconomicus* (Foucault, 2008) predominates. Similar to the ‘ideally rational individual’ the neoliberal individual is a ‘rational utility maximiser’ (Peters, 2011, p. 34). Further similarities lie in the shared regard for empirically based scientific approaches that are critical of a metaphysical background. Neoliberal ideas epitomise the ‘knowable’ human shaped by external action. These ideas intensify focus upon strategies to form individuals to fit neoliberal moulds; education systems are frequently targeted to create competitive individuals and encourage ‘rational’ knowledge and skills in

order to compete within the market. Murdoch's arguments against the 'ideally rational individual' offer another way of apprehending the ethical dimensions of neoliberal forms of education.

There are multiple issues within early childhood education that can be reconsidered through Murdochian philosophy. Murdoch (1998) writes, "Man is a creature who makes pictures of himself and then comes to resemble the picture" (p. 75). For Murdoch, images of the human hold the potential to affect moral actions in the world. The ways in which the 'ideally rational individual' misrepresents everyday moral thought and action motivates Murdoch to review this questionable image and offer a commendable alternative. Drawing from Murdochian attention, images of the human can be reconsidered in light of her demands for realism and worthiness. According to Murdoch, the desire to retain autonomy through reason drove philosophers to produce an image of the human built from shaky premises. These unstable images impart a precarious foundation for the image of 'the neoliberal human' in contemporary times. Can the 'shaky premises' of the human be reconsidered in our time, or is there no alternative? Anxieties about the ineffectiveness of early childhood centres, the low levels of academic achievement, and the ways in which children are put 'at risk' by varied educational approaches are frequently identified to highlight 'problems' within early childhood education (Franks, 2019). At times the discourse shifts to the stress, workload, and conditions of work for early childhood teachers (NZEI Te Riu Roa, 2018; One News, 2018), but infrequently are the mechanisms that underpin these conditions commented upon – the neoliberal systems that shape early childhood education.

The notion of education as an ethical encounter is in tension with an economic vision of education. Murdochian attention supports the reconsideration of the 'indisputable truths' of an education system built from economic rationality. In order to deviate from the dominant image of her time, Murdoch reconsiders 'indisputable truths' in order to expose the erroneous suppositions upon which they are built and question their substance and validity. I argue that Murdoch's philosophy offers the opportunity to reconsider the 'indisputable truths' of our time and reflect upon contemporary problems anew. She developed a substantive philosophical argument that can highlight the devalued ethical and moral dimensions of education in contemporary times. Through the concept of attention, an ethical rationale for education can be revived.

Murdoch (1998) contested the image of the 'ideally rational individual' and its categorical inculcation of the capacity to separate fact from value; morality cannot be easily divided into these distinct realms as morality is a ubiquitous concern underpinning and

influencing all human actions and decisions. This image is not the worthy ideal Murdoch sought to identify. Contesting this image motivated Murdoch to investigate alternatives and, through the philosophy of Plato and Simone Weil, explore the notion of *attention*. Attention resists the limitations imposed by scientific images of morality and supports the role of the moral imagination³ as a medium to comprehend the world. Through attention, the metaphysical background is revitalised. Considered deliberation of moral concepts, such as love and goodness, deepens and strengthens our understanding of human morality and supports everyday human interactions. Attention advocates for people to expand their understanding of moral values enhanced by the development of the “inner life” (p. 306).

Today, the scientific search for the activity of the inner life and the workings of the mind has expanded widely in the study of neuroscience, with concurrent effects upon the image of the child in education. Developments in neuroscientific research have highlighted the ways that the early childhood years impact upon overall life development and amplified governmental focus upon the education of very young children (Millei & Joronen, 2016; Shonkoff & Levitt, 2010). Murdoch’s concerns with the primacy of science are of critical relevance here. Although science can be used to seek some functions of the child’s mind, there is an inextricable moral element to life which, when glossed over, will misrepresent the human.

When augmented with economic concerns, neuroscientific ‘findings’ are utilised to position children as human capital and highlight how spending money on educational experiences earlier in life may have a positive correlation with less later spending in health, justice, and welfare (Vandenbroeck & Olsson, 2017). To determine the conditions to reduce later spending, importance is placed upon standardised assessment of early education (Aronsson & Taguchi, 2018; Cowell & Decety, 2015). But these images are determined through dominant neoliberal lenses; economic productivity is the concern and aim of assessment, rendering other visions unnecessary or irrelevant (Stack, 2013). Additionally, these forms of assessment are primarily concerned with what can be empirically measured, compared, and contrasted. Diversities in educational experiences and the particulars of individual situations can be overlooked in preference for trends and positive correlations (Moss, 2017; Moss et al., 2016). These externalised measurements can produce an image of

³ Although the moral imagination will be explored further throughout the thesis, here it can be briefly explained that Murdoch asserts that human have a rich *imaginative* capacity, and it is through the direction of this imaginative capacity towards an understanding of morality, ethics, and values that a deeper apprehension of reality can be attained. Furthermore, the moral imagination supports a clearer understanding of the ubiquity of morals in life.

the young child as a 'product' of educational experiences and a site of improvement for pecuniary gains. The narrowing effects these measurements can have upon teachers, children, and whānau need to be brought into conversation with Murdoch's philosophy. Murdoch's concerns with the fact/value divide and defence of inner life need to be considered against the advance of these images that shape early childhood education. Murdoch's critical lens can be applied in order to ascertain their limitations. Consideration must be given to the tensions Murdoch highlights in order to reconsider the utilisation of neuroscientific findings to reconceive education.

Murdoch's centrality of the inner life contests arguments that delegate individual knowledge and experience to the fringes merely because they cannot be standardised or externally analysed. Although, as Murdoch posits, humans are opaque to each other, careful attention is required in order to move beyond initial judgements and respect the individuality of others. Through attention, we are called to negotiate our understanding of the world against a metaphysical background that can illuminate the world in the light of goodness. When applied to education, attention defends pedagogy as a uniquely human experience and reinforces the benefits of viewing other beings through a just and loving gaze. Attention defends the crucial value of the inner life and illustrates how the moral imagination can be developed to support ethical thought and action. Education can benefit from such an understanding of the human; one in which it is the ethical and moral task of the teacher to carefully attend to the child in order to respond in pedagogically appropriate ways, delimiting the role of standardised practices and technical forms of pedagogy. There is potent potential in recognising the role of the inner life in education, the function and benefits of which can be developed through a deeper investigation into Murdoch's attention.

Attention demands the moral individual to look and re-look in order to move beyond self-interest and to "pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 376-7). Attention presents the opportunity to expand upon our understanding of the inner life of teaching and offers new ways of considering the educational relationship between teachers and children. This thesis will argue that Murdoch's claims hold as much relevance now as they did then and argue that the inner life of the teacher is critical to pedagogy. Even though the inner life cannot be empirically evaluated, it should not be rendered insignificant. Attention supports the notion of education as an ethical *encounter*, but attention can also be understood as a *practice*; it is both a moral task and an orientation into interactions with others, set before every individual and individually refined and cultivated over time. Objective and standardised measurements are brought into question

by the practice of attention, as attention reorients individuals to focus upon the particulars in life. Through the attentive gaze, the small, unique, and specific experiences of each individual can enhance moral concepts and actions. The task of attention demands the educator to listen to the child and engage the moral imagination to develop a philosophical approach to pedagogical practice. The concept of attention has much to offer the domain of education and the conceptualisation of pedagogy in the early years.

Following this introduction, Chapters One and Two are specifically concerned with contextualising Murdoch, outlining the concept of attention and explicating other major themes of her philosophy. Given that this study focusses upon the concept of attention, a chapter is devoted to exploring this concept in depth. However, there are other philosophical ideas Murdoch developed which are important to the concept of attention. Rather than developing these within one large chapter, two chapters are devoted to exploring Murdoch's philosophical ideas. Chapter One contextualises Iris Murdoch and develops a broad picture of her philosophy to illustrate common themes. This chapter provides some background material, describing Murdoch's involvement within wider social, personal, and philosophical scenes. Brief attention is given to her concurrent careers as a philosopher and a novelist, to discuss why many scholars of Murdoch's work identify the significance of this unique position upon her writing in both spheres. Following this discussion, some prominent philosophical influences upon Murdoch's concept of attention are identified, specifically her indebtedness to the philosophy of Simone Weil and Plato. The philosophical ideas of these significant individuals are explored to illustrate their impacts upon Murdoch's own vision. Next three major themes of Murdoch's philosophy are discussed prior to a more in-depth exploration of attention in the following chapter.

Chapter Two will provide a detailed account of the concept of attention. This chapter serves as the philosophical basis for arguments developed later in the study and offers the opportunity to understand the concept of attention through a very detailed and thorough exposition. Although later chapters also explore Murdochian philosophy, this chapter serves as a foundation for later arguments. Within this chapter, the image of the human supported by Murdoch's contemporaries are explained and critiqued, followed by the description of the moral 'problem' of M and D⁴. Next, multiple aspects of the concept of attention are explained

⁴ 'M' and 'D' are abbreviations for 'Mother in law' and 'Daughter in Law' utilised by Murdoch in her description of the moral 'problem' she develops to illustrate the concept of attention. This moral problem is further explicated in Chapter Two.

in order to enable a clear and comprehensive picture to support arguments presented in later chapters.

Chapters Three through Seven comprise the substantive argument. The concerns outlined in this introduction about the ‘ideally rational individual’ are critically extended in Chapter Three. This image is compared with contemporary neoliberal ideas and later brought into conversation with the arguments Murdoch developed in order to reconsider the projection of a predominant economic vision of early childhood education.

Chapter Four expands upon Murdoch’s concerns with the ‘fact-value’ divide in order to raise questions about the utilisation of neuroscientific research within education and question a scientific vision for deriving educational policy to inform pedagogical practice. Murdoch’s concerns about the diminishment of moral concepts are considered in light of educational visions that relegate moral and ethical concerns to the margins, or obscures them entirely.

Chapter Five offers a detailed exposition of the role of love in attention and explores the possibilities of recognising love as a critical element within pedagogical relationships. The conceptualisation of the ‘professional’ early childhood teacher is explored. Additionally, the implications of neoliberal ‘professionalisms’ upon the role of emotions in pedagogy is examined. Following this is an exposition of Murdochian love. The ‘professional’ teacher is re-examined through the demands of attention to reconsider the role of the moral within pedagogical relationships and the benefits of a just and loving gaze.

Chapter Six involves a short autobiographical positioning statement in order to contextualise my position as a teacher and researcher within Aotearoa New Zealand. Later, this chapter explores the Māori concept of aroha as a notion that holds synergistic possibilities with attention. Commencing with a brief account of my own professional context, this chapter moves into a detailed critical investigation into the concept of aroha to identify and explore commonalities between aroha and attention.

Chapter Seven explores the concept of attention as an ‘inhabited’ philosophy and carries through the analysis of aroha and attention to offer a synergistic approach. This chapter critically examines Murdochian understandings of the role of the ‘inner life’ and explores the encouraging possibilities of attention as a singular, unique, but also ‘ordinary’ and ‘everyday’ philosophical endeavour. Attention as an ongoing exercise or practice, aroha as a focused attention upon the light within another individual. Together, these concepts support an appreciation that the inner life is wholly opaque and unable to be represented through language or external observation. Teaching is built from the inner life and needs to be appreciated as an obscure but significant element.

Finally, a concluding chapter discusses the main arguments developed over the study, with a view to highlighting the ways in which an enhanced understanding of attention can enrich education. Some limitations of the research are discussed and some suggestions for further research are offered.

Chapter One

Introducing Iris Murdoch

Introduction

In this study, the philosophy of Iris Murdoch provides a critical lens through which contemporary issues in early childhood education will be reviewed and reconceived. But, an important initial question is, why draw from Murdoch's philosophy to illuminate the current situation of early childhood education? Murdoch's philosophy is at times elusive. Nicol (1999) characterises her as a philosopher who "has consistently taken up an unfashionable position" (p. 1). Murdoch identified herself as a "Wittgensteinian neo-Platonist" (Hobson & Murdoch, 2003, p. 92), a position which Hämäläinen (2014) argues is paradoxical due to the incompatibility of the concepts of transcendentalism and essentialism with linguistic philosophy. Furthermore, Murdoch's consideration of morality is characterised by a pragmatic approach to the metaphysical realm (Jordan, 2014). Somewhat more complimentary, Conradi (2001) describes her as 'at odds' with orthodox philosophy due to her interest in everything and her refusal to be limited or confined; a "half-artist and half intellectual" (p. 268) who was never at home in either group. Browning (2018) describes Murdoch as a philosopher who "strikes a subtle balance between the styles and objects of thinking to which she attends" (p. 2). Murdoch promotes the centrality of morality, human individuality, and human relationships within any consideration of human existence. Although the introduction offered a brief insight into the possibilities of considering Murdoch's concept of attention in early childhood education, it will take the length of this study to broach its subtleties. This first chapter will serve as a preliminary introduction to Murdoch's philosophy to establish the relevance of her oeuvre for contemporary early childhood education and indicate some major themes of her philosophy. It is important to explain these major themes to prepare for later discussion on the concept of attention and to support a clearer understanding of the more nuanced aspects of Murdoch's philosophy for later argumentation.

At the outset, this chapter will briefly describe some important moments in Murdoch's life. There will be a brief mention of her undergraduate studies and early philosophical influences, particularly the tutors and life experiences that her philosophical writing. Stemming from an interest in Sartre, Murdoch's movement away from existentialist thought

will be described and a concise description of her thoughts on writing as a novelist and philosopher will be offered. Murdoch discouraged readers from attempting to gain an idea of her philosophy from her novels, but also highlighted the important role that fiction played in her abilities to express philosophical situations and problems within the everyday world. Although this study only draws from Murdoch's philosophical writings, this introductory chapter allows the opportunity to address her fictional writing as a critical aspect of her career. Following this, I will give a brief outline of her publications and describe ways in which her thought influenced her contemporaries and present-day philosophy, demonstrating the increasing interest in and validity of her thought.

Following this initial section, there are two sections dedicated to the two major philosophical influences upon Murdoch's thought: Plato and Simone Weil. Although there are other philosophical influences upon Murdoch's thought, there is not the space within this study to explore these in depth. However, these influences are highlighted due to their impact upon Murdoch's development of the concept of attention, which is central to this thesis. In the sections discussing Plato and Weil, important points of alignment and departure will be described, for as the study unfolds, it will become increasingly apparent why these differences are critical when the concept of attention is considered in relation to early childhood education. After discussing these two major philosophical influences, three fundamental aspects of Murdoch's philosophical vision will be expounded in three separate sections. The purpose of clarifying these aspects within this initial chapter, rather than in the next, is to offer a separate exposition of how they can be understood discretely from the concept of attention. These aspects - the ubiquity of morality, Murdoch's resistance of a behaviouristic vision, and her devotion to making philosophy inclusive of diversity and relatable to all individuals – underpin Murdochian attention, differentiating her from Weilian and Platonist thought. Exploring these three aspects prior to a concentrated investigation into the concept of attention will provide a necessary foundation to comprehend Murdochian attention more clearly.

A Brief Synopsis of the Life and Work of Iris Murdoch.

Iris Murdoch was born in Dublin in 1919 and studied at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge (Antonaccio & Schweiker, 1996). At Somerville College in Oxford, Murdoch studied in the analytical tradition, taking an undergraduate degree which trained her analytic capacity (Conradi, 2001, p. 86). Murdoch (Conradi, 2001) comments that at the start of her

studies, Oxford was “bohemian and fantastic” (p. 109). However, World War II altered this atmosphere, with Murdoch describing wartime Oxford as “more earnest and more timid and no more careless rapture” (Conradi, 2001, p. 109). Heavily populated by women students during this time, Oxford was a dramatically altered space for study and, as an excellent scholar, Murdoch was afforded time with tutors who influenced her philosophical direction. Donald Mackinnon is identified as a tutor who had a significant impact on Murdoch. Described as a “Kantian and post-Kantian realist” (Conradi, 2001, p. 125) who refused the demise of metaphysics, Mackinnon influenced Murdoch’s philosophical considerations through his adherence to the fundamental consideration of moral philosophy as a lived experience and philosophy as central to how life is lived (Conradi, 2001, pp. 126-7).

Following graduation, Murdoch took up a season of employment within the Treasury and a period working for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to help with the war effort. Soon after Murdoch reengaged with philosophy through her interest in Wittgenstein and Sartre. She writes of Sartre, “his writing and talking on morals – will, liberty, choice – is hard and lucid and invigorating. It’s the real thing” (Conradi, 2001, pp. 215-6). Firchow (2007) identifies Murdoch’s interest in Sartre as pivotal in her philosophical development; although she never ‘converted’ to existentialism and remained critical of its tenets, this inspiration was influential. Later, this interest motivated her to move to Cambridge in 1947, spending most of her time at Trinity College with other postgraduates who encouraged her to read Wittgenstein. Although she just missed the opportunity to study under his tutelage, she later met Wittgenstein in person (Conradi, 2001). Murdoch’s first philosophical book *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (published in 1953) is representative of the approach to philosophy that Murdoch was to undertake within the course of her life; akin to Sartre, Murdoch would write novels as well as philosophical tomes and seek to comprehend philosophical questions within the boundaries of the personal domain, connected to concrete experience (Firchow, 2007).

Murdoch’s (1999) book on Sartre was the first English monograph produced on his work, gaining her esteem and prominence in her exposition of existentialism, but Sartre and Wittgenstein’s diminishment of the inner life invoked her refusal to adopt their ideas *in toto*. Murdoch is critical of the individualistic tone she identifies in existentialism and refused to displace consideration of the other (Conradi, 2001, pp. 269-70). Sartre’s interest in issues rather than people shaped his writing in ways that cannot represent the intricacies of real human life, alienating Murdoch (Bove, 1993). These points of difference shaped her concerns with the authority of the will and the prominence of rationality in moral philosophy (these

aspects of Murdoch's philosophy will be discussed at length later in the study). Moving on in 1948 to a philosophy tutorship at St Anne's College at Oxford, Murdoch's philosophical career flourished. Her oeuvre developed during her time teaching moral philosophy and focussing upon Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Descartes, and Hume. She was further inspired by the climate of Oxford, described as situating itself as "the philosophical centre of the world" (Conradi, 2001, p. 301).

Murdoch's contemporaries never fully accepted her approach to philosophy. Later she is characterised as 'retrospective' (Nicol, 1999) due in part to the classical philosophy she drew from to inform her thought. Even as late as 1998, following the publication of 'Elegy for Iris'⁵ in *The New Yorker* by her widower John Bailey (Bailey, 1998b), the *New Statesman Magazine's* comments that Murdoch's philosophy was marginalised, stating she was "admired by the public more as a novelist than as a philosopher [and] The same opinion is probably shared by most academic philosophers" (p.48). However, the journal *Philosophy* ("Editorial," 1998) paints a different picture, identifying Murdoch as "a guiding light...[who] sounded a clarion call against the conventional wisdom of the age" (p. 535). It was only much later that appreciation of Murdochian philosophy generated philosophical work in her vein, notably in the philosophy of Charles Taylor and Martha Nussbaum. Despite this lack of credence, Murdoch's (1998) philosophical consideration continued to resist the 'dryness'⁶ of "behaviouristic philosophy" produced within a "scientific age", producing an image of humankind as "monarchs of all we survey" (p. 290, 293).

Additional to her career in philosophy, Iris Murdoch was a prolific novelist. Over the course of four decades, she wrote twenty-six novels and several plays. There is an interrelationship between her fiction and philosophy that many scholars consider at length (see Lazenby, 2014; McMenemy, 2017; Nicol, 1999; Roberts & Freeman-Moir, 2013). It is also a topic of consideration Murdoch broached herself within interviews. With Brian Magee (Magee & Murdoch, 1998), Murdoch outlined some important differences between the philosopher and the novelist and perhaps, due to this self-determined distinction, she was careful to dissuade scholars away from determining her philosophical position from her novels. She states "The philosopher engages with the philosophical field in the form which it

⁵ 'An Elegy for Iris: Scenes from an Indomitable Marriage' (Bailey, 1998b) was written by John Bailey prior to the time of her death, but at a time when she had succumbed to total memory loss from Alzheimer's disease. Bailey describes the situation, stating "She is not sailing into the dark: The voyage is over, and under the dark escort of Alzheimer's she has arrived somewhere. So have I" (p. 44). Arguably, this article was written to announce the death of her cognition, prior to her corporeal death, for through her philosophy and literature, Murdoch's thoughts and ideas were a part of the wider public domain.

⁶ Murdoch's (1998) essay 'Against Dryness' is precisely about these aspects, and the following quotes are taken from this essay.

has when he appears on the scene...The artist by contrast seems an irresponsible individual...he has no given problems to solve. He has to invent his own problems” (pp. 9-10). Within this interview, Murdoch proposes several differences between philosophy and literature. She asserts that philosophical arguments need to be clearly defined and structured, but literature can involve many forms; few individuals undertake philosophy, but literature is accessible to the wider public. The philosopher seeks to create form out of muddle, whereas the artist breaks forms and obfuscates to reveal a grander unifying narrative behind the signs and symbols.

Although this study will only draw from the philosophical writings of Murdoch, within this overview it would be remiss to disregard Murdoch’s fictional work entirely. While once novels were considered to be of less philosophical worth than traditional academic writing, the contemporary view holds that literature can enhance and deepen individual philosophical engagement, develop individual stances, and deepen meaning (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 261). Murdoch defended literature as an art form that can elicit attention and improve the moral imagination. There are many important similarities between philosophy and literature, the foremost of which is that they are both truth-seeking activities. Both philosophy and literature involve a form of exposition that includes “exploration, classification, discrimination, organised vision” (Magee & Murdoch, 1998, p. 11), and a concern for moral truth. However, a common criticism for both forms is whether they represent human life truthfully and reliably. When an artist or philosopher fails to represent moral truth within his or her work, more often than not that work is viewed as a failure. The main similarity between Murdoch’s philosophy and fiction is the moral truth she seeks to reveal.

Murdoch’s philosophical writing theorised morality and moral concepts, but fictional writing supported her exploration of these concepts in everyday human situations. Murdoch contended that philosophy surfaced in her novels because this was her area of knowledge and expertise, rather than to instruct (Magee & Murdoch, 1998). Although there are common threads between Murdoch’s philosophy and fiction, it is important to remain sensitive to the stance that Murdoch took to separate the two. She argued that it was important to distinguish her fictional writings from her philosophy; although both literature and philosophy are truth-seeking activities, fiction is not the place in which to instruct or proselytise a particular philosophical view (Magee & Murdoch, 1998). Murdoch argues that literature which pushes a particular view too strongly, or is too full of the writers’ personality, is frequently recognised as ‘bad’ literature. Although she wishes to present a style of writing as her own, she never sought to be personally present within her work (p. 9). Whether contemporary

scholars accept this as an accurate representation of Murdoch's work is still an area for debate (see Lamarque, 1978; Nussbaum, 2004; Robjant, 2015; Widdows, 2005).

Due to the value Murdoch placed on the unique human position in her philosophy, her fictional characters are placed in situations to provoke moral and ethical consideration. In fiction, Murdoch explored the ways in which the individual's moral decisions are influenced by the group dynamic. She outlines varying moral standpoints to illustrate the tensions the individual can face in relation to the group. Murdoch's representation of communities of individuals experiencing moral issues aids our common understanding of how different moral stances can influence human relationship and the complexities of living in a "world driven, on the one hand, by individualism and, on the other, by ideological or moral frameworks that obliterate the individual" (Stan, 2014, p. 1173). This point of tension raises moral and ethical questions about the pressures of seeking individuality within the dynamics of a group that promotes a collective image. The tensions between freedom, community, and individuality are strong within Murdoch's fictional and philosophical writing (the philosophical aspect will be further discussed in Chapter Three).

Similar to the length and breadth of her fictional-writing career, Murdoch published in many philosophical journals over many decades. The essays collected for *Existentialists and Mystics* (Murdoch, 1998) span from 1950 to 1986. Three essays in this book, entitled 'The Idea of Perfection', 'On 'God' and 'Good'', and 'The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts' are collected in a book entitled *The Sovereignty of Good* (Murdoch, 1970) and reprinted in paper (Murdoch, 2001) and digital format (Murdoch, 2013), opening up Murdoch's work to a new generation of scholarship. Late in her career, Murdoch also wrote a book of her philosophical entitled *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (Murdoch, 1992). As outlined above, her philosophical work took the distinctive role of 'truth-seeking' seriously. One of Murdoch's major contributions to modern philosophy was her persistent work to rescue the role of consciousness within moral decision-making. She reclaimed the validity of 'the particulars' of human experience from relegation by the dominant trends in philosophical thought of her time⁷. Soon after the completion of *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (Murdoch, 1992) came the untimely ending of her life in 1999 from Alzheimer's disease. Following Murdoch's death, there was a brief focus upon the more sensational periods of Murdoch's life. However (as articulated above) the focus of this study is upon her

⁷ Widdows (2005) argues that this movement towards promoting the individual human standpoint in her philosophy caused her to desist her short involvement in the communist party. This was in part due to the primacy of the human individual within her philosophical stance, but equally reflective of "her recognition that totalitarian regimes become dehumanizing" (p. 3).

philosophical work and the application of her conceptual ideas to the domain of early childhood education. To read more about Murdoch's personal life, see the authorised biography *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (Conradi, 2001).

As outlined earlier, Murdoch's philosophy was contrary to the dominant direction of philosophical thought and, due to her criticisms of analytical traditions and the use of scientific empiricism in moral philosophy. Murdoch was an outlier within philosophy circles of her time. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that her philosophy was ahead of her time. Currently, there is a renewed focus upon Murdochian thought, with multiple books, papers, and studies being dedicated to her philosophical concepts (see Antonaccio, 2012; Browning, 2018; Catton, 2017; Hämäläinen & Dooley, 2019; Olsson, 2018; Roberts, 2016; Roberts & Saeverot, 2018 for some examples). *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (Murdoch, 1992) is regarded as a "brilliant, erudite but sprawling work" (Antonaccio & Schweiker, 1996, p. xv). Equally the essays she wrote over her life, collected into the text *Existentialists and Mystics* (Murdoch, 1998) covered diverse topics. There are central themes in Murdoch's work that persist throughout her writing. This study will explore these themes. However, at this point it is pertinent to discuss significant influences upon Murdoch's philosophy to inform later discussion. The next two sections are devoted to philosophical influences. Firstly Plato, secondly Simone Weil.

The Influence of Plato

The philosophy of Plato was highly influential upon Iris Murdoch's writing and integral to the concept of attention. The section in *Existentialists and Mystics* (Murdoch 1998) containing the essays collected for *The Sovereignty of Good* are given the sub-heading 'Re-reading Plato'. Despite an early distaste for Plato's philosophy in her undergraduate studies (Conradi, 2001, p. 87), Murdoch was inspired to reconsider Plato. This 're-reading' is attributed to her fascination with Weilian philosophy (which will be discussed in the following section). Murdoch refers to Plato as a significant voice within her thought, stating "I think Plato is one of the most religious of all thinkers, and he is one of the greatest" (Sagare & Murdoch, 2001, p. 713). This statement by Murdoch demonstrates not only the instrumental role of Plato in the development of her philosophical thought, but also the influence of Plato's religious direction upon Murdoch's philosophy. Inspired by Plato, the place of morality and the concept of the good became central within Murdochian philosophy.

In articulating the concept of goodness, Murdoch draws directly from Plato, stating “Plato says of it [goodness] ‘It is that which every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does all that it does’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 380). Through Plato, Murdoch’s develops an argument that goodness is the sovereign concept in morality, unifying others and yet remaining separate and indefinable. Light becomes a metaphor for goodness through Murdoch’s use of Plato’s analogy of the cave; the prisoners in the cave are at first seeing the shadows from the objects in the light of the fire, but the true light that calls them out of the cave is the light of the sun. At first, the prisoners only see the shadows of the objects cast by the light of the fire and fail to see the objects themselves. This false light deludes them into thinking they are seeing reality, but they are only seeing a limited image. Once the prisoners see the fire as the source of the light that made the shadows, these illusions no longer hold sway. However, the light of the fire becomes the new source of attention, a point of focus that may cease the search for anything more. The light of the fire is a false light within us. Forms of self-scrutiny that generate pride and selfishness is an investigation of this ‘false light’. To move towards the sun, out of the cave, into the world illuminated by its light is to move “right away from the self towards a distant transcendent perfection, a source of uncontaminated energy, a source of new and quite undreamt-of virtue” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 383). The notion of goodness will be discussed later in this section.

It is important to identify some points of departure between Murdoch and Plato, because they will be important in discerning the subtle differences in their philosophical positions. Murdoch highlights art and literature as two modes of expression that hold potential for developing a moral vision, but she is equally clear that Plato does not share this view. For Plato, art (including poetry/literature) is not a source of inspiration for discerning goodness. In the essay ‘The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists’, Murdoch (1998) asserts that Plato placed limitations upon his definition of beauty to exclude the consideration of art. She writes, “Plato wants to cut art off from beauty, because he regards beauty as too serious a matter to be commandeered by art” (p. 401). She states that Plato finds artists ‘morally weak’ and situates art as a medium that develops the lowest forms of awareness, or “*eikasia*, a state of vague image-ridden illusion” (p. 389). *Eikasia* characterises the experience of the prisoners of the cave when they view the shadows on the wall. As the movement through the cave is a successive progression from illusion to reality, Plato’s argument is that art can only indulge false understandings of the world. Furthermore, art depicts wicked individuals and situations, tainting the possibility of developing goodness. An

appreciation of art will encourage people to indulge the base emotions that are elicited. She aligns Kant with Plato's assertion that "almost all 'real' art turns out to be impure" (p. 402).

Murdoch (1998) also highlights Plato's concern with the 'fixed nature' of art in relation to his dialectical approach to philosophy. In Plato's view, philosophy should be lived and discussed, but the work of art is statically represented (p. 405). Art exacerbates the distance between us and knowledge, involving the introduction of further systems and signs. Art distracts the mind away through attention to the signs rather than the knowledge that is sought. Artistic symbolism adds another layer of interpretation onto the already dark mode of communicative language we endure in order to represent the reality of the world. To explain Plato's position, Murdoch writes, "the ideal of knowledge is to see face to face, not (*eikasia*) in a glass darkly" (p. 413, original emphasis). However, Murdoch does not fully agree with this position and argues for the educational benefits of contemplating art. In her view, art can present an opportunity to reconsider morality and enhance philosophical considerations (p. 461).

For Murdoch, there is a distinction between the 'material art' as the fixed object and the 'work of art' as a "sustained *experienced* mental synthesis" (Murdoch, 1992, p. 3, author's emphasis). In this respect, art is not solely the 'thing' itself but also our engagement with it, particularly how we employ our moral imagination to consider the artwork. Art offers the opportunity for people to develop their moral vision by encouraging a state of consciousness that supports reflection and discernment. These opportunities for reflective discernment support our developing moral ideas. There are forms or 'bad art' that may produce egotistical responses and can damage us by "prompting a false egotistic fantasy" (p.19), but there is also good art that develops our understanding and appreciation of the world illuminated through transcendent goodness.

Now that some differences between Murdoch and Plato have been explored, some alignments will be discussed. As explained above, Murdoch develops her understanding of goodness as a transcendent, external, and fixed actuality from Plato. In the analogy of the cave, the sun is the representation of goodness. Goodness is something outside of us, constant and unwavering. We never fully know what goodness is for it "is *difficult* to look at the sun...it is easier to look at the converging edges than to look at the centre itself" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 382). The light of goodness enhances our vision of the world, but this vision is only for those individuals who make the moral pilgrimage out of the cave. Although Murdoch supports Plato's view that goodness is transcendent, there is work involved in developing an accurate vision of the world illuminated by the good. Unlike later Platonists in a 'post-

Freudian age', Murdoch's Plato is not optimistic on the search for the good. Moral progress is difficult and the search for the good is a moral *task* that is an arduous, incremental, and lifelong pursuit (Tracy, 1996). There is no assurance of comprehensive enlightenment. Plato is the source of Murdoch's distrust of consolatory philosophical positions, as they both turn away from a consolatory philosophical vision to "strip away the layers of benighted self-mythologizing and approach the transcendent concepts of the Good and the True through a process of asceticism" (Nicol, 1999, p. 15). Through the process of *unselfing*⁸ and the work of a just and loving gaze, attention is meant to move into the metaphysical 'light' of the sun. Although it may console us to think of our own desires and needs, unselfing develops the attentive focus to resist this egotistical pull. Murdoch (1998) writes "there are false suns, easier to gaze upon and more comforting than the true one" (p. 382). Yet our task is not to follow a degraded philosophy that substitutes goodness with the fascination of the self. To explicate this progression, Murdoch draws from the Platonic image of the energy of Eros, Freudian psychoanalysis and Simone Weil's concepts of *gravity* and *grace* to illustrate the interplay between energy and love.

Eros, drawn from Plato, is both spiritual energy and the orientation of desire. Eros is a significant part of moral life, as "most of our moral problems involve an orientation of our energy and our appetites" (Murdoch, 1992, p. 497). The shape of Eros stems from the focus, with good energy drawn from morally truthful objects and the opposite equally true. Corrupted desires may summon immense destructive energy, whereas a better world is built through the love of the good. The influence of Plato and in the earlier outlined description of the corrupting force of art can be seen in this position; Eros is simply the energy, but the focus of that energy determines whether it will summon up positive energy or "great energy [that] may prove to be a great demon" (pp. 497). The 'great demonic' energy reduces our progress out of the cave. This 'negative' energy comes from the degradation of love and the desire for "ambition, vanity, cruelty, greed, jealousy, hatred" (p. 496).

As egotistical beings, Murdoch (1998) asserts that the picture of the human, created by psychology – the most accurate creation conceived by Freud (p. 341) – explicates the demonic 'Luciferian' compulsion within the human condition. The desire to seek consolation drives the psyche to create a fantasy, redirecting attention from reality in order to avoid its

⁸ The term 'unselfing' is not one that is used by Murdoch herself. The closest approximation that is used by Murdoch is contained within the following quote "Goodness is connected with the attempt to see the unself" (Murdoch, 1998b, p. 376). However, many contemporary scholars have deemed the term 'unselfing' appropriate to use in order to explain the form of ego-repression that Murdoch was seeking to represent in her writing (Griffin, 1993; Olsson, 2018; Ruokonen, 2002).

unpleasant aspects (Murdoch, 1998). As an egotistical system, the psyche feeds its inherent selfish nature by drawing our focus to objects that distort moral truth. Through a just and loving gaze, the moral imagination moves away from the selfish pull of the ego. Murdoch (1998) aligns Freud and Plato in their depiction of Eros as universal energy. She promotes Freud as a preferred psychological theorist, as Freud understands Plato's representation of the binary nature of Eros – as a force for good *or* destruction (Tracy, 1996, p. 60). Freudian theory presents an image of the human analogous to a machine, drawing from energy in order to operate. This cynical (yet, according to Murdoch, accurate) image of the psyche demonstrates the human desire for consolation and subsequent degradation, a point at which the Weilian influence comes to the fore.

Murdoch's connection to Weil is expanded upon in the next section, but at this point it is necessary to highlight this association in relation to Plato. For Weil, goodness is a transcendent reality above us. Where gravity is the spiritual equivalent of physical gravity, drawing us downwards and exhausting us, grace is the lifting counterbalance offering us the opportunity to experience fulfilment and peace. Weil (2002) asserts, "Everything we call base is a phenomenon due to gravity. Moreover, the word baseness is an indication of this fact" (p. 2). Selfish and individualistic acts are the gravity that lowers us; to move beyond gravity, we must take actions towards grace. Weil stipulates we must have an "attitude of supplication" (p. 3), which is also an act of lowering ourselves but described as "the descending movement of the second degree of grace" (p. 4). The act of humility invokes a re-evaluation of what we 'need'. We may still feel the press of desire to resist our moments of privation and may even succumb to these desires. In these moments, Weil reminds us that gravity lowers us towards baseness, but grace allows us to access the spiritual and moral energy that we need to thrive. In humility, the second degree of grace, we experience a moral gravity that "makes us fall towards the heights" (p. 4).

Murdoch was clear to articulate that Weil was a strong influence upon her philosophy. Weil inspired Murdoch to reconsider her initial assumptions about Plato's philosophy and encounter him "anew" (Conradi, 2001, p. 260). According to Murdoch, Plato was instrumental in Weil's overall development of thought. She writes that Weil "believes in a transcendent reality and that Good and Evil are connected with modes of human knowledge" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 158). Like Plato, Weil was critical within the development of Murdoch's thought, and more about this influence is discussed in the next section.

The Influence of Simone Weil

I have used the word ‘attention’, which I borrow from Simone Weil, to express the idea of a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality. I believe this to be the characteristic and proper mark of the active moral agent. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 327)

The concept of attention was integral to the philosophical theories of Simone Weil, and Murdoch’s extension of the concept of attention originates from Weil’s writings. Weilian attention differs from Murdochian attention. These points of divergence are essential to understand to support the wider argument developed in this study: That Murdochian attention can resist the dominant neoliberal approaches that limit novel possibilities for early childhood education.

Murdoch was forthcoming regarding the influence of Weil’s philosophy upon her own oeuvre and wrote comments to this extent within her own philosophy. The initial quote of this section is from the essay entitled ‘The Idea of Perfection’ (Murdoch, 1998). Another, taken from ‘On ‘God’ and ‘Good’ (Murdoch, 1998), is equally pertinent:

Let me now simply suggest ways in which I take the prevalent and popular picture to be unrealistic. In doing this my debt to Simone Weil will become evident. (p. 340)

Weil’s philosophy affected Murdoch’s ongoing development of philosophical concepts, but the esteem with which she held Weil was crucial to developing her own vision. Within a review of Weil’s notebooks, Murdoch writes, “To read her is to be reminded of a standard” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 157). However, Murdoch did not merely copy Weilian attention, but expanded upon it. As with Sartre and Plato, Murdoch was inspired by Weil’s philosophical ideas to progress and develop her own philosophical vision. Weil’s vision, combined with Murdoch’s dissatisfaction with the image of the human promoted by her contemporaries, inspired her to develop a unique conceptualisation of attention.

Physical pain and distress shaped Weil’s (1973) philosophical vision. Throughout her life, Weil was plagued by illness. Her belief that she could alleviate her suffering through concentrated attention shaped the development of this concept. Despite admitting that this belief was “practically unsupported by any hope of results” (p. 64), she endeavoured to sustain long periods of concentration during her headaches, chanting a poem as a mantra to direct her attention. It was during these experiences that Weil felt she was able to focus and pay attention to God and, through patient attention, open herself to the grace of God. She writes, “it was during one of these recitations that...Christ himself came down and took

possession of me” (p. 69). ‘Love’ was the title of the poem she recited and the centrality of love within Murdochian attention stems from Weil’s consideration of it. Through attention, Weil experienced a feeling of love, which she attributed to Christ. The experience of love became a crucial and central element in Weil’s concept of attention.

In Weil’s (2002) view, attention is a prerequisite for love. Like a poet who produces beauty through attention to reality, love is generated through attention to the real. The values of truth, beauty, and goodness are understood through “a certain application of the full attention to the object” (p. 120). Weil writes, “attention, taken to its highest degree is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love” (p. 117). It is important to identify that love is necessary to attention, but it is equally significant to recognise that Weilian attention *presupposes* love. Without love, there can be no attentive state. Claims to attention undertaken without love are erroneous. Love is central to Murdochian attention, described as “a just and *loving* gaze towards an individual reality” (Murdoch, p. 327). Later in this study, a chapter will be devoted to the consideration of love within attention. At this point, it is important to outline the influence of Weilian love and Murdoch’s departures from it.

Weil’s (2002) acknowledgment that “Among human beings, only the existence of those we love is fully recognized” (p. 64) influences Murdoch’s development of the concept of attention as the opportunity to apprehend reality through the medium of the moral imagination. Love renders others more clearly and without love, the other is less ‘real’. Through love, we can see the other illuminated through the light of goodness. Without love, we are seeing ‘through the glass darkly’. According to Murdoch (1992), love “indicate[s] the connection of the good and the real” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 437). We not only see others more fully through the vision of love, but we become more attuned to reality through the medium of the moral imagination.

The notion of surrender is critical to Weilian attention, as it is necessary to relinquish the ‘self’ to the focus of attention. Moments of pure attention foster the conditions for a total suspension of self. Weilian attention is an act of deference; it is necessary for the attentive individual to let go of the self. However, this is not an act of will. Willing involves a rupture in attention through the sense of tightening that is experienced in its activation. Weil (2002) writes, “What could be more stupid than to tighten up our muscles and set our jaws about virtue, or poetry, or the solution of a problem. Attention is something quite different” (p. 117). In contrast to the ‘tightening’ action, Weilian attention is concerned with desire, love and consent. To be open to the divine inspiration within us, we must desire it, be open to it, and not refuse it. This is where attention is akin to consent and relaxing, rather than will and

tightening. She writes that attention involves “all that I call ‘I’ to be passive” (p. 118). Deference of the self is not ‘optional’, it is necessary to elicit an attentive state “so full that the ‘I’ disappears” (p. 118).

This is a critical point of departure between Murdoch and Weil. Where Weil surrendered the self to attain the attentive state, Murdoch defends the uniqueness of the individual in the concept of attention. This is an important distinction to outline, for it will prove significant in later discussions, particularly in the notion of liberal freedom (Chapter Three) and the unique role of the teacher in pedagogy (Chapter Seven). Although the next chapter outlines the concept of attention more fully, to illustrate this point of difference requires reference to some indispensable aspects of Murdochian attention. First, moral concepts are taken internally and contemplated. The ‘inner life’ that was discussed in the introduction is a critical aspect of Murdochian attention. This inner life must be defended, as the moral imagination is critical to determining moral choice and actions. Second, the inner life is not accessible to others and is built from unique experiences and musings upon moral concepts. The inner life is a part of a singular consciousness. Murdoch does not relinquish the opaque and individual self in order to attend to others, Murdochian attention is *built* from this unique position and the moral imagination develops through it, enlarging a personal understanding of goodness. This is not to argue that goodness is as unique and varied as people are, nor that goodness is a label affixed to things. Attention reveals a greater understanding of goodness (and other moral concepts), but this clearer image is dependent upon the knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the individual consciousness to render it more clearly. These philosophical ideas are discussed in more depth within the subsequent chapters (particularly Chapter Seven). However, it is critical to outline them here to clarify the point that Weilian notions of the obliteration of the self are not part of Murdochian attention. Weil seeks to withdraw, to disappear so that love may pass through her from God to the people she meets. However, Murdoch asserts that the attentive individual cannot disappear, for an *individual’s* history builds and forms their moral imagination (Murdoch, 1998, p. 320).

Murdoch and Weil both assert that all individuals are offered the opportunities that grow from attention. For Weil (2002), attention is underpinned by from mystical understandings. Failing to develop attentiveness and draw energy from the grace of God, or to “feed on light” (p. 3), is the fault all other faults stem from. For Murdoch (1998), the centrality and acceptance of God is in question. Murdoch asserts, “...there is, in my view, no

God in the traditional sense of that term; and the traditional sense is perhaps the only sense” (p. 365). Any allusion to our τέλος as a species is disdained, particularly where she contends:

...the various metaphysical substitutes for God – Reason, Science, History – are false deities. Our destiny can be examined but it cannot be justified or totally explained. We are simply here. And if there is any kind of sense or unity in human life...it is of some other kind and must be sought within a human experience which has nothing outside it (p. 365).

In Murdoch’s fictional writing, she explores the behaviours of those who consider themselves to be cast “in the role of god”⁹ (Griffin, 1993, p. 106) and produces characters who are egotistical and destructive (of self and other). The relationships of these ‘god-like’ individuals fail due to an inattentiveness to the other. It is through their egotism that they are ‘god-like’. Murdoch’s understanding of ‘god-like’ is depicted as despotic, repressive, and pursuing the light of the ego.

Murdoch’s own relationship with the concept of god was convoluted. Bayley (1998a) discusses her affinity for Buddhism, but mainly through her admiration of Buddhists (Bayley points out that Peter Conradi was a Buddhist admired by Murdoch). Murdoch discussed the complexities of the role of religion in her life, stating:

I have a Puritan background. I don't feel that religion departed from my life when God the Father departed. I used to think that when God the Father went it was the end of religion for me, but I have learnt better. I feel now that I don't have to have this image or to believe in a personal God in order to have religion (Chevalier, 2013, paragraph 10)

Despite the validity of God, god, or gods, Murdoch (1992) argues that the role that religion has played within our history must be considered, writing, “our huge jumbled history is a *religious* history from which we must learn” (p. 139, original emphasis).

Murdoch explored spirituality and spiritual aspects of human experience, attempting to make sense of how attention connects to a clearer understanding of goodness. For Murdoch, there is a distinction between religion and spirituality. Spirituality can be a part of religious structure, but the individual may need to defend their understanding of spirituality within the religious context (p. 481). Murdoch asserts there is an interconnection between spirituality, morality and religion, but there are also careful distinctions between them. The dutiful

⁹ See Griffin’s (1993) analysis of *The sea, the sea*

individual, the virtuous individual, and the religious individual can illustrate these distinctions. The dutiful individual may follow the rules of religion, akin to the religious individual, but the virtuous individual can reconsider religious dogma in order to evaluate its connection to virtue. This is not to eschew the rules of religion. Some individuals may need a strict list of rules (religion) to guide them away from 'sin'. Murdoch argues that the criminal may break multiple 'moral rules' but later come to adhere to religious rules and redirect their conduct. The religious individual may be guided into a higher form of consciousness through devotion to morality and a search for the good of God (p. 484). Religious ideals may prove more inspirational and accessible than the "unadorned promptings of reason" (p. 484). Nevertheless, the religious life can be distinct from the moral and spiritual life, for religion and spirituality are "both one and not one" (p. 483).

There are continual adjustments when considering the intersections between morality, spirituality and religion, and none are undertaken simply. Where religion and spirituality are considered moral, institutional structures of religion that oppress free thought and promote cruelties are an enemy of morality (Murdoch, 1992, p. 487). High aspects of morality can often be associated with individuals who have departed from 'religion'. However, Murdoch argues that the positive benefits of prayer have been lost through the diminishment of religion in everyday lives. She writes, "whatever one thinks of its theological context, it does seem that prayer can actually induce a better quality of consciousness and provide energy for good action which would not otherwise be available" (p. 368). The concept of attention is an examination of 'prayer' that can aid the secular individual in their development of the moral imagination, concepts, and character. In explaining the possibilities of the concept of attention, she considers her development of the concept of attention as an exploration into the benefits of prayer without the notion of God (Murdoch, 1998, p. 344). Murdoch asserts, "I think that useless confusion arises from attempts to extend the meaning of our word 'God' to cover any conception of a spiritual reality" (Murdoch, 1992, p. 419). Although she is concerned with the wide application of the word 'God', she equally argues that the presence of the mystery of God can shape our thoughts. It would be dangerous to conceive of this presence as a 'parent figure' due to the consoling fantasy it would produce, detracting from the moral pilgrimage (Mulhall, 2007), but there are opportunities to be had in developing an appreciation of goodness beyond ourselves.

The actuality of the mystical realm was essential to Weil's (2002) development of the concept of attention. She proposed that attention offers the opportunity to experience eternity in the mortal realm, as the capacity to pay full attention endows the individual with the

“capacity to drive a thought away once and for all” (p. 118). This ability is “the gateway to eternity. The infinite in an instant” (p. 118). Weil emphasised a distinction between reason and biological functions in order to access this plane of existence. She writes, “the discursively reasoning part of the soul, which inhabits time, and the vegetative part, which controls the biological functions and is below time” can support the access to infinity. In the same way that “there is an infinity of points in the length of a yard” (Weil, 1970, p. 292), attention can access an eternal state of being within the mortal realm. To do so, we must lose the concept of the ‘I’ to allow space for God to access the individual’s soul.

A sense of eternity can only be summoned when the part of the soul that “reasons discursively and measures” (Weil, 1970, p. 292) is destroyed. Murdoch shares this suspicion of rationality, discursive reason, and limited forms of measurement. As outlined within the introduction, discussed in more depth later in this chapter and within Chapter Four, Murdoch was concerned with the ‘fact/value’ divide and the precedence of scientism. She argued that the promotion of fact over value elicited the loss of the metaphysical background of philosophy. However, the critical point of departure between Murdoch and Weil is in the destruction of the self in order to achieve the attentive state. There are aspects of the portion of the soul which ‘reasons discursively and measures’ that could be essential to the moral imagination. Although this study is not the space to expand upon this issue, it would be a point of interest to explore.

Murdoch’s vision of the spiritual pilgrimage is also indebted to Weil. In Murdoch’s review of Weil’s notebooks, Murdoch (1998) wrote:

Spiritual progress is won through meditation: A view which is contrast (and some may think a welcome corrective) to contemporary English ethics with its exclusive emphasis on act and choice, and its neglect of the ‘inner life’. (p. 159)

This quote encapsulates Murdoch’s admiration for Weil, her criticisms of dominant rationality and promotion of the spiritual pilgrimage as attainment of an improved ethical standpoint. For Murdoch, ethics should not be a set of guiding principles manifested through actions. Ethics should extend beyond the behaviouristic, beyond only externally visible actions. Morality should be at the heart of ethics, and ethics should support an understanding of moral values (Antonaccio, 2007). The spiritual journey, in this case through Weil’s experiences with meditation and detachment through the act of attention is congruent with Murdoch’s interpretation of the ‘moral pilgrim’ and the ‘endless task’ of the individual who is developing moral concepts (more on the moral pilgrim is discussed in Chapter Two).

Through Plato and Weil, Murdoch reconsidered the diminishment of the metaphysical background in the philosophy of her contemporaries. Through Weil, Murdoch gained renewed interest in Plato. From the influence of these philosophers, Murdoch developed a substantive argument to contest the diminishment of metaphysics and the assumption that moral values can be separated from ‘fact’ in order to rationally determine a course of moral action. Murdoch’s argument against this divide, and her support for an image of human experience as ‘saturated’ with moral value is discussed in the next section.

Morality Covers the ‘Whole of Our Mode of Living’

This title comes from the following quote:

The area of morals, and ergo moral philosophy, can now be seen, not as a hole-and-corner matter of debts and promises, but as covering the *whole of our mode of living* and the quality of our relations with the world (Murdoch, 1998, p. 380, emphasis added).

Murdoch was critical of any vision of the world that reduced morality to a subsidiary issue. The diminishing place of moral concepts in the philosophy of her time incensed Murdoch and drove her to write extensively on this demise. The effects of fascism, Nazism, and totalitarianism deeply affected Murdoch; in the introduction to *Existentialists and Mystics* (Murdoch, 1998) Conradi writes, “it might be surmised that the madnesses of Europe hurt Iris Murdoch into moral philosophy” in which she witnessed the “total breakdown of society” (p. xix). This ‘madness’ became inspirational and instructive for her thought. As articulated earlier, Murdoch (1998) argued that the creation and promulgation of human images have ramifications for human actions; humans are creatures who make pictures of themselves, then become shaped by this picture (p. 75). The moral philosophy of her contemporaries, which promoted the human capacity to determine and choose moral actions *without* a notion of the metaphysical background, may have been viewed by Murdoch as a form of moral relativism too similar to the arguments that underpinned various war atrocities.

Murdoch established arguments for the retrieval of the metaphysical background and appreciation of the spiritual aspects of philosophy whilst maintaining the critical importance of philosophy to explore and understand the world (Antonaccio, 2012, p. 3). The philosophical position that thought, action, and language are inherently evaluative and value-laden was considered by Murdoch in 1951 in ‘Thinking and Language’ (1951), in 1956 in ‘Vision and Choice in Morality’, and the essays within *The Sovereignty of Good* written from

1962, to 1969. *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* in 1992 further develops this position, marking over 40 years of considered argumentation upon the role of morality within human thought. In *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist*, Murdoch writes, “almost all our thoughts and actions are concerned with the infinitely heterogeneous business of evaluation, almost all our language is value language” (p. 32).

Using language to represent the workings of the human *moral* mind is problematic. Although language is an attempt to move us towards a communal understanding of the signifying of ‘things’, the conceptual language required within discussions of morality is more slippery than that for external objects¹⁰ (See Chapter Seven for further discussion on the problems of moral language). The problem of ‘value-free’ analytical forms of philosophical inquiry is that they miss the foundational moral backdrop to arguments. Morality is not an option, not something added onto the world. Morality is woven into the fabric of existence and pervades our existence. The performance of ‘stepping back’ into an assumed ‘value-free’ rationality is redundant (more on the fact/value divide is discussed in Chapter Three). The description ‘value-free’ illustrates the desire to demarcate a preference for ‘facts’ over ‘values’ (Murdoch, 1992). Murdoch (1992) argues that the divide between fact and value sought by her contemporaries may seem like a practical measure in order to reduce value preferences, but this delineation generates the illusion of a non-biased stance. A problem of analytical forms of philosophical enquiry, which seek to be ‘value-free’, is that they miss foundational premises based upon value. The distinction between fact and value and the movement to protect facts from value stemmed from the desire to liberate the human, harness the will, and discern appropriate action from the world of facts (Murdoch, 1992). In order to represent moral choices through actions, a demarcation was determined, but this schism is value-driven.

Murdoch contested the position that a person’s moral worth can be measured via actions and movements; the capacity to *report* the inner workings of the mind does not represent the thing itself. When one attempts to explain one’s inner thoughts, descriptions fail

¹⁰ The problem of language – that it is difficult to find commonality in moral conceptual language to sustain a philosophical argument about morality – is recognised as a characteristic of her own writing style. Murdoch is identified as a philosophical writer who undertook a style of writing which does not reflect a standard approach to building a philosophical argument; her sources are varied and wide-reaching, and her arguments are built from ‘talking around’ issues from multiple angles (Widdows, 2012). Antonaccio (2000) characterises Murdoch as mediating a position between contrasting pairs of ideas in moral philosophy, producing a form of argumentation which is “complex and rarely yields a straightforward synthesis” (p. 24). But this more open-ended, “unsystematic and sometimes obscure” (Widdows, 2012, p. 19) writing is necessary in order to develop an argument about moral philosophy. In order to approach moral concepts, and indeed to argue about them, it appears necessary for Murdoch to take a meandering and oscillatory approach and, through this approach, produce a philosophical position on morality quite unlike her contemporaries, and all the more interesting for it.

to represent all the small details that comprise its totality. Murdoch quotes Wittgenstein to belie this undertaking, stating, “‘What is this ceremony for?’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 310). The problems of (in)accurate representation are not grounds for dismissal or disregard. In accepting the difficulty of explication, some philosophers have jumped to assume there is no value to the workings of the inner mind. Murdoch argues that doing away with the entirety of the inner life based upon the problems of accurate depiction is excessive. She asserts, “‘Not a report’ need not entail ‘not an activity’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 318). There is value in the moral imagination, as developed through the practice of attention. Humans have the potential for a rich *imaginative* capacity. Humans can attain a greater understanding of the ubiquity of morals and the reality of the world through their imaginative capacity. In Murdoch’s words, “it is important to remember that language itself is a moral medium, almost all uses of language convey value. This is one reason why we are *almost always morally active*. Life is soaked in the moral” (Magee & Murdoch, 1998, p. 27, emphasis added).

This line of argumentation is strongly represented within ‘The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts’ (Murdoch, 1998), particularly in the extended version of the initial quote from the start of this section. In this quote Murdoch identifies how an appreciation of the good within human relationships develops a ‘unifying theory’ for life. She writes:

The scene remains disparate and complex beyond the hopes of any system, yet at the same time the concept Good stretches through the whole of it and gives it the only kind of shadowy unachieved unity which it can possess. The area of morals, and ergo of moral philosophy, can now be seen, not as a hole-and-corner matter of debts and promises, but as covering the whole of our mode of living and the quality of our relations with the world. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 380)

Goodness ‘stretches’ throughout human relationships and therefore morality permeates human life. Morality is not an option to the side or an overlay of values on top of reality; it saturates reality and is an integral element in comprehending reality. It is erroneous to assume that individual choice establishes values. Values are discernible but not containable through our evaluative capacity: “We are not usually in doubt about the direction in which Good lies. Equally, we recognise the real existence of evil: cynicism, cruelty, indifference to suffering” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 380).

Although morality pervades existence, moral concepts develop and shift over time and are infinitely refinable (which is discussed further within Chapter Two in the section ‘Attention: The Endless Task’). Murdoch (1992) identifies that there is something about the human spirit

that seems “to demand a search for ‘deep foundations’” (p. 55). In attempting to contain these foundations they can be inappropriately transformed into something idolatry and, through the attempts of objective representation, lose their quintessence. Yet this does not negate the existence of values, nor prove that they are created by choices. Rather they demonstrate the vast complexity and pervasiveness of morals within the world, and the necessity for humans to move into ways of understanding values beyond the rational, objective, analytical, and ‘value-free’ definitions.

Morality is More than Actions

Another central theme that informs the concept of attention (and arguably one of her major contributions to the domain of moral philosophy) was Murdoch’s argument that ethics extends beyond the domain of the behaviouristic (Antonaccio, 2007). As articulated earlier, Murdoch argued that morality is not only a question of the right thing to do, but also, “How can we make ourselves better?” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 364). Murdoch moved the argument away from a reductive consideration of goodness as solely a matter of conduct that can be externally measured and assessed, to one that supported the criticality of consciousness, the development of the moral imagination, and the defence of the singular and wholly opaque ‘inner life’. Judgement of an individual’s ethical conduct cannot be limited to an assessment of their behaviours, but must also consider the role that moral vision plays in moral choice and action (Murdoch, 1998).

Murdoch contends, “difficult concepts which cannot be explained in simple terms are classified as ‘emotive’ or dismissed as meaningless” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 236). Although it can be difficult to relate these concepts to actions, this is not sufficient grounds to abandon them. A simple correlation between actions and morality cannot illuminate depth of conceptual understanding, nor subtle variations between individuals. Murdoch (1992) argued that good people can be recognised by their ‘rhythm’ as much as their actions, and the relationship of this rhythm to our ‘inner space’. She writes, “An obsessed egoist...destroys the space and air round him and is uncomfortable to be around...an unselfish person enlarges the space and the world, we are composed and calmed by his¹¹ presence” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 347). In this example, Murdoch asserts that it is not only behaviours that illuminate moral impact, but more ‘difficult’ concepts as rhythm and space. Murdoch (1992, p. 347) identifies space and light as essential a deeper comprehension of morality. Additionally, Murdoch

¹¹ See Note 2

argues that metaphors tied to vision are crucial to understanding morality, rather than solely those tied to movement. In outlining the ideas she seeks to refute, Murdoch (1998) writes:

The image whereby to understand morality...is not the image of vision but the image of movement....Good must be thought of, not as part of the world, but as a moveable label affixed to the world; for only so can the agent be pictured as responsible and free. (p. 301)

For Murdoch, goodness is not just a matter of 'choose this' and freedom is not the option to act differently, but also "freedom to *think* and *believe* differently...[for]...Moral differences can be differences of concept as well as differences of choice" (p. 73, emphasis added).

Murdoch argues against the 'trivial' sense of goodness, which she attributes to her contemporaries, and seeks to retrieve a greater appreciation of the good (p. 333).

There is another point to consider, moral principles cannot be the only way of communicating moral concepts. As Murdoch (1998) writes, "communication of a new moral concept cannot necessarily be achieved by specification of factual criteria open to any observer ('Approve of *this* area') but may involve the communication of a completely new, possibly far-reaching and coherent, vision" (p. 82). The philosophical visions that relegate the role of the inner life and focus upon observable activities (a behaviouristic vision of human morality) prescribe and proscribe particular behaviours or actions to guide moral conduct. These two philosophical conceptions, that there is no inner life and that moral concepts must have externally verifiable meaning, develop the picture of the 'ideally rational individual', which Murdoch seeks to refute. Murdoch understands morality as an awareness of the particulars, guiding individuals to respond to unique situations in unique ways (this is discussed in depth within the next chapter, for it is central to the concept of attention). Murdoch was concerned with the 'behaviouristic' image of the human and offers a sketch of an alternative, writing, "My point is that here the 'universal rules' model simply no longer describes the situation" (p. 86). There is an important philosophical difference between an individual who understands morality as a set of observable rules and an individual who understands moral values through a vision of the metaphysical world (p. 96). Murdoch's concept of attention is the search for the benefits of such a vision.

A Philosophy for Human Life...in all its Multiplicity, Ambiguity and Complexity

Writing within her journal in 1947, Murdoch contended, "for me philosophical problems are the problems of my own life" (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 261). Central to Murdoch's rejection of

the ‘value-free’ approach was the concern that moral philosophy had become disassociated from a multifaceted and multitudinous appreciation of humanity (Widdows, 2005). For Murdoch, the purpose of philosophy is not to obfuscate. Philosophy should not be written in jargon so that the everyday person cannot comprehend its message and benefit from its opportunities. Nor should philosophy be written only for the benefit of philosophers. Instead, the purpose of philosophy is to deal with issues faced by ordinary individuals in their lives. In the preface to *Existentialists and Mystics* (Murdoch, 1998), Conradi states, “The interested reader can find here a concern with ordinary moral issues and decisions that everyone faces” (p. xxv). In this explanation of Murdoch’s writing, her desire to reshape moral philosophy to be appreciated and lived by everyday individuals appears to have come to fruition.

As explained earlier, Murdoch’s philosophy “defies easy categorization” (Antonaccio, 2007, p. 15). Again, in the preface to *Existentialists and Mystics*, (Murdoch, 1998) Conradi explains that Murdoch’s seemingly eclectic philosophical approach is the symptom of a philosopher who does not neatly follow ideas. There are many recurrences of themes and overlapping of ideas within her collected writings. He also points this out in his biography of Murdoch (Conradi, 2001), where he highlights Murdoch’s refusal to be confined to one area of investigation. This approach is reflected in the book *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (Murdoch, 1992), described as “a huge hall of reflection full of light and space and fresh air, in which ideas and intuitions can be unsystematically nurtured” (Antonaccio & Schweiker, 1996, p. xv). Recently a readers companion entitled *Reading Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals: An Introduction* (Hämäläinen & Dooley, 2019) was released in order to “offer accessible readings of chapters and themes in the book, connecting them to Murdoch's larger oeuvre” (SpringerLink, 2019).

Murdoch’s unique approach to philosophy can be attributed, in part, to her desire to explore nuances and subtleties between binary positions. As an atheist, she sought to redeem religion from analytical philosophy, as a Platonist, she resisted the move to Aristotelian thought. She defends the value of art despite Plato’s rejection of this mode of expression. However, within the nexus point of tension, Murdoch’s philosophy negotiates between two seemingly incongruent ideas to mediate a novel position with an “awareness of a contradiction in the description [which] promises no simple solution” (Hämäläinen, 2014, p. 193). Some critics may argue that this approach to the incongruities of two contrasting positions demonstrates either a naïve consideration of the points, or the shifting of theoretical positioning over time. However, Jordan (2014) contends that the theories proposed by

Murdoch are consistent and “*prima facie* tensions can be explained away as merely apparent given some richer understanding of her position” (Jordan, 2014, p. 372).

Murdoch’s position is based upon her stance that morality can be viewed as independent of experience, but must be moderated on reflection of experience through the medium of consciousness. Murdoch promotes an approach to objective morality, yet equally, Murdoch’s moral theory is viewed to be response-dependent; that properties of moral concepts are only able to be viewed from a “peculiarly human standpoint” (Jordan, 2014, p. 378). Although contradictory at a first glance, the subtleties of Murdoch’s reflexive approach to morality can illustrate a clear line of argument, that the specificity of the individual is important within the search for metaphysical moral truth. The search for moral truth involves a reflexive process in which “the good is discovered through the medium of consciousness as it reflects on itself; yet at the same time, the act of reflexivity reveals the good to be a perfection or ‘higher condition’ that transcends or surpasses consciousness” (Antonaccio, 2000, p. 119). The primacy of individual human experiences and perspectives in tandem with an external actuality of morality is essential to her position.

Murdoch’s oeuvre carves out a philosophical space to recognise of the complexity of human lives and the defence of the individual human being. Murdoch argues for the self as an individual capable of self-reflection, living a life with developing ideas of moral value and goodness. In response to analytical arguments that promote the ‘knowable/visible’ aspects of human morality, Murdoch reconceived morality to situate the variety and diversity of human life as a critical aspect. Consciousness is a medium to comprehend and develop moral concepts that is singular to each individual. While some commonality can be understood in the sharing of ideas, each individual’s grasp of concepts is singular and unique. These understandings grow from individual experiences and the reflections of consciousness upon these experiences.

Murdoch (1998) was concerned with advancing a defence of the ‘real impenetrable person’ (p. 294), discussed earlier in the ‘opaque’ individual. Although the task of attention attunes oneself to reality, it is necessary to expose the tensions of conceiving of reality as a singular truth (as cautioned earlier in relation to empiricism). For Murdoch, the ‘truth’ of reality hinges upon moral vision, moderated by the respect for the contingent, and underpinned by the validity of the ‘real impenetrable person’.

Summary

This chapter has outlined a brief history of Iris Murdoch and some of her significant philosophical themes. The purpose of this broader view was to contextualise Murdoch's philosophical vision and to prepare readers for the investigation of the concept of attention within the next chapter. Over this chapter, the influence of World War II, in shaping the Oxford experience and Murdoch's approach to moral philosophy, was outlined. Significant figures in Murdoch's life, guiding her to Plato, Wittgenstein, and Sartre, also honed her vision. However, her critical approach to philosophical ideas meant that no form of philosophical thought was embraced *in toto*; through the ideas of these other thinkers, Murdoch developed her own extraordinary and inimitable vision. This vision became a part of her fictional writing, but she was clear to articulate that novels were not the place to discern her philosophical ideas. Given her extensive corpus of scholarly work, there is ample philosophical material to perceive and understand Murdoch's oeuvre.

Plato and Simone Weil are singled out as major influences. Throughout forty years of philosophical writing, Murdoch consistently refers to their writing. They are two philosophers who significantly supported the development of Murdoch's concept of attention. Despite this critical influence, as with other philosophers, Murdoch did not embrace all of Plato or Weil's thought entirely, there are important points of departure that were critical to outline within this chapter in order to inform later argumentation. While Murdoch adopts the image of the cave from Plato and the notion of goodness as a fixed external actuality, she rejects his assertion that art does not develop of the moral imagination. Murdoch echoes Plato's lack of optimism in the search for the good and the difficulty in attaining a clear vision, but supports different notions about the sources of the good. Murdoch is enamoured with the passion of Weil's vision as a 'standard' to be upheld, but questions her obliteration of the self to be a conduit for the love of God. Murdoch's concept of attention is dependent upon the individual and all that comprises it – thoughts, experiences, memories – for this is the substance of consciousness working to moderate and develop moral vision. These experiences cannot be removed in order to 'act as a screen' for God, or to seek a space to 'step back' in order to assess the direction of moral actions in a 'value-free' form. Morality is not only 'actions' but a part of a singular consciousness, which develops moral vision through the practice of attention. This practice is offered to all individuals and set before them as a moral 'task'. In every walk of human life, attention offers the opportunity to see the world illuminated in the light of goodness.

Chapter Two

The Concept of Attention

Introduction

The concept of attention is integral to the substantive theoretical foundations of this study. Described by Murdoch as “the idea of a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality” (p. 327), attention can be partially understood as an exercise of the moral imagination with concurrent implications for an understanding of individuality, consciousness, love, justice and freedom. This chapter will explore the concept of attention as outlined by Murdoch and other scholars who expand upon her work. To establish the tension that gave rise to Murdoch’s concept of attention, I will introduce Murdoch’s concerns and articulate the problem Murdoch sought to address. I will then paraphrase the situation of M and D the moral ‘problem’ Murdoch invented to illustrate the concept of attention, and extend the discussion of this concept further. Later sections of this chapter will address differing aspects of attention: a just and loving gaze; an individual reality; the endless task; the role of freedom; and the concern of the ‘ordinary and everyday’. Finally, Murdoch’s alternate ideal – the ‘humble individual’- will be discussed.

The Problem of the ‘Ideally Rational Individual’

The position in question, in current moral philosophy, is one which seems to me unsatisfactory in two related ways, in that it ignores certain facts and at the same time imposes a single theory which admits of no communication with or escape into rival theories. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 299)

Murdoch’s concept of attention generated from a dissatisfaction with a prevalent image of the human in her time. Murdoch asserts that the image of human personality held by her contemporaries is “shallow and flimsy” (p. 287) and cannot be related to what she considers to be the ‘everyday’ human. As stated in the previous chapter, Murdoch considered philosophy to be an everyday concern; philosophy is “the problems of my own life” (Murdoch, cited in Nussbaum, 2012, p. 261). The idea that philosophy can remain relevant and reflective of everyday human lives was lost in the Murdoch sought to refute, inspiring her to reconsider the image of the moral individual.

The contemporary image Murdoch refutes is heavily indebted to the influential role of Kant. Murdoch asserts, “we are living in the age of the Kantian man¹², or Kantian man-god” (p. 365). The legacy of Kant’s image is presented within her analysis, which includes multiple references to *Thought and Action* (Hampshire, 1959) and *Disposition and Memory* (Hampshire, 1962) by Stuart Hampshire¹³ (1914-2004), a contemporary of Murdoch’s. She draws from Hampshire’s image to articulate wider problems with the image of the human presented in “modern moral philosophy” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 302). Murdoch critiques the contemporary ‘Hampshirian’ iteration of the ‘Kantian man-god’ in order to highlight the extensive problems this image produces in moral philosophy. Initially in this section, Hampshire’s image will be discussed to contextualise Murdoch’s arguments. Later, other philosophical influences will be identified¹⁴.

Murdoch states that Hampshire promotes an image of the human as “an object moving among other objects in a continual flow of intention into action” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 302). Hampshire’s image of the human seeks to displace ‘vision’ for ‘action’ as the prominent metaphor in moral philosophy. Murdoch describes Hampshire’s main point to be the following: morality should be relegated to the movement of the will and not to individual concepts or visions. Driven by the metaphor of movement and not vision, the ‘ideally rational individual’ is described as a “neo-Kantian existentialist ‘will’” based on movement (Murdoch, 1998, p. 345). Central to this description, and critical to Murdoch’s counter-argument, is Hampshire’s stance that “There is no point in talking of ‘moral seeing’ since there is nothing morally to see” (p. 327). In this explanation of humanity, moral decisions are only identifiable as actions. Visible actions are of paramount importance as “nothing counts as an act unless it is a ‘bringing about of a recognizable change in the world’” (p. 302).

The ‘inner’ world is conceived as holding a “parasitic and shadowy nature” (p. 302) and, as this shadowy domain cannot be shared externally, thoughts can only be considered noteworthy if they are directed towards conclusive visible action. Thoughts are solely “an introduction to action” (p. 303) and moral character is determined by others according to

¹² See Note 2

¹³ In fact, the original print of *The Sovereignty of Good* (Murdoch, 1970) was dedicated to Stuart Hampshire. Although Murdoch and Hampshire disagreed, Conradi (2001) identifies that Hampshire was a long-time acquaintance of Murdoch’s with whom she was not always at odds.

¹⁴ Within ‘The Idea of Perfection’, Murdoch (1998) primarily draws from Hampshire and Moore to present a contrasting pair to mediate between. In this essay Murdoch aligns Hampshire’s image to Hume and Kant, and later in ‘On ‘God’ and ‘Good’ and ‘The Sovereignty of Good over other Concepts’ she speaks more directly to the Kantian image rather than Hampshire’s own. She describes Hampshire’s image as the inheritance of “a happy and fruitful marriage of Kantian liberalism with Wittgensteinian logic solemnised by Freud” (p. 306). Consequently, while it is important to identify Hampshire specifically, as Murdoch argues directly to this depiction in her text, it is important not to restrict the argument solely to the writings of this particular philosopher; Murdoch’s vision is beyond engaging directly with one person, and seeks to respond more broadly to the wider philosophical milieu.

these visible actions. Our moral identity is defined in relation to these visible actions. The actions themselves are defined and judged by “objective observers [whom] are actually and potentially at hand to decide” (p. 318). What we are as individuals, therefore, is the product of the ‘objective’ observations of others and the ‘subjective’ “footloose, solitary, substanceless will” (p. 311).

Murdoch argues that this image of the human is pervasive. It is the image seen within moral philosophy, politics, and contemporary literature. This ‘hero’ is presented to inculcate the impression that we “ought to know what we are doing” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 304) and that this ‘doing’ is “not something private and personal, but is imposed...in the sense of being identifiable only via public concepts and objective observers” (p. 355). Reason combined with knowledge and unconstrained will situates our engagement with morality like “a visit to a shop” (p. 305). The authority of reason and the unfettered nature of the (central) will enables the individual to view all options objectively and choose appropriately. Through this image of the human, there is no need to draw from a more detailed terminology for morality, nor become involved with an inquiry into virtues. There is only the need to discern what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ based upon an objective reading of actions.

Sketched in this way, humans are presented with the spurious belief that “we should aim at total knowledge of our situation and a clear conceptualisation of all our possibilities” (p. 304). Murdoch expands upon the image she wishes to contest, stating:

...this man is with us still, free, independent, lonely, powerful, rational, responsible, brave...He is the offspring of the age of science, confidently rational and yet increasingly aware of his alienation from the material universe which his discoveries reveal. (p. 365)

Murdoch argues that the ‘ideally rational man’ cannot remove this sense of alienation due to the Kantian legacy of ethics. This legacy demands moral duty to be fulfilled through rationality. However, this sense of alienation is inappropriately entangled with a feeling of detachment and an ability to objectively (empirically) observe oneself. In the hopes that this alienation represents moral freedom, philosophers single out this ‘experience’ as evidence of autonomy via objective rationality. Scientific reason and detached objectivity are idealised, and presented as the means through which moral action can be understood, determined, and judged. Yet Murdoch refutes the idea that an empirically derived ethics encapsulates moral philosophy, stating:

Science can instruct morality at certain points and can change its direction, but it cannot contain morality nor, ergo, moral philosophy...Moral concepts do not move about *within* a hard world set up by science and logic. They set up, for different purposes, a different world. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 321)

The world of moral concepts is not the world of scientific rationality, instead it is informed by a metaphysical backdrop which must allude to the history of the human individual. The ideally rational individual only seeks to understand the certainties of the past (rather than imagining alternatives) and only these 'facts' will serve to guide his or her future actions. Furthermore, the ideally rational individual considers the past to be a fixed constant, which is objectively viewed from a distance. This is an image driven by the doctrine of psychoanalysis.

Murdoch questions Hampshire's allusion that a 'perfect psychoanalysis' would "make us perfectly self-aware and so perfectly detached and free" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 340). Murdoch questions the validity of psychoanalysis and the elevation of the psychoanalyst who would serve as the detached 'omniscient' observer of external movements to explicate internal motivations. She writes:

...why should some unspecified psychoanalyst be the measure of all things?
Psychoanalysis is a muddled embryonic science, and even if it were not, there is no argument that I know of that can show us that we have got to treat its concepts as fundamental. The notion of an 'ideal analysis' is a misleading one. (p. 320)

Instead, the elevation of this 'science' as a desired method of producing rational and free individuals, through the emancipative power of psychoanalysis, moves the focus away from the centrality of morality. Murdoch's rejoinder is to reiterate, "This is a *moral* question; and what is at stake here is the liberation of morality, and of philosophy as a study of human nature, from the domination of science" (p. 320, original emphasis). As discussed in the previous chapter, although Murdoch is wary of psychoanalysis, she defends aspects of Freudian theory, particularly the clarity with which Freud has detailed the image of the "fallen man" and a "thoroughly pessimistic view of human nature" (p. 341).

The 'ideally rational individual' is the being who considers the centre of his or her own decision-making to be hinged upon objective rationality and conjoined with comprehensive knowledge of the external 'facts' in any decision-making process. In this image, the individual is governed by his or her choices, as "freedom, indeed moral quality, resides in his choices" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 343). This individual is unmoved by external models, preferring

rational self-guided assessment to ascertain his or her own impressions and subsequent decisions for action. She identifies this individual as “the offspring of the age of science” and “the ideal citizen of the liberal state” (pp. 365–366). She ultimately denounces this image of the human for the selfish and egotistical nature that it encourages stating “Kant’s man had already received a glorious incarnation nearly a century earlier in the work of Milton: his proper name is Lucifer” (p. 366). She extends this criticism, writing:

Briefly put, our picture of ourselves has become too grand, we have isolated, and identified ourselves with, an unrealistic conception of will, we have lost the vision of a reality separate from ourselves, and we have no adequate conception of original sin...the moral agent...is pictured as an isolated principle of will, or burrowing pinpoint of consciousness, inside, or beside, a lump of being which has been handed over to other disciplines, such as psychology or sociology (p. 338).

This image of humanity does not satisfy Murdoch. She asserts, “I find the image of man...both alien and implausible” (p. 306), and seeks to theorise a space where the ‘ideally rational man’ can be brought into question to allow room for an alternative. Although this image of the human is based upon the role of choice, Murdoch argues that there is no sufficient exposition of “what prepares him for the choices” (p. 343). Murdoch’s concept of attention develops from the rejection of this image of the human. Attention seeks to reclaim a connection between everyday moral experiences and philosophical images of the moral agent, and admit a conceptualisation of reality “infinitely more complex and various than that of science” (p. 326). Attention reinstates the value of the ‘inner life’ and the importance of moral vision for human beings. In order to set the moral ‘problem’ to illustrate the concept of attention, and give credence to the value of the inner life, Murdoch offers the situation of M and D.

The Situation of M and D

The image of the human sketched out in this next section is characterised as a “rival picture” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 306) to that of the ‘ideally rational man’ (p. 312). Murdoch proposes an “ordinary and everyday” (p. 312) situation involving two individuals: a mother (M) and a daughter in law (D). M is characterised as a “very ‘correct’ person” (p. 312), and her capacity M to exercise moral vision is critical to the picture created by Murdoch. D is essential to this picture as the object of attention. At the outset, Murdoch is very keen to illustrate that M’s outward behaviour to her daughter-in-law remains constant throughout the event, specifically

identifying that there is no external change in M's behaviour to D. M is unfailingly considerate with D in her manner when she is present with her – she maintains a certain 'standard' of politeness throughout her interactions. What Murdoch seeks to argue is that the change in M is an 'inner' event: the way in which M sees D.

At the start of the story, M is critical of D, viewing her to be “unpolished and lacking in dignity...pert and familiar, insufficiently ceremonious, brusque, sometimes positively rude, always tiresomely juvenile” (p. 312). As stated above, despite this internal view of D, M treats D with the utmost respect, concealing these internal feelings. For the purposes of the hypothesis, Murdoch proposes that D is taken out of the equation, in a way to ensure that the assessment of D is entirely within M's mind and not due to any subsequent interaction. She proposes that perhaps the young couple immigrates, or that D is dead. Essentially, the purpose of this finality is to ensure that there are no opportunities for M and D to interact, opening the possibility for critics to consider the shift in M's inner picture to be caused by an external action by D. Without any grounds for further interaction between M and D, the shift in thinking by M can be considered to be entirely internal. There are some problems with suggesting that D be considered 'dead' – this raises questions about how M could “behave beautifully to the girl throughout” (p. 312). Furthermore death could be a 'final movement' that encourages M to reconsider her thoughts of D, as such reassessment can occur when it is realised that an associate is dead. For the purposes of this exposition of the concept of attention, I will support the idea that D has immigrated.

A span of undefined time passes following this immigration. Murdoch suggests that M could become ingrained in her perceptions of D, “imprisoned (if I may use a question-begging word) by the cliché: my poor son has married a silly vulgar girl” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 312). However, M is characterised as an “intelligent and well-intentioned person, capable of self-criticism, capable of giving careful and just *attention* to an object which confronts her” (p. 313, original emphasis). These qualities support a reassessment of her initial thoughts of D. Upon reflection, M's view shifts to reveal an image of D as “not vulgar but refreshingly simple, not undignified but spontaneous, not noisy but gay, not tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful” (p. 313). Through the practice of attention, M has altered her perception of D, seeing D in a 'new light'. Murdoch states that she describes M as 'intelligent' and 'just' to cast her in a positive light. Although the decision M makes regarding how she will see D could be interpreted by others as a form of delusion, Murdoch articulates that M is “moved by love or justice” (p. 313). It is this vision, viewing another being through a 'just and loving gaze', which is at the heart of the concept of attention.

Attention and Moral Vision: The ‘Just and Loving’ Gaze

The act of attention must be guided by the intention to see the other ‘justly’ and ‘lovingly’. The concept of attention is expressed by Murdoch (1998) to be “the idea of a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality” (p. 327). As outlined in Chapter One, an underpinning rationale for the concept of attention can be understood through Murdoch’s respect for the ways in which prayer can enhance moral thought. Murdoch considers prayer to be “not petition, but simply an attention to God which is a form of love” (p. 344). However Murdoch does not support a philosophical view defending the notion of a ‘personal God’ and seeks a secular understanding of the benefits of prayer, asking “What is this attention like, and can those who are not religious believers still conceive of profiting by such an activity?” (p. 344). In addressing this question, the indebtedness to Weilian philosophy, and the influence of Plato are highlighted.

Building on from the discussion of energy and eros in the previous chapter, Murdoch (1998) conceives of God as a “source of energy” (p. 345) and grace. Grace flows from our connection to God, streaming a flow of “supernatural assistance” (p. 344) towards devotees in order to overcome their personal limitations. Murdoch asserts that it is a ‘psychological fact’ that attention to God is “a powerful source of (often good) energy” (p. 344). As argued in the previous chapter, the energy of eros is determined from its source, with good objects providing the power to enhance and bad objects having the power to destroy. However, as Murdoch did not instil a deity in her philosophy, she sought an alternative justification for the source of our good energy; she sought moral direction without divine intervention and the power of prayer without religion. Over the course of her writing within ‘The Idea of Perfection’, ‘On ‘God’ and ‘Good’’, and ‘The Sovereignty of Good’, the argument is pieced together that *love* of a transcendent form of goodness can be an alternate positive source of energy to the attentive individual. This energy is attained through the enactment of a just and loving gaze directed upon individuals. Goodness is the source of this energy, but it is harnessed through the act of love (p. 354).

At this point, some further explanation is required to illustrate why love is considered the means to acquire good energy, and to do so it is important to revisit the analogy of the cave. As described in the previous chapter. Murdoch’s concept of attention is indebted to Plato’s analogy of the cave; the sun becomes a metaphor for goodness and although the prisoner’s vision is occluded from this light at the outset, the intention is for the prisoners to move from the cave out into the light of the sun. The sun is the “distant transcendent

perfection, a source of uncontaminated energy, a source of new and quite undreamt-of virtue” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 383). Getting to this source of energy is tricky because the pull of the ego, the source of energy produced through the light of the fire, is strong and encourages the prisoners to remain within the cave. The fire is not a true light, only the light of self-reflection. In this aspect, Murdoch is supportive of Kant, as she identifies that he went to great lengths to draw attention away from the empirical psyche, towards objective rationality (p. 383). Although Kant “abolished God and made man God in His stead”, he was still prepared to endow humanity with an “exiguous metaphysical background” (p. 365).

In the concept of attention, Murdoch (1998) expands upon the relationship between the human, goodness, and love to reveal the tensions between them. Love is irresistibly pulled to the good and when love is directed towards the good, then individuals are pulled out of the cave towards the sun and afforded the opportunity to see the world enhanced through the light of goodness. The love of goodness is a positive source of energy, enhancing moral understanding and the inspiration to use this understanding to guide moral action in the world. Through love, the human is drawn to goodness and enlivened through goodness; we flourish in the light of the sun. This is why it is critical to defend the inner life. An understanding of love and goodness is a built from the practice of attention; through attentive relationships, humans are supplied with the right form of energy to continue with moral progress. Attention stimulates our desire to search and gives us the energy to do so. Our moral actions stem from this inner ability, the sources of moral energy and the quality of attachments to others (p. 375).

Yet love is often interpreted as a difficult and fraught undertaking. Murdoch (1998) argues that love between humans is too-often interpreted incorrectly, affected by a natural selfishness (p. 364). Furthermore “our minds are continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying *veil* which partially conceals the world” (p. 369). Falseness is drawn from the negative energy of the ego – the source of inner light. Sometimes the ego causes us to see a mistaken unity and forms a delusionary perspective; that our centrality within events is the foundation of purpose. The ego fabricates reasons to place our ‘self’ at the centre of things, before consideration of others. In doing so, the ego prevents us from the difficulties of attention through the belief that “‘it all somehow must make sense’ or ‘there is a best decision here’” (p. 346). The challenge lies in resisting the selfish desire to contort consolation into a misrepresentation of reality. Fabrication of the world, generated through the energy of the ego and harnessed by the misdirection of will, reduces the ability to see the world as it is and to appreciate others as real and unique beings. This is not to say that

there is no unity, as engaging in the act of attention enables humans to reflect upon moral concepts and develop an increasing moral sophistication, which ‘reveals increasing unity’. The purpose of pointing out the fabricating role of the ego at this point is to identify that selfishness gets in the way of clear thinking, obscuring what is in front of us through the creation of the ‘falsifying veil’, distracting us from exiting the cave. The ego gets in the way of our innate abilities to seek and discern the good.

Through careful attention, the difference between falsification and reality can be understood. Reality is the proper object of love (Murdoch, 1998, p. 355) and attention consists of and is guided by love. Our misunderstanding of love in human lives needs to be reconsidered in light of the role of the ego. The ‘fantastical’ illusion that is at times confused with love is not to be understood as love. Selfishness generates a ‘false love’ concerned with consolation in order to satisfy the ego. The ego produces a false understanding of love, which is fictitious and fanciful inasmuch as it is unconnected with reality. This fantasy is “the proliferation of blinding self-centred aims and images...a powerful system of energy...most often...called ‘will’ or ‘willing’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 354). This system of energy needs to be kept in check in order to resist consolation. “Fantasy (self)” Murdoch argues, “can prevent us from seeing a blade of grass just as it can prevent us from seeing another person” (p. 357). Although most of our contemporary examples of ‘love’ are instances of ‘false love’ due to their possessive and self-absorbed nature, when we happen upon real instances of love we can immediately distinguish it from lesser forms and understand how goodness is present within the world through this love. Goodness has many ‘false doubles’, ‘false love’ can be dishonest, deceitful, or simply misdirected, but when brought together, true love and goodness cannot be lead astray. What “counteracts the system” of the ego is attention to reality that is “inspired by, consisting of, love” (p. 354). Through attention, the human individual is rewarded with a clearer vision of reality.

At this point, it is important to clarify Murdoch’s assertion that M is not deluded but rather motivated by love and justice. When the aforementioned separation of the ego from the light of goodness is considered, it becomes increasingly clear that the moral decisions discerned through attentive relationships cannot be delusion, for the magnetic tension between love and good pulls us away from the light of the ego. Only fantasy can delude us from attending to the proper direction of love. Love is directed towards reality and through love, our understanding of reality is illuminated through goodness. Love reveals moral truth, and is magnetically drawn to the good, clarifying our vision of reality. Other forms of emotion may invoke delusion (anger, hate, fear) but love always draws us towards the good

(Murdoch 1992, p. 357). Love is the call to see beyond the delusions of the ‘veil’. Murdoch (1998) writes:

It is in the capacity to love, that is to *see*, that the liberation of the soul from fantasy consists. The freedom which is a proper human goal is the freedom from fantasy...the realism of compassion. (p. 354)

In this way, an understanding of reality is quite different from that promoted in empirical science (this will be discussed more at length in the next section).

We are all connected through this inner struggle, guided by the external magnetic force of the good, which draws us in similar directions when we exercise our moral imagination and enhance our attentiveness. Furthermore, this ‘just love’ is magnetised towards goodness.

Murdoch (1998) writes:

Good is the magnetic centre towards which love naturally moves...when true good is loved, even impurely or by accident, the quality of the love is automatically refined, and when the soul is turned towards the Good the highest part of the soul is enlivened. (p. 384)

The energy of the ‘good object’ needs to be reconsidered more subtly in Murdoch’s understanding of the magnetic tension between goodness and love, for if ‘false love’ accidentally happens upon the good, then this love is refined and purified, enlivening the soul. Within the attentive act, a loving view of the information is described as a “rethinking [of] *phronêsis* in a world deprived of shared morality” (Stan, 2014, p. 1175). The ability to grasp the particulars of a situation, and view them in a loving manner in order to promote a positive view of others in the world, promotes a form of obedience to others originating from an appreciation of the reality of the other, generated through an exercise of love.

In the same way that there is a ‘false love’, there is “a false transcendence” and a “false unity” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 347). This false transcendence dismisses the moral world to a “shadowy existence in terms of emotive language, imperatives, behaviour patterns, attitudes” (p. 347). However, Murdoch wishes to seek out a unifying transcendence in which a form of moral realism can exist, one which is based in the reality that surrounds the individual, comprised of their conscious work to interpret it; a transcendence stemming from the exercise of the moral imagination, but directed towards an ‘ideal limit’. This is connected to the role of the attentive individual to see the other ‘justly’. In this way, morality is not considered to be solely within the domain of knowledge, and certainly not within the domain of scientific

knowledge, but within “a patient and just discernment and exploration of what really confronts one” (p. 330). Murdoch’s the concept of attention is concerned with envisioning the other justly and lovingly. Morality can then be understood as “our complex apprehension of ourselves and the world which cannot be reduced to a rational scrutiny of the facts” (Antonaccio, 2000, p. 87). Murdoch asserts that M’s attention to D is not understood through a form of knowledge that rests within the domain of science, stating:

M’s independence of science, and of the ‘world of facts’ which empiricist philosophy has created in the scientific image, rests not simply in her moving will but in her seeing knowing mind. (Murdoch, 1998 p. 321)

Within attention, the idea of a ‘just love’ is the guiding principle. Without this moral aim guiding the view of the individual, true attention to the other cannot be obtained. Attention is dependent upon the ‘seeing knowing mind’ and this is built from the moral imagination.

Attention: An *Individual Reality*

As described by Murdoch (1998), attention is “a just and loving gaze directed upon an *individual reality*” (p. 327, emphasis added). The role of ‘reality’ within Murdochian philosophy is important to outline at this point, for it is critical to understanding the role of the ‘inner life’ and the moral imagination in the concept of attention.

The Murdochian notion of ‘reality’ is considered at length by scholars who study Murdoch’s philosophical work. Antonaccio (2000) identifies Murdoch’s understanding of reality as the framework for human morality and the setting for human existence. Importantly, Antonaccio (2000) highlights Murdochian reality as always more than our attempts to border and describe it (p. 11). For Murdoch (1998), reality is an ideal end-point; inexhaustible and infinitely difficult to apprehend. Due to the infinitely complex nature of reality, it is difficult to apprehend yet it is important to understand that reality is not a ‘given whole’ in the sense that misuses of the empirical sciences would maintain. An understanding of reality is honed through an obedience to it, as an exercise of love (p. 333). As described in the outline of the magnetic force between the human, goodness, and love, there is a close connection between love, the good, and the real (p. 333). In the exploration of the magnetic force between goodness and love in the analogy of the cave, the broader spiritual progression from the inside to the outside of the cave is described by Murdoch (1992) as “a spiritual pilgrimage from appearance to reality” (p. 10).

Reality is not understood through the removal of moral values, but the discernment and refinement of them. Goodness is indefinable, it is limitless (more will be discussed on this point later in the chapter). This is not because “what is ‘real’ is potentially open to different observers” (p. 302), but because of the infinite difficulty in the moral task of “apprehending a magnetic but inexhaustible reality” (p. 333). Within the parable of the cave, our apprehension of this inexhaustible reality is sensed in an intuitive awareness of the many things around us whose proximity and presence we feel, but cannot fully apprehend or appreciate (Murdoch, 1992, p. 228). There are ‘levels of awareness’. In progressively moving away from the ego, towards a clearer, and therefore more moral, understanding of reality we progress through these levels towards the true perception of reality and the good (Widdows, 2005, p. 101). Reality can be considered “as that which is revealed to the patient eye of love” and is “an idea entirely comprehensible to the ordinary person” (p. 332). When we develop the moral imagination through the task of attention, we are given not only the opportunity to see reality more clearly but also ourselves more clearly. We can see ourselves as something more than rationality, something more complex, and inherently *capable* of engaging in the work to develop our moral vision. Murdoch identifies that reality may be ‘non-empirical’ (p. 332), but even though M might not be able to clearly articulate it for the purposes of an objective external analysis, she knows what she is doing when she is trying to be just to D. Furthermore, “we know what she is doing too” (p. 332).

In the image of the ‘ideally rational individual’, the abilities to determine total knowledge over our moral situation and clearly conceptualise all potential possibilities (p. 304) are of central importance. When this is compared with an understanding of the concept of attention, it is clear that knowledge over the situation and a clear understanding of all possibilities is impossible; reality cannot ever be fully understood and certainly not through exposition or analysis. The idea of the ‘knowable’ human has already been queried, the ‘knowable’ cannot be related to the notion of reality. Reality is mediated through consciousness and our understanding of reality is built from the inner life and the moral imagination. Where the reality of the ‘ideally rational individual’ can be discerned from a thoroughly rational assessment and an understanding of the human as ‘knowable’, substance of reality is not as easily characterised or defined. As articulated earlier, in the image of the ‘ideally rational individual’ there is a desire to retain autonomy by resisting ‘compartmentalisation’ through an externalised goodness. But human understandings of ‘goodness’ are not shaped only by predilections, will or choices, but because of the qualities

of attachments, and how these attachments develop a different notion of freedom. This point is the focus of the next subsection.

Attention and Freedom

The differences between Weilian attention and Murdochian attention outlined in the previous chapter are important to this discussion, for in asserting “the highest love is in some sense impersonal” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 361), Murdoch promotes a selfless love reminiscent of Weil’s attention “which is so full that the ‘I’ disappears” (Weil, 2002, p. 118). Like Weil, Murdoch explores the relationship between selflessness and attention, but as outlined before, there are critical points of departure that need to be understood in order to appreciate Murdoch’s defence of the personal.

Murdoch (1998) asserts, “We cease to be in order to attend to the existence of something else” (p. 348). Such a view could be seen as incongruent with personal freedom, and more akin to Weilian attention. However, acquiescence to the other is not obliteration of the self. Murdochian freedom takes on a different form and purpose. Selflessness valued for the ways it affords us the ability to see “things of the world in their true relationships” (p. 92), but these ‘true relationships’ are understood through moral vision. Selflessness is interconnected with the role of the seeing knowing mind (p. 321). The act of attention is to see the other justly and lovingly and resist the pull of the ego. Murdochian selflessness is articulated by some scholars as the removal of certain personal emotions connected to the ego and the ability to focus on others “not at the *expense* of the self, but, so to speak, without considering the self at all” (Blum, 1986, p. 362). In order to appreciate the role that the individual and his or her ‘seeing, knowing mind’ has to play within the practice of attention. this disregard of the ‘self’ needs to be understood as not the entirety of the self, but of the desires of the ego, identified as “ambition, vanity, cruelty, greed, jealousy, hatred” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 496).

Although this could be considered a way of suspending the emotive response, McDonough (2000) reinforces the critical role that emotions play within the Murdochian attention. The dialectic between reason and emotion is unnecessary. Murdoch’s act of attention promotes an alternative that encapsulates both faculties. McDonough (2000) writes, “For Murdoch, reason and emotion are conjoined in the call to be ‘just’ and ‘loving’ in our orientation toward another. They are positioned not in opposition to each other, but rather in a way that refuses to distinguish between the two” (p.223). The interplay between reason and

emotion are part of Murdoch's reflexive realism (Antonaccio, 2000), an approach to moral philosophy that is grounded within the reality of human relationships.

In Murdochian attention, freedom is not about the 'unfettered will', but rather the submission of certain qualities and the promotion of others in order to attend to the other. The search for freedom is not contained by scientific reason as has been championed by the image of the 'ideally rational individual'; venerating the point at which detached objective reason gives rise to the unimpeded will. As Murdoch (1998) states: "Freedom is not the sudden jumping of the isolated will in and out of an impersonal logical complex, it is a function of the progressive attempt to see a particular object clearly" (p. 317). Human freedom in attention is conceived quite differently to that of the 'ideally rational individual'. In the act of attention, the role of the will is given over to a form of submission, for true attendance to another is "represented as a kind of 'necessity' ...present[ing] the will not as unimpeded movement but as something very much more like 'obedience'" (p. 331). She writes:

If we consider what the work of attention is like, how continuously it goes on, and how imperceptibly it builds up structures of value round about us, we shall not be surprised that at crucial moments of choice, most of the business of choosing is already over.

This does not imply that we are not free, certainly not. But it implies that the exercise of our freedom is a small piecemeal business which goes on all the time and not a grandiose leaping about unimpeded at important moments. (p. 329)

Our call to be 'just' and see the world clearly is an act of freedom not the preclusion of it. The suppression of the ego is not the oppression of our 'self' but the movement to free ourselves from the veil that obscures the world and the possibilities of the pilgrimage. Attention is the call to apprehend reality more clearly, and enhance our moral self. Attention is a task that is 'small', 'piecemeal' and endless.

Attention: The Endless Task

Within the image of the 'ideally rational individual', moral character can be determined by 'rational' choices, which then results in action. Yet, Murdoch (1998) is concerned with a general lack of consideration about the conditions that prepare the individual to make these choices (p. 343). She asserts that the image of the 'ideally rational individual' presents an image of moral choice, relegating the inner life to the irrelevant or non-existent, an unhelpful and unrealistic (p. 343) image that diminishes the progressive development the individual can make towards enhancing moral concepts. She writes:

The analysis pictures M as defined ‘from the inside in’: M’s individuality lies in her will, understood as her ‘movements’. The analysis makes no sense of M as continually active, as making progress, or of her inner acts as belonging to her or forming part of a continuous fabric of being. (p. 316)

An understanding of M as defined from the ‘outside-in’ disregards M’s inner contemplation, rendering this mental effort redundant in relation to her outward movements. According to Murdoch’s contemporaries, M’s thoughts are hazy and untrustworthy and, if they were to be taken into consideration at all, a group of ‘objective’ others would assess them based upon M’s capacity for disclosure. Murdoch rejects the necessity for revelation as evidence of moral development. The act of attention demands the attentive individual to look, and re-look with a just and loving gaze in order to see what is really there, not base their assessment upon the judgement of an external group of individuals. Attention is not the ability to determine moral ‘choices’ through the leaping of the will from decision to decision. Instead, attention is “the progressive attempt to see a particular object clearly...something infinitely perfectible” (p. 317).

Earlier, it was identified that reality is inexhaustible, this ‘infinitely complex’ quality of reality enriches the endless task of attention. Attention is as endless as reality is limitless and attentive individuals are incrementally refining their understanding of reality. M is engaged in this endless task (p. 317) and rewarded not only in her heightened understanding of D, but also in her enrichment of moral concepts. Through attention, an appreciation of the subject of a just and loving gaze is deepened and moral concepts are enhanced. Furthermore, the moral task of attention is endless because reality is endless, moral concepts are evolving, and our efforts to understand reality are imperfect, requiring ongoing refinement. Attention is a practice as well as a task. It is something to be honed and developed. As we develop this practice our understanding of the world shifts and moral concepts develop, necessitating us to look and look again (p. 321). Furthermore, the idea of perfection stimulates the desire for deeper comprehension of moral concepts and/or experiences in the light of goodness and reassess them according to this light. Impulsively, one set of behaviours may appear best, but just and loving reflection will show whether different behaviours would have improved matters. Murdoch (1992) argues that the possibilities for learning moral concepts are infinite (p. 322).

A just and loving gaze is guided by the idea of perfection, the idea that we can seek perfection beyond our present state and arguably beyond our comprehension. In acquiescing

to the idea of perfection, the attentive individual acknowledges there is no end point to this task and there is always room for improvement. Morality is not contained by external limitations or definitions by objective observers (as explained within the earlier section ‘The Problem of the ‘Ideally Rational Man’). The feasibility of moral principles are called into question; human individuals are specific and particular and our attentive responses to them are grounded within experiences. Through multiple attentive relationships over time, our responses to others will vary greatly according to the knowledge we have grown through attention. Even our responses to a specific individual will shift and change through the refinement of our moral vision. Additionally, the focus of attention is also continually active and making progress; humans are not the same from the first time we gave our attention to the last. We must attend to what is in front of us. It is the constant looking and re-looking that effects a change in our affiliations to moral principles. Within Murdochian theory, the task of the individual is not to “generate action based on universal and impartial principles but to attend and respond to particular persons” (Blum, 1986, p.362). A consideration of the individual as specific and unique illustrates the inappropriateness of general moral principles. Additionally, with incremental exposure to manifold attentive relationships, principles become increasingly obtuse and lose generality as the individual’s morality shifts and deepens over the course of the lifetime. As Murdoch (1998) identifies, we are “human historical individuals” (p. 322) and through attention our conceptual development moves away from a general impersonal understanding, towards increasing personal relevance and privacy in the direction of the ideal limit. Against the idea of perfection, we can look and relook in light of the call to the good, without an impartial limit.

The spiritual pilgrimage was an integral element in the act of attention as the pilgrimage was viewed as “the centre and essence of morality, upon whose success and well-being the health of other kinds of moral reaction and thinking is likely to depend” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 367). The pilgrimage is the journey towards the ideal, seeking a moral perfection. As the attention is guided by a reflexive vision of the good, the individual’s path towards the moral ideal is guided by the idea of perfection. Murdoch contended that the search for moral perfection is an essential characteristic of moral activity. Murdoch (1998) asserts, “where virtue is concerned we often apprehend more than we clearly understand and *grow by looking*” (p. 324).

If virtue is an area of growth, then morality cannot be seen as static and therefore to be contained within the boundaries of the scientific. Morality does not consist of singular neutral definitions of moral properties, instead it is “essentially connected with change and progress”

(Murdoch, 1998, p. 322). Murdoch (1992) perceives consciousness as mobile, constantly reflexive, and containing a “polymorphous complexity” (p. 237) that belies attempts to represent moral positions as calcified. Moral concepts shift and deepen over time as individuals cogitate upon them. As Murdoch articulates “we have a different image of courage at forty from that which we had a twenty” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 322). Moral concepts understood by the individual shift, deepen, and have the potential to mature over the course of the lifetime. Because the understanding of concepts is grounded within individual experience affected by personal history, comprehension of moral principles become increasingly private and less “towards a genesis in the rulings of an impersonal public language” (p. 322). Murdoch urges us to become attuned to nuance and respectful of the particular (Stan, 2014).

When guided by the idea of perfection, the magnetic connection between love and goodness supports a deeper understanding of the analogy of the cave as continuous and unending. The ideal end-point of the parable is to arrive in the light of the sun, but in life, moral development is inexhaustible. The removal of an ‘end-point’ also introduces an element of “necessary fallibility” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 317). Empirical science seeks universal truth: within the perceived world, evidential and replicable. But what occurs within consciousness is not capable of meeting these conditions. As Murdoch asserts “what is real may be ‘non empirical’” (p. 332). An appreciation of reality is deepened when it is not considered an objective fixed reality, but “in relation to the progressing life of a person” (p. 320). Moral concepts cannot be contained by science because, due to their lack of ‘completion’, they are beyond finality.

The Concern with the ‘Ordinary and Everyday’

The situation Murdoch (1998) sketches of M and D is described as “ordinary and everyday” (p. 312). This point is important to Murdoch’s moral vision and a significant aspect of her argument. Murdoch argues that human life has “no external point or *τέλος*” (p. 364). Life cannot be justified nor totally explained, and neither can the reasons for our destiny. Instead, “We are simply here” (p. 365). In making this claim, Murdoch is asserting her position that omniscient beings (God) or substitutes for these beings (“Reason, Science, History”, p. 365) cannot offer comprehensive explanation for humanity’s sense of the occluded unity of life. If unity exists, then an understanding of it must be sought in a deeper examination of human experiences nestled in everyday lives.

According to Murdoch, individuals who are negotiating within the world and honing a moral vision of it, are ‘everyday’ and ‘ordinary’ individuals. They are not the Kantian or post-Kantian image of rationality; those who are bound to moral action through shared rationality. They are not bound by the judgements of their moral actions. Instead Murdoch (1998) accuses these constructions to be as “thin as a needle” (p. 343) and seeks an alternate image that is connected to the everyday experiences of the human, as “it is surely in the tissue of life that the secrets of good and evil are to be found” (p. 344). Some attention to this area has been presented in the first chapter, but it is necessary here to outline some more important nuances of Murdoch’s position.

Murdoch (1998) argues that it is not only philosophers who can claim an understanding of goodness, ‘everyday individuals’ can also make a claim of knowledge, whether it be part of a religious doctrine or not. Murdoch asserts “I think there is a place both inside and outside religion for a sort of contemplation of the Good, not just by dedicated experts, but by ordinary people” (p. 383). Within this theme of the ‘ordinary’ and ‘everyday’ is the notion that “moral philosophy should be inhabited” (p. 337). Through living and enacting these moral concepts in life, individuals develop an increasingly private understanding based upon public definitions, but increasingly private and familiar. To explain further, Murdoch proposes that a person who is privately trying to determine the level of his or her ‘repentance’ is engaged in a private act of introspection. Through such cogitation, the individual is “making a specialised personal *use* of a concept. Of course he derives the concept initially from his surroundings; but he takes it away into his privacy” (p. 319). Furthermore, conceptual understandings are hinged upon the personal history of the individual and the particular historical experiences the person underwent in relation to this idea (p. 319). Murdoch writes, “Repentance may mean something different to an individual at different times in his life, and what it fully means is a part of this life and cannot be understood except in context” (p. 320). This is not to assert that an analysis of an individual’s history will afford a way to understand his or her moral concepts. Murdoch is careful to argue that the inner life of the individual must also be taken into account.

The displacement of the ‘ordinary and everyday’ experiences in favour of a scientific approach to philosophy motivates Murdoch to argue for the necessity of the ‘inner life’ of the *individual* in moral philosophy. Murdoch “insists on philosophy’s responsibility to picture the human being in the fullness of her experience” (Lazenby, 2014, p. 48), demonstrating concern with the departure from the everyday and the particular. Murdoch is dissatisfied with a segmented image of life, abstracted from reality rather than respecting ‘indwelling’

(Lazenby, 2014). The ‘ideally rational individual’ misrepresents the human by demarcating the individual’s decisions from the history of their personal experiences. Furthermore, this image removes the ability to claim an individual comprehension of moral concepts unless they are shared and accepted within the wider public domain. Murdoch seeks to reconstitute the individual and restore the ability to make the claim for the ‘inner life’ and private concepts. These abilities are a part of what sets each individual apart from one another, and enables each human to negotiate, deepen, and extend his or her own vision through an engagement in the world (Antonaccio, 2000). They are a part of a detailed moral vocabulary, which Murdoch (1992) argues is necessary to moral philosophy:

We *need* a moral vocabulary, a detailed value terminology, morally loaded words...Important moral partings of the ways are implied in the complex relations between these concepts. (pp. 35–36).

Our individual and particular moral visions, through detailed and complex relations between moral concepts become clearer when we can navigate the ways in which they align and part; the ways they are divided and conjoined.

Antonaccio (2000) extends this point by arguing that the example of M and D is “an instrument of the individual’s knowledge of herself and the world, rather than determined by a public context on which all agents can agree” (p. 90). The individuality of M’s observations of D are both a part of her individual moral vision and a justification for it. The unique way in which she pictures (and then re-views) D is particular to her own vision, signifying that she is indeed engaging in a form of individual deliberation, but also demonstrating the growth in her particular moral vision rather than the development of shared concepts (Antonaccio, 2000). Alterations to her vision are based on her ordinary and everyday experiences with D, and may not be understood when articulated to individuals who are not privy to this relationship. This is no reason to exclude this process from the consideration of a development of morality; although the alterations may be inimitable, they are nonetheless extant.

Furthermore, as attention is a moral task that is available to all humans, there is no justification in arguing that philosophers will be more advanced in their knowledge of goodness compared to others. Murdoch (1998) is clear to articulate that not all individuals who make their way out of the cave need have been enthralled by the fire prior to their departure, and identifies the ‘everyday individual’ as someone who may well have avoided the trappings of moral philosophical images of will, reason and exposition, stating “Perhaps

the virtuous peasant has got out of the cave without even noticing the fire” (p. 383). At this point, it is important to outline the Murdochian ideal, offered as a response to the ‘ideally rational individual’.

The Offering of the ‘Ideally Humble Individual’

In her rejection of the ‘ideally rational individual’ Murdoch is not only seeking to remove this image from moral philosophy, but to suggest a new image. She articulates over the course of ‘The Idea of Perfection’ and ‘On ‘God’ and ‘Good’ that the current image of the moral individual is concerned with freedom, honesty and sincerity, but that these values are skewed by narcissism and personal self-interest. Murdoch seeks to justifiably argue that self-fascination is a hindrance to the moral life, to highlight the dominance of the ego and to offer ways to deal with this conundrum. According to Murdoch (1998) “In the moral life the enemy is the fat relentless ego” (p. 342). It is important not only to identify the problem, but also to consider ways to live differently.

Moving against the explanation for human conduct in the ‘ideally rational individual’, Murdoch (1998) suggests that the human is “more like an obscure system of energy out of which choices and visible acts of will emerge at intervals in ways which are often unclear and often dependent upon the condition of the system in between the moments of choice” (p. 344). She continues, if this is how human life should be represented, then the main question of moral philosophy would be: “are there any techniques for the purification and reorientation of an energy which is naturally selfish, in such a way that when moments of choice arrive we shall be sure of acting rightly?” (p. 344).

The quality of humility is offered as holding the possibility of supporting individuals to refine the practice of attention, as the humble person is able to displace personal needs, desires and wants in deference to the other. This is the point at which Murdoch’s philosophy comes closest to that of Simone Weil. Murdoch (1998) is drawing directly from Weilian philosophy and identifies this connection by stating, “Simone Weil tells us that the exposure of the soul to God condemns the selfish part of it not to suffering but to death” (p. 385). Although Murdoch’s position is not to maintain a religious notion of a personal God (or god), she embraces the vision of the individual who is humbled by something greater than his or herself. A contrast to the Kantian image who “confronted even with Christ turns away to consider the judgement of his own conscience and to hear the voice of his own reason” (p. 365). Humility can offer significant opportunities to move beyond the ego and beyond

selfishness. Humility offers us the possibility of developing attention. What she seeks to refute in the ‘Kantian Man-God’ culminates in the ‘humble individual’. Murdoch writes:

The good man is humble; he is very unlike the big neo-Kantian Lucifer...the humble man, because he sees himself as nothing, can see other things as they are. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 385)

The selflessness articulated previously as the key to attention and the access to seeing the world through the light of goodness, is inherent in the humble individual. This is not a form of selflessness that obliterates the self, but is built from the experiences of the individual over the course of his or her life.

The humble individual is able to love *others* and through this love can see things as they are; able to “pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 376-7). The humble individual is motivated to act morally through the quality of his or her attachments to others in their world, through specific life experiences and attentive relationships with others. In this understanding of the world, moral choices are not the function of an unimpeded will, but rather the humility to embrace the ties that connect us to others in the world and act accordingly. Murdoch writes:

If I attend properly I will have no choices and this is the ultimate condition to be aimed at. This is in a way the reverse of Hampshire’s picture, where our efforts are supposed to be directed to increasing our freedom by conceptualising as many different possibilities of action as possible...The ideal situation, on the contrary, is rather to be represented as a kind of ‘necessity’...the idea of a patient, loving regard, directed upon a person, a thing, a situation, presents the will not as unimpeded movement, but as something very much more like ‘obedience’. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 331)

To accede to this obedience requires humility. Humility is an integral element in engaging in the endless task of attention, as it enables individuals to embrace the understanding that there are others in the world, as equally real as oneself. The moral task before us is to attend to them justly and lovingly so that we may understand reality through connections and human relationships, and not just objective measures and the unfettered will.

Humility is also important in the idea of perfection to encourage attentive individuals to see their efforts as steps along the way and not the end point in the journey. Yet the humility necessary to engage in the act of attention is hard to attain as “humility is a rare virtue and an unfashionable one and one which is hard to discern” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 385). The ‘ideally

rational individual' promoted through literature, politics and philosophy is not humble; this pervasive image endorses humans to look inward for their answers. However, the humble individual avoids the "avaricious tentacles of the self" (p. 385) and eschews self-aggrandisement. The humble individual is the person who "is not by definition the good man, [but] perhaps he is the kind of man who is most likely of all to become good" (p. 385).

Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the concept of attention to build a substantive philosophical foundation for arguments presented later in the study. At the outset of this chapter, Murdoch's concerns with the 'shallow and flimsy' image of humanity presented within the philosophy of her time were described. The legacy of Kant, in which the human supplanted 'god', produced an image of the human as an 'ideally rational individual'. This image of the human situates morality as a problem of sufficient rationality and reason: to make a moral decision a survey and assay of the 'facts' (and separation of values) offers a rational direction for action. The primary metaphor for the ideally rational individual is action and movement. Vision or moral insight is considered incomprehensible, unmeasurable and therefore superfluous, but Murdoch argues that this understanding of morality confuses the measurement of the inner life with the value of the inner life. She seeks to defend the important role of the inner life through the concept of attention, the 'just and loving gaze'.

Attention is described as a moral task and a practice; something every individual may morally benefit from, but a skill to be honed and refined. Rather than reclaim the role of 'God' within human lives, Murdoch explores attention as a form of prayer without the need for 'God'. To direct attention appropriately, Murdoch seeks to reclaim the metaphysical background through external goodness. Through Plato's analogy of the cave goodness can be understood as a guiding light that, through a magnetic connection to love, calls attentive individuals away from the narcissistic light of the fire towards the light of the sun. A clearer understanding of reality requires a deeper understanding of morals, not a movement away from them; through the light of goodness, the world is clearly illuminated. Perceiving the world 'as it really is' is contingent upon the unique understanding of the individual and their progressive moral development.

This understanding of morality is different to that of the 'ideally rational individual'. The 'ideally rational individual' is concerned with extending the breadth of his or her moral decisions, assessed and determined by a committee of peers through exposition and

assessment of behaviours. The 'ideally rational individual' is concerned with freedom, honesty and sincerity and affixes 'goodness' like a label to certain actions in the world. Murdoch counters this image for its lack of plausibility, validity and commendation. She argues that this image stems from egotistical individualism, desiring to be 'free' to determine moral actions. A more accurate understanding of our moral conduct in the world needs to take into account the role of the inner life in preparing the individual for moral decisions and highlight the humility that is required to accept some choices as already 'decided' through our loving attachments to others. This is an endless task, and a greater understanding of the moral life is incrementally revealed through attentive relationships. Contemporary substitutes for god – reason, science, history – cannot offer an accurate account for purpose in life, but a deeper examination of human experience in everyday lives through the practice of attention offers a possibility.

Chapter Three

Neoliberalism, Ethics, and Education

Introduction

As articulated within Chapter One, Murdoch's philosophy negotiates between incongruent ideas to negotiate her own unique philosophical position and this is particularly true of her illustration of the moral human being; her philosophical argumentation oscillates between rejections of particular images of the human and the development of her own image of what the human is and should be. As articulated by Murdoch (1998), philosophy is often perceived to make no progress due to movements that build and break elaborate theories. But such argumentation is necessary in order to enact a return to contemplating truths held as 'obvious', yet underpinned by questionable first premises.

Neoliberalisms¹⁵ are situated as the only way, a 'there is no alternative' approach to governance and the direction of human life (Fitzsimmons et al., 1999; Olssen, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Peters, 2011; Roberts, 2004, 2014; Roberts & Peters, 2008). Neoliberal effects on early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand are felt strongly due to the advancement of the competitive business model, shaping governmental policy and educational practices. Despite changes in government, the market model of governance for early childhood education has remained since the late 1980s. The influence of neoliberal forms of governance upon the landscape of early childhood education and colonising effects upon Māori tamariki (children) cannot be overstated (May, 2019; Ritchie et al., 2014; Sims, 2017). Although Murdoch wrote philosophy in a similar time to schools of thought that underpin modern neoliberal approaches (Hayek; The Chicago School), her philosophy did not specifically address 'neoliberalism' as it has been conceptualised and debated in contemporary times. Yet, enacting a return to contemplating the 'truths' of neoliberalisms can support a reconsideration of what is held to be 'obvious'. Murdoch was concerned with many concepts that can speak to the issues faced from the enactment of neoliberalisms today, such as the depiction of the moral agent, individualism, and the notion of freedom. Murdoch's

¹⁵ The use of the term neoliberalisms rather than neoliberalism is drawn from Stewart and Roberts (2015) who argue for this plural term due to the ways in which neoliberalism is multiplied into numerous forms, each with their own set of distinct features but underpinned by common characteristics. Although this point will be made later in the discussion of neoliberalisms, it is important to explain why this term is being used in the plural prior to this later discussion, and to avoid a jarring transition from the singular to the plural within this section.

arguments hold relevance for our times and as a response to the impacts of neoliberal policies upon early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The next section of this chapter will outline neoliberalisms in depth as it is important to understand the complexities of these ideas to illustrate the contemporary early childhood situation. This section will focus on neoliberalisms with reference to early childhood education is explored. The ‘slippery’ nature of neoliberalisms is articulated in order to clarify the ways in which neoliberal theories, practices, and the lived experiences of those affected by these theories and practices, are inseparable.

The moral individual as described by Murdoch and her contemporaries is then brought into conversation with contemporary neoliberalisms. Murdoch’s main points of argument against the ‘liberal’ individual is sketched out, with reference to some critical points of departure. Liberalism will only be regarded in light of Murdoch’s interpretations of the limits of the ‘ideally rational individual’ with subsequent implications for the Murdochian image. Liberalism(s) and neoliberalism(s) are important concepts in this chapter for differing purposes. It is not the focus of this chapter to consider the many aspects of (and fissures in) liberalism. Parallels between a ‘liberal’ image and contemporary neoliberal ideas are drawn. While it would be remiss to disregard Murdoch’s arguments against ‘liberalism’, it would be distracting to consider her image against a wider analysis of liberalism; this is not the focus of this study. However, Murdochian arguments against the limitations of the ‘ideally rational individual’ will present a particular understanding of ‘liberalism’. Murdoch drew upon this specific image of the liberal individual in order to articulate problems in relation to the concept of attention, a notion of ethics, and a consideration of freedom. Her description of this image’s overreliance on the scientific image of the human and the demise of metaphysics is explored in depth. The notion of freedom invoked by this image is contrasted with Murdoch’s responses, with a view to building towards the later argument in relation to neoliberal ideas.

Following this, a section devoted to a critique of neoliberalisms in relation to Murdoch’s concerns will be discussed. Some questions about how education is shaped through the dominant economic gaze will be raised. Considerations of freedom and autonomy are strengthened by the concept of attention as a means to enhance an approach to freedom that is less about ‘autonomy’ and more concerned with human connections and responsiveness. These ideas resonate strongly with early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. As the dominant image of the human within the neoliberal modes of governance is that of the *homo oeconomicus* (Foucault, 2008), or the ‘rational autonomous

individual’, and neoliberalisms as a form of governance that promotes the neoliberal vision for the world through a “hybrid discourse insinuating the economic into the democratic and vice versa” (Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 31), this vision needs redress within the collective values of early childhood education. Murdochian attention offers an opportunity to explore this facet of human ‘freedom’ and a response to the individualism of neoliberalisms. It is this vision, and the projection of this image into educational policy (and subsequent practice) that is brought into question by Murdochian theory within the conclusion of this chapter.

The Neoliberal Subject and Early Childhood Education

It is the purpose of this section to illustrate the image of the neoliberal subject within contemporary society. In this section, the neoliberal subject is discussed in relation to the adult, the child, and the domain of education, but due to the pervasive nature of neoliberal discourses, these subjects and domains cannot be fully extracted from each other and will be discussed in a more fluid format to illuminate their intricacies. Furthermore, the slippages between neoliberalisms in educational systems, educational policies, and human experiences are unable to be extracted from one another. In order to illuminate an image of the neoliberal subject, it is necessary to coalesce images drawn from more than one source. As the concept of neoliberalism is diversely discussed, debated and interpreted, this section will draw from multiple sources to make sense of the theory, practices and lived experiences of neoliberalism within early childhood education.

Neoliberal effects on governance have been felt most strongly within educational and social policies due to the advancement of the competitive business model in these domains. Within neoliberalism, economic rationality is considered to be the appropriate approach to governance, built from the notion of human freedom in liberalism as the enactment of the ‘unfettered will’. The underpinning logic of neoliberalisms doesn’t simply reduce governance, but seeks to refine systems and boundaries of governance it so that governance is experienced by citizens in such a way as to enhance their productivity. Productivity enhancement becomes self-reinforced over time through internalisation, self-management, and depiction of competition as a ‘truth’ of human existence. Furthermore, neoliberal modes of governance are reinforced as ‘the only way’ due to the requirement for humans working within these conditions to comply with these forms of governance; in order to remain ‘competitive’ (Peters, 2011, p. 6) it is necessary to ‘play the game’ to survive. Peters and Tesar (2018) assert that the theory of neoliberalism “takes the view that individual liberty and

freedom are the paramount goals of human subjects in the civilisation” (p. 2), but the practices of neoliberalism are varied and diverse and do not always align with the theory. Likewise, in articulating the necessity of considering neoliberalism within early childhood education, Vintimilla (2014) highlights the distinction between neoliberalism as a set of economic policies and the experiences of neoliberalism as a lived rationality, something pervasive “which expands its normative ideology and values to other spheres of our lives through specific discourses and practices” (p. 80). As such, neoliberalism is a “doctrine, an ideology, which argues that free market – and the market exchange – is an *ethic in itself*, constantly capable of re-inventing itself and acting as a guide for all human subjects’ actions” (Peters & Tesar, 2018, p. 5, emphasis added).

Early childhood education experiences differing forms of growth under varied governments (see May, 2009), yet economic ‘sensibilities’ have been adopted by both of the majority¹⁶ governmental parties, leading to commonalities in governance. Despite changes in governance, there has been little movement away from the market model for early childhood educational provision; due to the pervasiveness of the neoliberal mode of governance within Western society (Olssen & Peters, 2005) several governments, organisations and industries maintain the tenets of neoliberalism. Functioning as “a malleable, adaptable ideology, capable of surviving and indeed flourishing under both centre-left and centre-right governments”, Stewart and Roberts (2015, p. 239) argue that neoliberal discourse is conceived more clearly as a set of discourses rather than as a single unitary perspective or position. It is important to identify multiple *neoliberalisms* “each with their own distinctive features, but with some underlying ideas in common” (p. 239) and remain sensitive to the slippery nature of neoliberalisms as policy, practice, and lived experience(s) within early childhood education. The ubiquitous nature of neoliberalisms within education flow into other lived experiences of children, families and teachers. Resisting the temptation to codify neoliberalism into a single homogeneous entity moves the focus away from a singular narrative, towards a vision that embraces complexity. In respecting the difference between ideology and lived experience, there are the grounds to generate an understanding of neoliberalism in accordance with the Murdochian drive to respond to persons and develop a theory that is grounded within human experience.

Peters (2011) writes that “Neoliberalism represents a struggle between two forms of welfare or social policy discourse based on opposing and highly charged ideological

¹⁶ Within Aotearoa New Zealand, two major parties predominate: Labour and National.

metaphors of ‘individualism’ and ‘community’” (p. 1). The individual citizen is exemplified as the “rational optimiser” (Peters, 2011, p. 44) who must be viewed as having the knowledge to most suitably discern his or her own interests and needs. Furthermore, individuals should be given the authority to act within society as “rational utility maximisers” (Peters, 2011, p. 34), guiding political actions towards minimalist intervention and shaping communities to be based “fundamentally in competition” (Peters, 2011, p. 39). Peters (2011) asserts that Hayek’s discussion can be considered to have constituted much of the present definitions of neoliberalism (Peters, 2011). According to Hayek (1948), true individualism contains a singular truth of human existence, that “if left free, men will often achieve more than individual human reason could design or foresee” (p.11). One of Hayek’s central themes is that localised understandings enacted in the market are more valid than externalised ‘textbook planning’ (Peters, 2011). Hayek (1948) argues in favour of an “unorganised knowledge which cannot be called scientific” (p. 80) and is respectful of “the knowledge of the particular circumstances of time and place” (p. 80). He argues localised knowledge, which is responsive to the immediate demands of the community, is displaced in favour of externalised experts who are deemed “better equipped with theoretical or technical knowledge” (p. 81).

In Hayek’s view, freedom is incompatible with equality. Hayek (1948) clearly asserts that individuals are not equal and it is only through recognition of this inequality that all humans can be treated equally. Hayek claims “If all men were completely equal in their gifts and inclinations, we should have to treat them differently in order to achieve any sort of social organization” (pp. 15-16). Consequently, in applying a universalised approach each individual can be left to “find his own level” (p. 16). He differentiates between making individuals equal and treating them equal, writing, “there is all the difference in the world between treating people equally and attempting to make them equal...the first is the condition of a free society, the second means, as De Tocqueville described it ‘a new form of servitude’” (p. 16). Hayek’s economic theory is not concerned with redressing the social order and redistributing societal assets to put all individuals in an equal position, rather Hayek seeks a mechanism in which all individuals will be treated in the same fashion. He argues that this mode of governance will furnish individuals with the autonomy necessary to make their own place within the economic market. Hayek argues that rationality does not govern the individual, rather that a person is “by nature lazy and indolent, improvident and wasteful” (p.11) and it is only through the circumstantial power of the market that she or he can be made to behave carefully; individuals actions are rewarded for the value attributed to them by

others within the social setting, forcing individuals to be responsive to the demands of the community.

Echoes of Hayek's assertions can be heard within the speeches of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Deng Xiaoping as identified by Peters and Tesar (2018). Regan asserted "government is the problem" (Peters & Tesar, 2018, p. 4), Xiaoping argued, "planning and market forces are not the essential difference between socialism and capitalism" (Peters & Tesar, 2018, p. 4) and it is worth quoting Thatcher at length to understand the full influence of Hayek's philosophy:

I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand "I have a problem it is the Government's job to cope with it! ...they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people to look to themselves first. (Thatcher, 1987, cited in Peters & Tesar, 2018, p. 5)

The 'lazy, indolent' individual is viewed through Thatcher's words: If you are not looking to yourself first you are casting your problems out to others to deal with; You are improvident and wasteful. The government must set up the situation where the circumstantial power of the market will enable individuals to 'behave carefully' and reward those who are engaging in acts valued within their community. The story that is 'woven into reality' (Moss, 2019), situates competitiveness at the heart of human existence and the best way for encouraging individuals, families, communities, and nations to thrive. This is the theoretical understanding of neoliberalism, but as articulated earlier, the practices and indeed lived reality of neoliberalism are quite different.

Originally conceived as a community driven venture (May, 2013), early childhood education presently functions in the neoliberal competitive market. This situation has been written about at length by numerous scholars within many socio-political and cultural contexts (Lee, 2012; Moss, 2009; Osgood, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2014; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015; Smith, Tesar, & Myers, 2016). 'Integral' aspects of children's experiences and the overall direction and constitution of early childhood education in many countries have been heavily affected by the neoliberal model. Families are characterised as 'individual consumers' seeking to participate within the competitive market (Peters, 2011, p. 6) and children are positioned as (future) human capital to advance the value of the state (Buchanan, 2016; Smith et al., 2016). Community based-organisations are in demise, while corporate-run

early childhood centres flourish due, in part, to the presentation of the neoliberal model as ‘the only truth’ (Moss, 2009). Rather than being seen as one option amongst many, the market model is presented as the optimum means to promote competition (which is argued to drive up ‘quality’) to allow families the ‘choice’ to determine the experiences they want for their children. The discourse of ‘choice’ has origins in a sentimentalised understanding of children as agentic, co-opted to reconceive child ‘autonomy’ as a proxy for the child-consumer who maintains self-sufficiency (De Bie et al., 2010).

Families who participated within early childhood education as a part of being in the local community are now encouraged to do so for the educational advancements of their children and the betterment of their children as individuals who will compete in the future market. Privatised education situates education as an individual benefit and responsibility – the responsibility for education is placed within the hands of the individual rather than being a state responsibility. Thatcher’s vision of a populous that looks to themselves first, in action.

However, these are the subtleties of governance and individual responsibility in early childhood education. Within neoliberal governance, the state “seeks to create an individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur” (Peters, 2011, p. 44). Rather than position early childhood education as an individual benefit, neoliberal positioning of children as ‘future human capital’, situates early childhood education as an ‘investment’ into which governments can realise high rates of ‘returns’, reducing later spending on other social welfare areas - health, justice, social welfare (Delaune, 2017; Jenson, 2009; Lister, 2004). Within this mode of understanding, the relationship between government and children can be likened to a producer and a product. The experiences of children’s present lives are based upon their future productivity. In order to minimise the negative impacts to the child-‘product’ educational institutions are ‘irresponsibilised’ in order to delimit the areas of affect they hold under their welfare agenda (Cradock, 2007). Teachers are ‘irresponsibilised’ through increasing levels of surveillance; self-regulation, external measurement, and governmental directives. At best, these forms of governance reduce the educational relationship, at worse they transmute teaching into a technical set of performances between teacher and child.

With the prelation of the mechanisms of competition came the concurrent ascendancy of discourses of measurement, performativity, and outputs. Early childhood teachers are expected to perform within these conditions “under the threat of spot inspections, or visits from regulatory bodies and the promise of funding” (Smith et al., 2016, p. 130). Early childhood settings are produced as spaces where children’s ‘potential’ needs to be realised,

with ramifications for subsequent pedagogy. Calls for answerability in response to ‘crises’ in which such potential is not realised create the conditions to illicit “demands for accountability, performativity and standardised approaches to [educators’] practice, all of which mark a pronounced movement towards centralised control and prescription, which poses a potential threat to professional autonomy and morale” (Osgood, 2006, p. 6). Such occurrences can be seen within the experience of Suzi Sluyter (Strauss, 2014) who has chosen to publicly resign rather than teach within the standardised neoliberal mode. Or locally within the debate of the effectiveness of *Te Whāriki* (see Blaiklock, 2010, 2013; and Smith, 2013 for more on this debate); there is an intensification of workload characterised by the increase in measurement and assessment and a decrease in the range of responsibilities given to teachers (Apple, 2013). The intention of the technical approach to education is to contain the outcomes of children’s learning and attempt a level of control to produce children in particular ways. It is important to consider the notion that childhood is produced by political, social, cultural, and economic forces operating on it, a critique of positivist and normative constructions of ‘childhood’ and opening to “antipositivist, hermeneutic epistemological orientations” (Steinberg, 2011, p. 5).

Education is not a ‘product’ in the common consumable (and returnable) sense for experiences cannot be unlived, and the effects of these experiences become part of the fabric of a child’s life. Additionally, the point is made that “when it comes to ‘childcare’, parents prove more reluctant to switch their custom” (Moss, 2009, p. 18) under the assumption that their experiences are comparable to those within other early childhood settings. The ‘rational’ aspect of the decision making process within the free-market provision of early childhood education is brought into question here, as there are marked differences in the provision of quality between education providers, particularly between ‘for-profit’ and ‘not-for-profit’ providers (Mitchell, 2002; Mitchell & Brooking, 2007; Moss, 2009). However, parents, situated as ‘consumers’, frequently do not have the means (options/funds) or understanding (experience/knowledge of a ‘good product’) to make rational economic decisions (Moss, 2009). The equation is not simply an economic one, but one that is impacted upon by other aspects of human life. Hayek’s assertion that ‘acts of value’ within the community will be rewarded is brought into question in the domain of early childhood education. In neoliberalisms, ‘value’ and ‘rationality’ are measured economically, and ‘similar enough’ quality means that decisions will be encouraged to be made based solely upon cost. The theory that the free-market would enhance product quality is contested by the actuality of a ‘user-pays’ system in which varying quality and costs are generated in response to parent’s

levels of affordability (Morabito & Vandebroek, 2014). The idea of equality enhanced through a system which treats individuals indiscriminately (as argued by Hayek) is exposed as an illusion in light of the growing educational gap in an education system enabled to generate profit. In the early childhood ‘market’, enhanced educational experiences give cause for higher prices, low-cost early childhood education invoke reductions in quality indicators (ratios, group-sizes, qualifications) (Moss, 2009). Furthermore, consideration needs to be given to the re-colonisation of te ao Māori early childhood practices. The tensions between the collectivism that underpin *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017), and the individualism of neoliberalisms need to be brought to the fore (Ritchie et al., 2014; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014).

As articulated above, privatisation situates education as an individual benefit and responsibility; benefits enhanced through increased ‘knowledge’ (situated as a commodity in the market) and responsibility is placed upon families to utilise their personal resources to acquire this knowledge in order to promote individual advancement. On the other side of the equation, the dominance of the market model produces early childhood spaces where children are enculturated into the neoliberal climate, prompting them to be “compliant, productive, employable citizens” (Sims & Waniganayake, 2015, p. 336). A reconsideration of the discourses, constructions and institutions of the child can serve to re-examine the colonising effects they may produce (Cannella & Viruru, 2004). Children are introduced into the wider culture of competitiveness through participation in a ‘user pays’ system, potentially channelling them into high or low quality educational provision based on their parent’s economic resources. A dominant discourse within present neoliberal early childhood education is the drive to produce ‘life-long learners’. The notion of continually learning, growing and developing is not at odds with Murdochian philosophy, however, the rationale behind this movement – to enhance the position of the (future) nation-state by manufacturing a generation of citizens capable of adapting, evolving and maintaining a competitive edge in the future market – is. This discourse is promoted by international bodies such as the World Bank (2003) who argues that ‘life-long learning’ equips individuals to participate within the shifting market of the “global knowledge economy”, which is:

...placing new demands on citizens, who need more skills and knowledge to be able to function in their day-to-day lives. Equipping people to deal with these demands requires a new model of education and training, a model of lifelong learning. A lifelong learning framework encompasses learning throughout the lifecycle, from early

childhood through retirement...Lifelong learning is crucial to *preparing workers to compete in the global economy*. But it is important for other reasons as well. By improving people's ability to function as members of their communities, education and training increase social cohesion, reduce crime, and *improve income distribution*. (p. xvii, emphasis added).

Participation in the community is based upon participation in the 'knowledge economy', enabling individuals to 'function as members of their communities' not for ethical purposes, but as a means of reducing state costs and improving 'income distribution'. Functional community membership is inextricable from the directives of education to produce neoliberal beings: rational autonomous individuals who can compete within the free-market (Baltodano, 2012). In general, the situation of education within the discourse of a 'knowledge economy' is "taken for granted by governments, mass media, public opinion, and most scholars today" (Livingstone & Guile, 2012, p. xv). For pre-service teachers in institutions of higher learning, neoliberalisms shape university policies to mask how educational values can be redefined to reflect economic ideas (Chapman et al., 2015). In early childhood education, children are prepared for their future employment and produced into 'life-long consumers' in an 'educative' space in which "market-driven identities and values are both produced and legitimated" (Giroux, 2004, p. 494).

In summary, neoliberalism is a theory, a practice and a lived experience, each with very differing effects/affects upon the individuals in the society. Neoliberalism casts individuals as 'rational utility maximisers' whose autonomy to participate within the free market is paramount. Indeed freedom is equated with such participation, and people who are not maximising their utility or are seeking support from social services are the 'lazy, indolent' individuals characterised by Hayek (1948). He argued that external governance and scientific rationalisation of the market was erroneous. Rather, individuals were more able to respond to the immediate demands of the market due to their intricate knowledge of the situation and, if they did not behave rationally, the circumstantial power of the market would force them to do so.

In enacting neoliberal ideas, governments limit their intervention within social services, only insofar as to promote the maximum stimulation of the economy. Early childhood education has been dramatically changed by neoliberal policy, with a predominant number of early childhood settings owned by private individuals or corporate entities. The neoliberal mode of governance has enhanced competition between early childhood settings, increasing

managerialism, centralised strategies and affecting educators' practices. In the privatisation of early childhood, education can be (inappropriately) positioned as a product and teachers as a part of an educational machine (Moss, 2009; Peters, 2018). Within the neoliberal drive to reduce social spending, children are viewed as 'potent-potential' and early childhood education as an 'investment' which can reduce future welfare costs, and/or enhance the 'assets' of the nation in order to compete in the global market. Such a view reduces the responsibility of the early childhood teacher, as education settings are 'irresponsibilised' in order to delimit the possible negative effect (Cradock, 2007). Again, this is not always the case in practice, as standards for many early childhood settings are minimalised in the push-pull for maximum utility and minimal restrictions on the market. The theory that supported the view that the market would drive up quality has not been realised in reality.

Neoliberalisms and Murdochian Attention

According to Murdoch, in the desire for 'freedom' two essential elements were lost: the diverse concepts that would enable individuals to represent their reality, and the ability to see beyond the limited scope of this vision. Within neoliberal theory, freedom of the individual is measured by his or her access to, and autonomy within, the market; the 'unfettered will' of neoliberal theory is not the same as that of liberalism, where minimal intervention is the key to freedom. However, the liberal and neoliberal ideas have had very similar effects upon the image of the human, raising the need to reconnect with the philosophy of Iris Murdoch in order to address contemporary concerns.

Responding to the domains of Anglo-Saxon and French philosophy (which she identifies as enlightenment, romanticism, liberalism) to piece together the human of her time, Murdoch (1998) takes the stance that the image of the moral agent is fundamentally impoverished within liberalism; in her view, Western philosophical traditions have created "far too shallow and flimsy an idea of human personality" (p. 287) leaving humanity poorer for it. According to Murdoch, liberalism and the rise of the welfare state has resulted in the loss of philosophical concepts necessary to the debates relevant within the liberal tradition, including the concepts of freedom and autonomy. The aims of liberalism are to "secure the political conditions that are necessary for the exercise of personal freedom" (Shklar, 1989), which may promote certain aspects as central; morality (Shklar, 1989), utilitarianism (Mill, 2011), freedom (Rawls, 1985) to name a few.

Murdoch writes that “Our central conception is still a debilitated form of Mill’s equation: happiness equals freedom equals personality” (p. 290). More extensively, she writes:

We no longer use a spread-out substantial picture of the manifold of virtues of man and society. We no longer see man¹⁷ against a background of values, of realities, which transcend him. We picture man as a brave naked will surrounded by an easily comprehended empirical world. What we have never had, of course, is a satisfactory Liberal theory of personality, a theory of man as free and separate and related to a rich and complicated world from which, as a moral being, he has much to learn. We have bought the Liberal theory as it stands, because we have wished to encourage people to think of themselves as free, at the cost of surrendering the background. (p. 290)

Hume, Kant, Hobbes, and Mill are identified as chief players in this ‘flimsy image’, although Murdoch also draws from Hampshire¹⁸ heavily in her argumentation. It is from these philosophers and “with friendly help from mathematical logic and science, we derive the idea that reality is finally a quantity of material atoms and that significant discourse must relate itself directly or indirectly to a reality so conceived” (pp. 287–288). This idea has been introduced within Chapter Two, and will be extended further within Chapter Four, but it is of significant importance to identify the role of the scientific here also, particularly through the segmentation of the individual into discreet measurable units, and the necessity for ‘hard’ evidence to make claims towards an understanding of the human.

The “ideal citizen of the liberal state” (Murdoch, 1998, pp. 365-6) is generated from the ‘age of science’, promoting confident rationality but also a sense of alienation from the universe. This sense of alienation was discussed in the previous chapter, through the image of the ideally rational individual who is unable to shift this feeling due to the legacy of Kantian rationality, which endows the individual with the capacity for objective assessment. Yet, one of Murdoch’s central criticisms of liberal traditions is that an overreliance upon the scientific lens (not only to investigate the human, but also as the correct mode of picturing the human), unsatisfactorily represents the intricate reality of the human individual. This is a failure that is composed of two parts “not only the erosion of the available conceptual resources for thinking about the self, but of a more general loss of the kind of theorizing that made such thinking possible, namely ‘metaphysics’” (Antonaccio, 2012, p. 217).

¹⁷ See Note 2

¹⁸ See note 11

The liberal concern to advance the freedom of the human concurrently delimits the realm of the metaphysical, and reduces the moral individual to ‘rational decision-maker’. She writes:

...we derive from Kant, and also Hobbes and Bentham through John Stuart Mill, a picture of the individual as a free rational will. With the removal of Kant’s metaphysical background this individual is seen as alone... monarch of all he surveys and totally responsible for his actions. Nothing transcends him...his inner life is resolved into facts and choices and his beliefs... [And] can only be identified through its expression. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 288)

An image of humanity as rational, detached, free, and externally observable is produced in the desire for autonomous freedom.

Within neoliberalism, autonomous freedom is protected only insofar as is necessary to stimulate the economy; the ‘will to be competitive’ is constantly shaped and enticed in order to maximise the productivity of market. Neoliberal freedom is an intricate relationship between the individual and the state. The degree of governmental involvement is to be extended only to this point: to encourage individual rights, and the vitality of market competition (Peters, 2011, p. 44). Harvey (2005) asserts:

The founding figures of neoliberal thought took political ideals of human dignity and individual freedom as fundamental, as ‘the central values of civilization’. In so doing they chose wisely, for these are indeed compelling and seductive ideals. These values, they held, were threatened not only by fascism, dictatorships, and communism, but by all forms of state intervention that substituted collective judgements for those of individuals free to choose. (p. 5)

This notion of freedom, which is indeed ‘compelling and seductive’, takes the stance that compromises to freedom threaten liaisons with totalitarianism, and are equitable to the authority of the state over the autonomy of the individual.

Despite her concerns with the ways that liberalism misrepresents the human, Murdoch was also concerned with the autonomy of the individual. It could appear that Murdoch wholeheartedly rejected the liberal image of the human, but her relationship with this individual is more complex than it appears. As illustrated by Antonaccio (2012), Murdoch respected the liberal tradition’s vehement defence of the ‘real impenetrable person’ (investigated further in Chapter Seven) and passionately defended this central liberal value

(pp. 212-3). Murdoch (1998) defines this value as “a respect for the individual person...however eccentric, private, messy, and generally tiresome he may be” (p. 275). Although she rejects the individualistic and egocentric natures that are essential to the ‘Kantian man-god’, she does not hold that these aspects are essential to the image of the individual and defends the concept of the liberal individual as a “substantial, impenetrable, individual, indefinable and valuable” (p. 294). However, even in her defence of the individual, Murdoch did not defend a form of individualism that promotes self over others. As articulated in Chapter Two, the humble individual is the preferred ideal in the concept of attention. Humans are not ‘free’, or as Murdoch writes, humans are “not isolated free choosers, monarchs of all we survey, but benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy” (p. 293). Murdoch points out that we are ridden by anxiety, which encourages us to produce a fictitious, self-satisfying, falsifying *veil*, occluding our vision of the world (p. 369).

The central values protected in neoliberalisms, the earlier stated ‘compelling and seductive ideals’, need to be considered in light of Murdoch’s understanding of the distinction between fantasy and imagination in the concept of attention. She expands upon her depiction of humans as ‘anxiety-ridden’ and encouraged to fantastical images, writing:

We are largely mechanical creatures, the slaves of relentlessly strong selfish forces the nature of which we scarcely comprehend. At best, as decent persons, we are usually very specialised. We behave well in areas where this can be done fairly easily and let other areas of possible virtue remain undeveloped...The self is a divided thing, and the whole of it cannot be redeemed any more than it can be known. (pp. 381–382)

At this point, it would appear that Murdoch’s assessment is that the human is irredeemable and the selfish and deluded nature of the individual that fabricates a fantasy in order to understand reality, is unable to be transformed. Yet this is not the completion of Murdoch’s illustration. To make room for the possibility of growth and change, Murdoch draws from Plato’s analogy of the cave to expand upon her conceptualisation of the human.

Murdoch (1998) argues that the prisoners in the cave are first drawn to the shadows created by the fire, yet the point of the analogy is for the prisoners to move beyond the fire and into the true light of the sun. Here, Murdoch defines the fire as the “self, the old unregenerate psyche, that great source of energy and warmth” (p. 382). If humans reduce themselves to this limited understanding and find no motivation to become aware of what is beyond this narcissistic source of fascination, they will mistake the fire for the sun and

misplace self-scrutiny for goodness (p. 383). Through the dominant projection of the liberal individual in moral philosophy, humans are not encouraged to move beyond the fire.

Murdoch (1998) explains: “When Kant wanted to find something clean and pure outside the mess of the selfish empirical psyche...His enquiry led him back again into the self, now pictured as angelic” (p. 368); despite Kant’s small metaphysical allowance, the delusion of unmitigated reason returned Kant to the self. Kant’s misstep was shared and magnified through a generation of philosophers that followed him. The moral agent is produced as an isolated, alienated will, offering two possibilities: “On one hand, Luciferian philosophy¹⁹ of adventures of the will, and on the other natural science” (p. 338).

Murdoch would argue that the compelling and seductive nature of the neoliberal images of the human is due to the way in which it creates this Luciferian compulsion – the desire to substitute a fantastical argument for the reality of the situation, one based in part upon the desires of the ‘fat relentless ego’. Like Murdoch’s arguments against the ‘liberal’ image, neoliberalisms do not encourage individuals to move beyond the ‘fire’ of the ego. Within neoliberal notions of freedom, there is ample space to preserve and indeed encourage selfishness and greed justified by the illusion of freedom presented through the arguments of ‘free access’ to the market. In this line of thought, those who prosper can be devolved of responsibility for those who fail, for if all humans are equally autonomous and capable of making rational decisions then they are solely responsible for their productivity or demise. The legacy of ‘movement’ over ‘vision’ as the primary way of understanding the actions of the human can be seen in the desire to ensure that continuous productivity is paramount, defining the validity of an individual within the ‘market’ and society.

Through a misconceived notion of freedom, the neoliberal individual is situated as free to exercise the unfettered will and the ego *and* protected from ethical entanglements, obligations to, or concerns for ‘unsuccessful’ individuals. Murdoch was wary of the ways in which the ego can move humans to transmute reality into fantasy, a characteristic she argued was present within the liberal individual (p. 292-3) and is certainly characteristic of neoliberal theories. She argues “reality is not a given whole. An understanding of this, a respect for the contingent, is essential to imagination as opposed to fantasy” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 294). The neoliberal imagination is the imagination of the ego – the desire to promote one’s individual interests in a competitive system, to advance oneself ahead of others, to see others as

¹⁹ ‘Luciferian’ is further explicated within Chapter 1 in the discussion of the influence of Plato, and in Chapter Two in the exploration of the concept of ‘demonic’ selfishness that creates fantasy in order to seek consolation.

economic subjects. Murdoch argues that the notion of freedom is not about freeing ourselves from connections to others, but being cognisant of the role these connections play within our lives, our decisions and our interpretation of freedom; we can still make our own choices to participate within the ‘market’, but to assume that individuals do not have to be responsible to each other is to engage in a particularly virulent form of narcissism, encouraged by neoliberal ideas.

Akin to the reductions invoked by the liberal image of the human, the neoliberal image has reduced the individual to the ‘economic unit’ and lost touch with the background to the human. These problems are generated through economic theory, the neoliberal affinity for quantifiable empirical research data and the desire for measurement of individuals. Within these understandings of the human there is a limiting effect, as they fail to recognise and appreciate the diversities and variations of the real impenetrable person. Furthermore, the neoliberal imagination is not an accurate representation of the real impenetrable person, but a misrepresentation in the national (global) desire to advance the economic situation of the nation-state. In creating an unnecessary dialectic between individual and community, there are significant aspects of human experiences that are omitted from neoliberal ideas. Murdoch would argue, that the presentation of the neoliberal agenda as the only ‘truth’ to be adhered to is limiting our understanding of the depth of human personality and the ability to be able to appreciate it.

Murdoch seeks an image of what she calls ‘human excellence’, defined by its relationship to goodness. It is the position of this study that this image holds potential to reconsider the centrality of neoliberalisms within contemporary education. Murdoch (1992) seeks excellence through her position that philosophy should be concerned with commending ‘a worthy ideal’ (p. 364). Murdoch maintains that goodness should be sovereign over other moral concepts, including freedom. Despite its sovereignty, goodness is difficult to understand not only because it is endless, but also because we deform goodness with many “false doubles” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 375). However, goodness cannot collapse into self-interest when combined with love and, although we may not be able to represent it accurately, we remain certain that ‘great’ does not equate to ‘perfect’; we *sense* the difference. Murdoch (1998) explains that we are capable of seeing and sensing the direction of goodness beyond ourselves, and can appreciate the ‘self’ as a place of illusion (p. 376). This is where the movement away from the ‘self’ in the form of ‘self’-ishness is “connected with the attempt to see the unself, to see and to respond to the real world in the light of a

virtuous consciousness” (p. 376). When viewed as a transcendent reality, goodness enhances our vision to remove the ‘veil’ and “join the world as it really is” (p. 377).

In ‘joining the world as it really is’, Murdoch’s focus on keeping philosophy within the realm of real human experience comes to the fore. In order to join the world, one must work within the world; to progress towards a realistic and experiential understanding of moral concepts. Murdoch (1998) was adamant that this increased understanding could only be wrought through reflection upon experience, guided by attention. Through continual work, moral concepts will reveal their unity; courage is an act of wisdom and love, freedom involves humility. However, moving towards unity cannot involve losing focus of the particular, nor losing sight of an external goodness by only attending to the particulars. Goodness involves the ability to not only grasp the particulars of each situation but to appreciate the sense of intuited moral unity and perceive the world in a unified manner; to connect with detail *and* to respect “distant transcendent perfection” (p. 383). Murdoch argues that the moral individual is capable of this moral task, capable of more than conceited self-reflection or unrealistic judgements. She argues that this is something that has been the cause of detailed investigation by philosophers, and “what the ordinary person does by instinct” (p. 377).

Yet how do we define the ideal individual? Murdoch (1998) is cagey about defining this person; she posits that we cannot sum up human excellence as “the world is aimless, chancy and huge, and we are blinded by the self” (p. 382). More importantly, she posits another reason we cannot fully encapsulate human excellence based upon Plato’s analogy, namely it “is *difficult* to look at the sun...it is easier to look at the converging edges than to look at the centre itself” (p. 382). Our looking towards the converging edges is enhanced through attention. Through magnetic tension, goodness and love are interconnected. However, neither the good nor love can be fully identified as “we are dealing with very difficult metaphors” (p. 384). Murdoch asserts that love is a concept disregarded within the philosophy of her time, displaced by discussions on freedom and autonomy (pp. 299-300). Yet through the concept of attention, freedom, love and the good are necessary cohabiters.

In the concept of attention, there is magnetic tension between goodness and love; when goodness is loved, we are enlivened, drawn towards perfection and flourish in the light of the sun. These movements are not simply a matter of choice, will and determination, but affected by desire and love and its relationship to goodness. In neoliberal and liberal traditions the relationship between goodness and freedom is in tension. Liberal freedom is connected to autonomy: the ‘unfettered will’ and the ability to determine one’s own actions based upon the

possibilities of choice. The notion of ‘goodness’ may limit the potential productivity of the market; a transcendent goodness shackles the will and binds it to an external and inalterable necessity. In order to de-shackle the human, the liberal notion of freedom reconceived the good as a relative set of options, and “an empty space into which human choice may move” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 380). Reducing the good to a space into which the will may move eliminates the influence transcendent goodness held over the individual. This indefinite nature of ‘liberal goodness’ is promoted by the desire for an unimpeded will and individual choice. Love does not feature within this image. Good inhabits a space considered “as empty and almost trivial, a mere word” (p. 381). Neoliberalisms are argued to be situated as an ‘ethic’ in themselves (Peters & Tesar, 2018). Yet in Murdoch’s view, goodness is not a matter of choice and creates an entirely different relationship to the notion of freedom; one which is not representative of an ‘unfettered will’ but more closely resembles ‘obedience’. As argued in the previous chapter, in this understanding of the world the movement of the will does not constitute moral ‘choice’ (p. 331). Rather, humility is brought to the fore as this quality will support the moral individual to accept the ties that connects him or her to others. Murdoch argues, “love is the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real” (p. 215). In appreciating the reality of another human, the idea of an ‘unfettered will’ needs redress. In this way, the ideal individual can be characterised as one who acquiesces to this ‘obedience’, someone who Murdoch identifies as ‘the humble individual’.

The unfettered will is dependent upon the ability to make choices, and humility is a key to understanding more about the position of ‘choices’. As stated earlier, freedom and autonomy are highly valued within liberal traditions. In situating the individual in the position where all one needs to do is to “objectively estimate the features of the goods, and...choose” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 305) the individual is placed in the ‘driving seat’ of all moral choices; the individual is in a position of autonomy to freely choose the path he/she will take. In the Murdochian position, the individual is not free in this sense. Murdoch is clear to state that freedom is not about “the sudden jumping of the isolated will in and out of an impersonal logical complex, it is a function of the progressive attempt to see a particular object clearly” (p. 317). When the moment of choice arrives, Murdoch describes a condition of ‘strange emptiness’, which is “hailed with delight by both wings of existentialism...the Kantian wing claims it as showing that we are free in relation to the reasons and the Surrealist wing claims it as showing that there are no reasons” (p. 328). But if we consider the concept of attention as a progressive journey towards a greater understanding of the good, then the moment of choosing is not strangely empty due to freedom of reason or lack of reason, but rather due to

the incremental work done prior to the moment. If we consider attention as a progressive endeavour, through which our moral vision is enhanced in ways that imperceptibly builds up structures of value around us, then we can develop an understanding of the ‘crucial’ choices in our life being guided by our experiences, interactions and relationships leading us to that ‘choice’, invoking a new relationship with choice, choosing and ‘freedom’ (p. 329). Freedom is less about the large decisions to be made, and more about the small moments that led us to the moment of choice; less about grand motions of ‘choosing’ and more about the progress made to get there.

This notion of freedom is not concerned with the freedom of the individual from an external background, but is reliant upon this background and the humility to accept the choices that will be made as a result of our connections to others in the world. Moreover, this notion of freedom is not concerned with the ‘unfettered will’ of liberalism, for “explicit choice seems now less important; less decisive (since much of the ‘decision’ lies elsewhere) and less obviously something to be ‘cultivated’” (p. 331). This notion of freedom is moving against the notion that freedom is a struggle for autonomy and towards the idea that freedom is our connections to others; away from the image of the human as an ‘impersonal rational thinker’ and towards the image of the human as a unified being who is afforded the capacity for moral vision, and who can exercise some control over the direction and focus of this vision through the practice of attention (p. 322).

Antonaccio (2012) argues that Murdoch’s philosophy contains a level of complexity that can accommodate “multiple forms of human aspiration” (p. 213). Although Murdoch’s notion of freedom is incompatible with the narrow liberal notion of the ‘ideally rational individual’, this is not to imply that there is no freedom. Antonaccio (2012) expands further, writing:

Murdoch’s commitment to a unitary conception of the good did not lead her to deny the “infinite variegations” among different people with different aspirations. Rather she regarded the perfection of goodness – the ability to see beyond the self – as the prerequisite to a liberal respect for persons. (pp. 214–215)

The narrow image of freedom presented within the philosophy of Murdoch’s contemporaries reduces our understanding of the capacity of the moral individual. Yet this is not to assert that there is no merit in the liberal struggle to promote the freedom of the individual. Murdoch (1998) is clear to demonstrate respect for this tradition, but expresses reservations about the simplicity of this freedom; for Murdoch the technique of becoming free is more complicated

than that realised through liberalism, and to support a liberal notion of freedom that welcomes the moral life “we need to be enabled to think in terms of *degrees* of freedom, and to picture, in a non-metaphysical, non-totalitarian and non-religious sense, the transcendence of reality” (p. 293, emphasis added).

In order to do so, Murdoch advocates for the realisation that there is intricate complexity to the moral life (which is in effect all aspects of life in Murdochian philosophy), and, in order to appreciate this complexity, we need to enhance the subtlety with which we comprehend moral concepts through the practice of attention. As stated earlier, Murdoch was concerned with philosophy as a truth seeking and truth revealing undertaking. The ways in which philosophical positions present reality, and how relatable they are to human life, are critical aspects of validity. Any philosophical positions that fail to accurately represent human experience fail to fit the necessary criteria of philosophy, which is to reveal a truth about human existence. Murdoch critiques the liberal notion of freedom as it is not representative of the reality of human life. People do not consider themselves free and unfettered from all other people. Their moral choices are not hinged upon autonomy and rationality, nor solely related to external action. Rather, reality and freedom are complexly connected between ourselves and others and reliant upon the moral imagination. The moral imagination is not only a function of will, but rather “the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 354).

When the practice of attention is refined over the course of time, and relationships are developed through love (allowing for the magnetic tension to goodness), freedom cannot be seen to be a product of the unfettered will or the rational autonomous individual; human freedom cannot be represented through this iteration of the liberal individual. To move away from this notion of freedom, towards the inevitability of actions created through the act of attention, is to move away from the individualistic ego, into an “obedience to reality as an exercise of love”. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 333).

Reconsidering Neoliberalisms

In the Introduction, the point was raised that in the desire to retain autonomy through reason, philosophers were driven to produce an image of the human built from shaky premises, which impart a precarious foundation for the image of the neoliberal human in contemporary times. Over the course of the chapter, Murdoch’s criticisms of the ‘free’ liberal individual argued that this instance of liberal freedom was insufficient to represent the reality of the

complete moral being. This is a contention that can be equally made against images of the neoliberal individual. As Murdoch (1998) articulates, we are not ‘isolated free choosers’ but individuals who are a part of a wider moral world which we seek to augment and deform to fit our fantastical and egotistical proclivities (p. 293). Although the liberal and neoliberal notions of freedom are not equal to totalitarianism, there is a narrowing effect that distorts the image of ‘freedom’ in order to preserve the illusion of rational autonomy. The ‘cultivation’ of these freedoms, in the refined limits of governance designed to elicit the competitive nature of individuals, is challenged by Murdochian theory. Murdoch is not concerned with the role of ‘explicit choice’ but the recognition that much of our decision-making happens prior to the event, raising the question: Why should neoliberal ‘freedom’ be ‘cultivated’?

And what of the ‘inner life’ that Murdoch seeks to defend? The ‘ideal neoliberal individual’ is again found wanting, with no ‘inner life’ represented beyond movements within the market. Although the moral decisions of the liberal individual were only externally measured, the neoliberal individual is measured through his or her productivity; again the measurement can only be outwardly regarded and subjected to external evaluation. The relationship between this externalised judgement, and the internal movements within the act of education need further exposition. Teachers are positioned to produce children who will compete within the future market, but are equally a part of the present market of early childhood education. Teachers are ‘irresponsibilised’ in order to limit the chances of moving outside the neoliberal mould (Cradock, 2007), but pedagogy is grounded within intricate human relationships; these relationships bind us together in ways that do not deny freedom, but are a part of its texture and substance. Neoliberalism promotes individualism over community, but early childhood education is built from a community ethic.

The enactment and influence of governance is a significant point of difference between neoliberal and liberal ideas; liberal traditions seek freedom from governance, neoliberal theories seek to find the point where governance can maximise productivity. Subsequently, responses to education are affected by this difference; within contemporary neoliberalisms, the edge of governance is sought in order to protect the interests of the state and develop a (future) human product whom is maximised for economic efficiency. But, as argued by Murdoch, when freedom is understood as the humility to accept that choice is dependent upon connections to others in the world, pre-determining appropriate actions or choices are “less obviously something to be ‘cultivated’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 331). Teachers within early childhood education are not involved with an amorphous object of ‘human capital’, but responding to an individual human being.

Through the promotion of neoliberal ideas, education could indeed become technical and standardised, but as argued by Murdoch this form of ‘knowledge’ of the human fails to represent reality. In adhering to this fantasy much is lost in the potentiality of the educational experience. Underpinned by neoliberal theory – to produce individuals who are ‘enterprising’ and ‘competitive’ – education could enculture children into a ‘neoliberal normality’; manufacturing children according to an economic doctrine. As argued before, this approach to pedagogy will misrepresent individuals and the relationships between individuals within education; a standardised approach loses the deep contextual understandings of the human individual that can be wrought through attentive relationships and the potential of understanding education illuminated in the light of the good. In displacing the teacher for the technician, we lose the opportunity to attend to the child, to engage our moral vision, and move pedagogy towards a deeper appreciation of the reality of the child.

Through neoliberal governance, teaching can become an object of externalised measurement: quantifiable, standardisable, and replicable; pedagogy can transmute into technical practices that can be translated into any setting. Yet there is an ‘inner life’ of the act of education that must be defended, one that cannot be measured externally without extensive understanding of the particulars of each setting, and indeed each relationship held between a teacher and a child. It is not easily measureable or quantifiable but that does not preclude its existence nor its value: “‘not a report’ need not entail ‘not an activity’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 318). Humans have the potential for a rich *imaginative* capacity that is not able to be easily represented for external analysis (a point that is explored in more depth in Chapter Seven). The liberal image of the individual resisted by Murdoch viewed ‘reality’ to be a phenomenon comprehensible only through external observation and judgement, akin to empirically-based scientific understandings of the world. However, a recognition of the opacity of persons (which will be discussed further within Chapter Seven) and a respect for the non-empirical aspects of individual lives appreciable through the ‘just and loving gaze’ give pause to those who wish to submit to the ‘seductive ideals’ of neoliberalism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, continuing the neoliberal agenda in education could engender a situation comparative to that which most concerned Murdoch: a loss of the conceptual understandings to nurture and defend alternate visions. Through acquiescence to neoliberal ideas and the

enculturation of children into a 'neoliberal normality', we develop another generation of individuals who view the world through the economic lens. Is this an adequate measure of the good of education? As argued before, goodness is not a 'void', it is not relative and selectable from equally suitable options. The good of education is not externally derived standardised practices which promote mechanistic procedures between teacher and child. This is a false goodness, derived from a false love generated by the ego – the love of the self and the desire for individual advancement in the (future) market. Goodness in education *is* the attentive human relationship between the teacher and the child, the application of a just and loving gaze towards an individual reality and the progress of the practicing teacher towards a clearer understanding of the educational relationship. The intricacies of the attentive relationship defy quantification, but cannot collapse into self-interest when applied appropriately.

Chapter Four

Fact/Value, the Moral Imagination, and Neuroscience

Introduction

There are central positions in Murdoch's philosophy that are persistent throughout her philosophical writing (from the 1950s to the early 1990s). These positions are developed over time and, although they feature differently within her various pieces of writing (taking a central or side role), they recur within many of her arguments. One of these positions is built from Murdoch's concern with the influence of scientific rationality within philosophy. Philosophical movements that emulate scientific rationality to develop moral arguments produce an unnecessary and misleading divide between fact and value. She asserts, if this form of argumentation continues then philosophy will suffer from a loss of concepts and no longer remain apposite to the lives of everyday individuals. Furthermore, the loss of this conceptual knowledge will affect our ability to effectively argue for an alternate image of the moral individual. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss Murdoch's arguments against scientism in order to illuminate similar concerns with the recent nascent application of neuroscientific findings to the field of early childhood education.

Neuroscience is a field of scientific inquiry about the functions of the brain and has become a prominent discourse within early childhood education (this will be discussed further later in this chapter). Although science has produced many findings to benefit society, some caution needs to be applied to the broad application of the neuroscientific lens to education, particularly when affecting the purpose, direction, and intention of education. The image of the 'learner' and the subsequent implications for the role of the 'teacher' are heavily affected by neuroscientific discourse. Building from Murdoch's arguments, this chapter seeks to demonstrate the need to pause and reconsider neuroscience as the prominent explanation of the 'human' and open conversations about the evaluative, ethical and *moral* act of education.

At the outset of this chapter the fact/value distinction will be outlined with an explanation of Murdoch's arguments against such a distinction. Following this, the problems of applying scientific rationality to philosophy will be defined. Next a discussion of the present situation and growing concerns about the application of neuroscientific findings within the domain of education will be outlined. Finally, the philosophical arguments developed by Murdoch will be brought into conversation with current concerns with neuroscience to offer a distinct position supported by Murdoch's philosophical vision.

The Fact/Value Distinction

Murdoch (1992) expressed concerns about the emergence of a strict fact/value distinction in moral philosophy. She argues that the initial purpose of this distinction was to protect values from facts in order to ensure moral values were neither tainted by, nor derived solely from, empirical conclusions (p. 25). What she identifies as a ‘post-Kantian theory of morals’ runs as follows: “survey all the facts, then use your reason” (p. 26). Murdoch remains uneasy with this movement into a new distinction and rationale for the fact/value divide, highlighting moments when it is expressed in this way. She identifies the advent of analytical philosophy as playing a major role in the promotion of the fact/value divide. The analytical tradition has promoted the position that the moral agent is capable of ‘stepping back’ into a theoretical ‘space’ where a survey of all the facts is possible. Yet, Murdoch (1998) questions the possibility of the ‘stepping back’ motion, arguing that the image of rational detachment is part of the liberal illusion of freedom (as discussed in Chapter Three). The act of surveying the facts and then applying ‘reason’ lacks cognisance of the assumptions made prior to and as part of the ‘stepping back’ motion and in the act of surveying the facts. She contends that philosophers who present this image profess to be neutral *and* analytical, yet these two states are not analogous; the analytical position suggests a spurious connection between these two states implying their interdependence. Any instance where this is not the case is worth commenting on (p. 300). Additionally, value judgements are obscured by this conflation, with the resultant image of the moral individual rendered through this co-joined gaze. Where analytical philosophy seeks to remove values to develop a ‘rational’ starting point for analysis, a more appropriate approach would be to expose the suppressed premise to identify a potential failure in moral thinking or a form of moral evasion (Diamond, 1996, p. 81). Murdoch rejects the proposed distinction between fact and value, and views this division to be funnelling moral philosophy into a particular direction, creating a false impression about human beings and conduct and misrepresenting where the problems of moral philosophy actually lie.

Murdoch (1992) identifies the “increasing prestige of science” (p. 25) as the major development affecting the movement of philosophical reasoning towards the new fact/value distinction. She suggests that the affinity for scientific rationalism encourages the desire for analytical neutrality and argues against the dominance of scientism due to the limiting effects that will be imposed upon philosophy through this relation; through the image of the world created through scientific naturalism, moral lives are delimited (Hacker-Wright, 2010, p.

205). Maintaining the fact/value distinction will cultivate “a diminished, even perfunctory, account of morality...leading to a marginalisation of the ‘ethical’” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 25). Structuring the approach to moral philosophy in this way invokes what Murdoch describes as the two ‘god-heads’ within Kantian philosophy – “the world of fact which must be realistically, bravely, accepted, and the moral subject who is to accept it” (p. 30). As discussed in the previous chapter, this simplification of the relationship between the individual and the world is promoted to maximise a liberal interpretation of individual freedom. Yet the relationship between freedom and reality is more complex, and the world of fact is not easily separated from the moral individual in the way suggested by philosophical (or scientific) visions of the world. Rather facts and values imply each other in more intricate and subtle ways. If, as Murdoch holds, the distinction between fact and value is not clearly delineated, then a different understanding of the relationship between science and philosophy is required.

Subsequently, there are three main ideas that will be outlined to build the argument against the fact/value divide. Firstly, that this partition neglects to acknowledge the evaluative element in the inception and development of facts (that, when concerning humans, value-laden decisions are necessary to devising a fact, and therefore fact is never devoid of value). Secondly, if moral thought infiltrates conclusions assumed to be ‘value-free’, then what is lost when this inherent influence is disregarded. Lastly, if moral thought is an integral part of consciousness, should the fact/value distinction be abandoned and moral consideration no longer considered a supplemental or additional consideration? These points will be expanded below.

The role of evaluation within the discernment of ‘facts’.

Murdoch resisted the notion that moral actions are solely determined by objective rationality. She considered the development of moral philosophy to be arrested by the image of the moral individual adhering to an objective assay of the ‘facts’, leading them to a logical ‘neutral’ decision. The presentation of the moral individual, as the ‘ideally rational individual’, is discussed more at length in the previous chapter, but the following quote from Murdoch (1998) also aids our comprehension of this illusory moral character. She writes:

A man's²⁰ morality is seen in his conduct and a moral statement is a prescription of rule uttered to guide a choice, and the descriptive meaning of the moral world which it contains is made specific by reference to a factual criteria of application. (p. 63)

This rendering of morality consists of a central individual who is guided by prescriptive rules (moral statements) determined by an allusion to empirically-derived 'facts' to support moral choice. It is a position supported by the dictum: "you cannot attach morality to the substance of the world" (p. 65) and an image devoid of any "transcendent background" (p. 63), picturing the moral individual as detached and 'free'. Such an image compels the conviction that all moral positions should be logically determined and externally defensible, rendering metaphysics defunct.

Murdoch argues that the fact/value distinction was determined in order to maintain the possibility for individual autonomy when the authority of the Good threatened it; in delineating 'fact' from 'value', the spiritual (value) world becomes a world of faith, not of knowledge (fact). Murdoch identifies these positions as confusing an anti-metaphysical argument with a logical argument, despite being covertly underpinned by a moral assumption that runs as follows: the danger in deriving morality from the factual world stems from the potential for morality to become dogma and the abstention from critical analysis of moral values (Murdoch, 1998, p. 66). This is a moral assumption, under the guise of logic. Murdoch expands further, writing:

I am suggesting that modern philosophers have tended to take their stripped, behaviouristic and non-conceptual picture of morality as the only possibly picture because they have joined the anti-metaphysical argument and the logical argument to a *moral* argument of a different type. (p. 66)

The presentation of moral deliberation as logical, neutral, and comprised of action, is not the only mode of moral thought, but a specific model enthralled with scientific neutrality. It is not a universal moral image, but a model developed through a certain perspective (one that will be later argued as a misapprehension of reality).

According to Murdoch, this image of the moral world was countered by other philosophers, but only for minor analytical differences and not for the deep assumptions underpinning this position. In this image, we are led to believe that life involves all individuals dwelling within a world of common facts, and morality consists of (different

²⁰ See Note 1

ways of) choosing and acting in response to these facts. The deep assumption that Murdoch seeks to contend is the possibility of an objective ‘space’ for the moral individual to step back into; this assumption misconceives the act of thinking and making sense of (moral) concepts. In contrast, Murdoch defended the moral imagination as critical to the decisions of the moral agent.

According to Murdoch (1998), understanding the world is in part derived from the active role that the imagination undertakes in order to perceive it. She asserts that the world is “not just a world of ‘facts’ but a world upon which our imagination has, at any given moment, already worked” (p. 199). Murdoch argues that “reality is not a given whole” (p. 294), consequently our imagination fills in the ‘gaps’ in order to develop a fuller picture of the world. It conjures up things that may be “beyond what could be said to be strictly factual” (p. 198). This is not to ascribe a ‘sinister’ role to imagination, nor to view this aspect of our consciousness as totally involuntary, but to view it as a critical aspect of the human condition. Appreciating the quality of reality and our apprehension of it is necessary in order to grasp the imperative role of the imagination. A moral imagination is developed through devoting our attention to the real world, a detailed observance of others within it and careful consideration of the particulars of each situation. Without this attention to reality, the moral imagination will be usurped by the individualistic ego leading to a departure into the delusion that it creates. So although Murdoch argues that imagination comprises of a movement ‘beyond the facts’, this movement is careful to maintain the ‘just and loving gaze’, which is necessary to resist the “fat relentless ego” (p. 342), the enemy of the moral life.

Exercising of the moral imagination involves an inevitable evaluative element as we contemplate our ideas and experiences. The role of the imagination is connected to the will as we are engaging in an *active* imagination; if imagination is more than ‘drifting ideas’ then the role of will in imagination is evident inasmuch as “imagining is *doing*, it is a sort of personal exploring” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 199). The imagination then becomes both an ability and a means by which to extend our understanding of reality, not through a fictitious ‘objective neutrality’, but through attention to others. Attention involves an imaginative extension of our knowledge of people – beyond our experiences with them; in conjunction with the direction of the will to resist the ego. This is where it is most evident that there is an evaluative undertaking in our comprehension of the world. Reality, which is reliant upon our comprehension of experiences and the imagination in order to comprehend it, is part of a wider sensory experience. She contends that the movement to a fact-based moral philosophy was altogether too simplistically derived from the analytical act of simply by placing good

into inverted commas, showing that “philosophers were too impressed by words” (p. 72). Through the analytical lens, goodness is interpreted as mutable and shifting as value judgements are dependent upon the movement of the will and the choices of the individual in relation to the facts presented (p. 301). Goodness is not considered a part of the world, but rather as a label to which things can be affixed and, as the moral individual is governed by his or her movement within it rather than a vision of it, freedom is assured through the ability to move in and out of this logical matrix (Murdoch, 1998, p. 301).

Yet thinking about morality is not as simplistic as that. Thinking about moral concepts – both the common understandings and our inner definitions – “is experienced in an imaging, semi-sensible mode” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 40). Moral concepts are not only thought of in words, but are pictured, remembered in relation to events and a part of a sensory experience. Thinking about concepts is not designating, but rather “understanding, grasping, ‘possessing’” (p. 41). Although analytical understandings are not unhelpful, they cannot be the sole basis for developing a moral philosophical position. Words are taken internally and developed in ways where they are no longer strictly designated as words. More explicitly, they become “not the words, but the words occurring in a certain way with... a certain force and colour” (p. 34). Our understanding of the world is affected by our attempts to comprehend it and our grasp of concepts. These concepts are related to actions, but not entirely contained by them; they do not and cannot resemble the same sort of objective understanding that characterises scientific conclusions. Murdoch (1998) agrees there is the capacity for ‘rational detachment’ in some of our decisions, but not when efforts of moral imagination are required (p. 201) and this imagination is extensively used in human relationships and interactions.

Here is where the critical nature of imagination is essential to the argument against the division of fact and value and can be best summed up by the following statement: all forms of thought are ubiquitously moral because of the “slow delicate processes of imagination and will which have put those values there” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 200). Furthermore, although the world is coloured by our values, our awareness of this tinted view is obscured due to the slow incremental movements that have built our beliefs. Fact and value are inseparable because the constructive activity of the imagination builds our vision of value and cannot be extracted, split, or stepped back from in order to rationally survey the ‘pure facts’ of the world. These arguments against an objective analytical view of the world show the necessity to reconsider any conclusions that involve a separation of fact from value, particularly those involving directives for human (inter)action. These directives need to be reconsidered in light of how

they are affected by the illusory fact/value divide, and the ways in which they move the moral imagination away from an accurate apprehension of reality. A ‘survey of the facts’ involves an evaluative element based upon, what Murdoch describes as “total differences of *Gestalt*. We differ not only because we select different objects out of the same world but because we see different worlds” (p. 82). Murdoch uses the term *Gestalt* to identify what she is trying to discern as a vision or outlook, a way of seeing and understanding the world derived from our imagination, which adds colour and force to our reading of it. These differences nullify the fallacy of a shared and accessible objective reality.

As discussed so far, Murdoch’s arguments against the fact/value distinction run as follows: that it is being inappropriately conceived and that it is endorsed for the wrong reasons. Firstly, it is inappropriately conceived because this develops a vision of the human that is inconsistent with how facts and morals function. Murdoch argues that when philosophers attempt to objectively contain a moral concept, as like a ring around a set of facts, the area that they are attempting to contain is not solely affected by the ‘factual’ limitations of the moral concept, but their interpretive understanding of the concepts. To philosophers who situate morality as a ‘choice’ by individuals who step-back and survey the ‘facts’, Murdoch asserts the following: Morality cannot be based upon ‘choice’, without consideration of moral concepts and their meaning and, as moral concepts are taken internally in order to be fully understood, ‘choice’ is not based upon factual representations of these concepts, but rather their interpretation.

As morality is dependent upon an understanding of moral concepts guided by inner thought, it is difficult to defend ethical principles (do x when you are in x situation) due to the potential differences in moral values. Morality is not akin to scientific inquiry, as the survey of the ‘facts’ is not solely based on differences of selection, but differences of moral vision. Morality then becomes differences of “understanding...which may show openly or privately as differences of story or metaphor or as differences of moral vocabulary” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 82). In this understanding of morality, choice becomes less about attempting to convince others of your moral argument based solely upon an exposition of ‘facts’ or what to do in particular situations, and more about the communication of a moral vision, which may or may not be comprehended by the listener due to the incremental processes influencing the teller’s understanding of this vision. It also implies a new relationship with goodness.

This leads into the second point, that the fact/value distinction was endorsed for the wrong reasons. This distinction was employed to secure the freedom of the moral individual against the authority of good. Murdoch (1998) asserts that the central desire for this form of

freedom is “to remove ourselves into a region where we can assess situations under no pressure from the will” (p. 199); freedom consists of our ability to engage our rationality, to ‘step-back’ from the situation, assay the facts, and make our decision. In this image of freedom, any “failure to be free is the failure to operate the machinery of will-desire-belief-reason in such a way as to enjoy the detachment of rational thought. It is that failure and not any more complicated moral failure” (p. 197). Yet Murdoch seeks to reconsider the dominance of this vision and suggest that there is not the possibility of ‘stepping-back’ in the way that the image of the ‘ideally rational individual’ would assume. This image of the human prioritises action over vision to promote the movement of the will as paramount, but humans are not “isolated free choosers, monarchs of all we survey, but benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to transform by fantasy” (p. 293). Murdoch is arguing against the image of freedom as an objective rational decision leading to moral action, an image in which the imagination limits the individual’s ability to perceive reality. In this image, imagination filters and augments our objective observation of the world, altering our perception and limiting our ability to remain neutral to access facts and reality. Furthermore, Murdoch contests the argument that the imagination will have negative effects upon rationality with concurrent effects on freedom. The arguments that situate the imagination as a hindrance, limit our ability to access objective reality²¹. As already argued, Murdoch’s interpretation of the imagination is that it is beneficial to accessing reality and necessary to the moral imagination as a medium to see the world as it really is.

Murdoch’s line of argument is later critiqued by Hare (1963), but Diamond (1996) defends Murdoch’s position by revealing that Hare’s critique was misconceived, missing (or avoiding) the point that Murdoch was seeking to make. Hare’s argument was concerned with the discernment of moral principles in order to preserve freedom as tied to action, but in retaining the notion of principles, he misrepresented Murdoch’s rebuttal. He misinterpreted the main point of her argument, which is, that moral differences are not about certain *kinds* of principled views, but about *total differences in vision*. Hare argues indirectly against Murdoch, arguing for different aspects of moral principles. Diamond (1996) suggests he misconstrued this deliberately, for if he engaged with Murdoch’s arguments directly, it would erode his assertion that our moral being is characterised by freedom of action (as in Hare’s

²¹ These assertions are directed primarily at the image of the ‘ideally rational individual’ which is attributed to Hampshire, but as noted earlier, is the legacy of Kant, Hobbes, and Hume (Murdoch, 1998, p. 198).

sense) and reinvigorate Murdoch's differing view of freedom (Diamond, 1996, p. 90). Hare's argument maintains a suppressed premise through the fact/value distinction (p. 101), making the next step – that strength in freedom is wrought through the strength of the will to find a position of neutrality – unstable.

What can be lost through the fact/value distinction?

The fact/value distinction limits the development of the moral individual in many differing ways, but there are two aspects that will be focussed upon in this section. First, the way in which the moral individual is encouraged to see his or her moral self, with subsequent ramifications for understanding moral progress. Second, the segregation and dismissal of the inner life of the moral individual (and the role of the moral imagination), which stifles the development of the moral imagination.

Murdoch (1998) was concerned with the characterisation of the moral individual through the fact/value distinction because the image of the human produced is both “alien and implausible” (p. 306). This estrangement has empirical grounds (that people are not like that), philosophical grounds (the arguments are unconvincing), and moral grounds (“I do not think that people *ought* to picture themselves in this way” p. 306). The first point of this section – that people will lose the ability to see themselves differently – is linked with the *moral* objections to the fact/value distinction. As articulated earlier, Murdoch asserted that our apprehension of reality is not only based upon facts, but also the workings of our moral imagination. As Murdoch states, the world is “not just a world of ‘facts’ but a world upon which our imagination has, at any given moment, already worked” (p. 199). This imaginative undertaking develops our conceptual understanding of life, which enables us to make sense of the world and our place within it. We are image-making beings, and the images we develop give us sense and purpose. Furthermore, these images act as a form of guidance, Murdoch states “Man is a creature who makes pictures of himself and then comes to resemble the picture” (p. 75), illustrating the idea that not only do we create these images in reflection of the world, but these images also serve to shape us. This point is crucial when considering the impacts of the imagination upon the ‘factual’ scientific realm of investigation (and will be expanded further below).

Moral concepts are also an element of the ‘inner life’ Murdoch sought to defend. Moral concepts are part of an ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ relationship as they are developed and redefined over time and experience, shaping the human. When discussing moral concepts, Murdoch

(1998) asserts “of course, he derives the concept initially from his surroundings; but he takes it away into his privacy...and what use is made of them [concepts] is partly a function of the user’s *history*” (p. 319). The individual develops moral concepts from public definitions into highly personal understanding, built from personal experiences. Experience influences the ways in which we come to comprehend the concepts we encounter; by exercising the moral imagination (through the task of attention) we have the opportunity to fill in the gaps to move towards a realistic understanding of these concepts, developing a deeper understanding of the good. Conversely, through the fantastical creation of the ego, we have the opportunity to build a conceptual understanding that is not representative of reality, but defends our selfish nature (for example, when one is not looking through a just and loving gaze, greed can be thought of as necessary self-preservation or deserving reward for hard work). But in either case, through the ego or the moral imagination, fact and value are inextricable. There is no objective understanding of the world of human relationships as moral concepts are not merely built from ‘facts’ but dependant on internal vision(s). Moral concepts are how we see the world and ourselves within it; external fact and internal value are intertwined so intimately that it is almost impossible to discern where one starts and the other ends.

As moral concepts are taken internally and developed within the privacy of the individual, then any moral ‘objectivity’ or ‘neutrality’ comes into question, and the image of the individual divorcing his or her value from the world of fact becomes less plausible. Moral value pervades existence and, through our evaluative nature, humans apply personal definitions of moral conceptual values to multiple spheres of existence. To assume the ability to ‘step back’ from moral value, particularly when investigating the human, is to miss this initial step. Furthermore, the proposed image of the individual ‘stepping back’ into a neutral position must be understood within the world of human relationships, in communion with other human individuals. There may be grounds for certain factual statements and empirical observations of the human world, but this strategy is not comprehensive. Objective scientific ‘fact-based’ strategies must undergo “important modifications when it is to be understood, not in relation to ‘the world described by science’, but in relation to the progressing life of a person” (p. 320).

As concepts are developed in the privacy of the individual, when humans engage in relationships they enter a space where they encounter others who equally hold internalised conceptual understandings. The actions of each individual are based upon equally private images; each is opaque to the other. But as these interactions lead to further interactions and develop conceptual understandings through these experiences, they are also shared in a

delicate way and each becomes affected by the other's progress. Our attention to others, combined with the particulars of each relationship and experience, are part of inner and outer processes – our moral imagination *and* our relationships with others. Our appreciation of moral concepts needs to be sensitive to this particularity and respect the space of each relationship as unique and individual, while simultaneously building to the greater understanding of moral concepts. Murdoch was careful to articulate that our development of moral concepts should be motivated by the idea of perfection, moving conceptual understandings along to a point that will infer a greater unity to them; but generated from the particular, not at its expense. Equally, as argued prior, Murdoch highlighted the necessity of retaining the relatability of moral philosophy to everyday life. This was one of the main concerns with the image of the rational human investigator, that it was alien and implausible due to the inability to divorce moral concepts from evaluative actions. These aspects of human engagement are beyond 'objectivity' due to the opaque nature of the inner life. The assumption of objectivity loses touch with the everyday human who (consciously or unconsciously) utilises moral concepts in everyday decisions. When the search for unifying theories is undertaken without regarding the ubiquity of morality and the necessity to pay attention to the particulars, then the opportunities for a deeper unification of moral concepts are missed.

The individual's development of moral concepts is connected to his or her private cogitations and attention to others, not a part of a 'stepping back' motion into an objective space. If inner cogitation is how we develop our concepts and decisions for actions, then the objective space to 'step back' into must be questioned and moral principles (do x in y situation) become less certain. The illusion of objectivity can encourage individuals to attempt to resemble it, becoming deprived of the opportunity for a deeper understanding of moral progress. In the 'stepping back' motion, 'moral progress' is not the slow incremental progress that Murdoch (1998) supports, but the aforementioned grandiose leaping of the will (p. 317), leading to the mechanised actions of moral principles. Less is also made of an individual's personal history (and their connections to others through this history), and more is made of the isolated individual and their 'neutral' choices in relation to facts. The opportunities for connections with and responsivity to the individuals in front of us are lessened when we are encouraged to focus upon individualistic choices in a contained world of facts (and see others as undertaking this task also).

Finally for this point, Murdoch's (1998) image of the moral progress as 'characteristically endless' is lost due to the conviction that humans may shape their direction

within an ‘objective’ world. If we ascribe to this image of the moral individual – whose moral world is bound by objective facts accessed through the ‘stepping back’ motion and where moral principles denote a mechanistic approach to moral behaviours (when in x do y) – then we lose the potent potentiality of the ideal limit that moves and develops as we do. We lose the possibilities of enabling an intense and unending understanding of moral concepts, beyond the genesis of the concept formed through “the rulings of an impersonal public language” (p. 322).

The second part of this section is concerned with arguments regarding the empirical grounds and moral grounds for the compartmentalisation of the inner life of the moral individual (and its subsequent loss of its development). Murdoch, (1998) asserts that the ‘inner life’, which is unable to be represented externally, has been subsequently identified to be of no use, but “‘not a report’ need not entail ‘not an activity’” (p. 318). She argues that arguments that present the inner life as ‘absent’ are derived from the certainty that moral decisions must be devised from the external, rather than the internal, built in turn from “an uncriticised conception of science” (p. 318). Knowledge and appearances are situated in opposition to each other. The ‘modern philosopher’ is attempting to justify the ‘hard objective world’ and the role of ‘fact’ within the world of philosophy in much the same way as it is presented within the domain of science (p. 319). The decision that fact needed to be extricated from value, not as the initial protection of value from the rigidity of fact, but from the position that knowledge and appearance are separate realms, moved certainty from the internal to the external – from the individual’s comprehension to an ascription to public rules (p. 318). Yet, “moral concepts do not move about *within* a hard world set up by science and logic. They set up, for different purposes, a different world” (p. 321). The ‘hard’ world can be imagined as the factual and externally verifiable world, as a world of clean lines, but Murdoch conceptualises the world as messy and chaotic (Murdoch, 1992). If we are to accept the image of this ‘hard world’ and the moral individual functioning within the boundaries of this world, the potential of the moral imagination and the progressive development of moral concepts are lost. If “where virtue is concerned, we apprehend more than we clearly understand, and *grow by looking*” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 324), then limiting our vision of the world to this objective vision would reduce such comprehension and growth.

In ‘objective’ vision, the difficulties of depicting the inner life render it defunct. The inner life is not able to be represented through explanation (I cannot explain how my inner mind works fully), it is not needed in the fact/value distinction (as ‘facts’ do not require the imagination to make sense of them) consequently the inner life doesn’t exist. However, akin

to the fusion of the anti-metaphysical and pro-logic arguments, contentions against the utility and existence of the inner life have been fused, and need to be extricated in order to salvage vital characteristics of the moral individual. The moral progression of an individual undertakes a different tone when perceived in light of morality, a mechanistic and infallible tone. Yet when the vision of morality involves the moral imagination and the progressive development of concepts there is an inherent (and Murdoch insists necessary) fallibility (p. 317). The endless task of attempting to perceive reality introduces the idea of perfection and the presence of this idea demands a different understanding of the work of the moral individual. If the inner life is positioned as being of no use simply because it is not detectable, the ability of the individual to conceptualise moral progress is diminished and the idea of perfection is lost. The notion of fallibility is necessary in order to maintain continual moral progress and reject the (blind) certainty of moral principles. Fallibility is also necessary to maintain humility in the moral life and resist the ‘Luciferian compulsion’ represented through the (potentially) egotistical self-assuredness of a moral principle; a position and assertion of ‘I’m right’ rather than ‘Let’s see’. This fallibility is necessary to the concept of attention, which seeks an understanding *outside* of the self, rather than inward for the answers to moral dilemmas.

The inextricability of evaluation: Moving away from the fact/value distinction

For Murdoch is it crucial that the dividing line between fact and value is shown to be in error. The claim to objectivity is a misapprehension and mischaracterisation of the moral individual. All mental concepts enter the sphere of evaluation and morality, consequently the dividing line creates a fantastical illusion of the moral life. The purposes of this dividing line have been articulated above: initially to protect value from the influence of fact, and later to ensure the moral agent a ‘freedom’ of motion to resist the determinism of ‘goodness’. However, (as also illustrated above) when this image of the moral individual becomes the primary image, and the moral life is governed by this interpretation of freedom, then other ways of seeing the moral individual – ways which may enable a movement beyond the ‘veil’ of our selves – are lost. According to Murdoch (1998), Hampshire’s interpretation of freedom consists in “how you choose, not what you choose, doing what you intend, not doing what is right” (p. 197). These underlying moral visions become a moral principle in itself while also affecting the interpretation and selection of the ‘facts’ on the road to devising other moral principles. The evaluative element is inextricable from ‘objective’ actions, indeed this

element precedes these actions at a point which is assumed to be the neutral starting position (for example – how does one determine the difference between what is ‘right’ and personal intentions without evaluation?). Diamond (1996) reiterates Murdoch’s point by stating “Our thought about *anything* is the thought of a morally live consciousness, a consciousness with its own moral character” (p. 102, original emphasis). Consequently, the ‘neutral starting position’ is not neutral but coloured by the moral vision of the observer. The assumption of objectivity disfigures our image of human potentiality and reduces our appreciation and comprehension of the imagination in moral choice and our aptitude for its development. In obscuring the imagination, decisions for actions can bolster the development of fantasy and maintain the veil of the egotistical self.

Furthermore, the notion of freedom is in question when the ‘stepping back’ motion is surmised to be possible. As articulated within the previous chapter, the conceptualisation of freedom underpinning the arguments for objectivity are connected to the desire to retain the unfettered will, but this image of human freedom fails to accurately represent reality. Murdoch (1998) argues that when we engage in the act of attention, we arrive at the point where we “will have no choices, and this is the ultimate condition to be aimed at” (p. 331). The ‘unfettered’ form is not the motion of a free individual, but a deluded individual who has failed to grasp the moral ties binding us to each other and is engaged in a fantasy of his or her own making. Or, as articulated by Hacker-Wright (2010), “the *freedom* that features so prominently in Kant-style morality is a symptom of it’s failing to take seriously the moral task of knowing the world” (p. 207, original emphasis). Kantian morality informs the notion of freedom that underpins the objectivity of scientific rationality, but the assumption that humans can remain ‘objective’ is shown to be inherently flawed when brought into dialogue with Murdoch’s arguments, rendering this representation of ‘reality’ to be inaccurate.

The nature of reality

In this philosophical vision, Murdoch is developing a different image of the nature of reality. In asserting that almost all scientific inquiries contain presuppositions – that there are assumptions or suppressed premises acting as the ‘stepping stones’ to scientific conclusions – she brings into question the premise of ‘objectivity’ in human beings, particularly when the focus of the inquiry is humans and human relationships. Murdoch’s position is that we cannot utilise the objective view when viewing humans and human relationships, instead we can only hope to work towards a way of viewing the world that distances ourselves from

individualistic views and the pull of the ego, in order to fully (and realistically) appreciate of the object of observation. This is not the *removal* of values, but the *deepening* and *broadening* of values. In order to appreciate reality more fully, we need to exercise a method of observing others that attempts to see them how they deserve to be seen, according to our just and loving gaze. In other words, to describe them according to what they ‘merit’ (Hacker-Wright, 2010). This approach could be accessed through a closer union between psychology and the humanities (Waugh, 2012, p. 39), demonstrating Murdoch’s appreciation of Freudian theory as an accurate starting point to build from (Hacker-Wright, 2010).

The Freudian starting point identifies how the individual comes into the world with an innate desire to satisfy his or her own wants based upon an internal perspective. Murdoch (1998) identifies this starting point to advance her argument that from here we can move towards the process of attention, pushing us to look outward (p. 375). Innate desires (self-pity etc.) intensify the veil that obscures us from the reality of the world (p. 369). Yet, if we move away from selfishness, we move ourselves in the direction of virtue and in doing so lift the obfuscating veil and gain a clearer view of reality. This is not a condition of merely ‘looking’, but is a *task* and any vision of the world that does not apprehend this as a task obscures the inherent relationship between virtue and reality. Murdoch argues that we are obscure to ourselves due to the delicate processes of the moral imagination and will that build values up around us (p. 200). Consequently, we need an understanding of the world comprising of these obscure moral aspects, the practice of attention and the role of moral vision. Developing a ‘value-free’ vision of the world adds to the veil and loses the opportunity for an accurate vision of reality. The development of a just and loving gaze moves us to appreciate the world in tandem with a more morally appropriate position. This dual movement reveals the substance of reality and its connection to virtue.

Murdoch’s philosophy outlines a form of moral realism, described as reflexive moral realism. Murdoch promotes a unification of moral concepts through the sovereignty of the good, yet equally Murdoch’s moral theory is viewed to be response-dependant; moral concepts are only able to be viewed from a “peculiarly human standpoint” (Jordan, 2014, p. 378). Murdoch’s reflexive approach to morality promotes the specificity of the individual, and the necessity to draw from moral vision and exercise the moral imagination in order to search for objective moral truths. Consequently, the search for moral truths involves a reflexive process in which consciousness is the medium for a reflective consideration of goodness, but avoids being merely subjective by understanding that consciousness is only the starting point (Altorf, 2004; Antonaccio, 2000). Murdoch, (1998) writes, “reflection rightly

tends to unify the moral world, and...increasing moral sophistication reveals increasing unity” (pp. 346-347). Reflection depends upon the moral imagination, and therefore this element of the moral individual must be rescued in order to fully appreciate reality. This form of realism, reliant upon the moral imagination, enhances our understanding of reality when we apply a just and loving gaze in order to view it. In return we attain a *morally better* vision of the world (Hacker-Wright, 2010). The image of the world presented through scientism must be rejected due to the ways in which it “belies the very conditions of generating knowledge, including scientific knowledge...[and]...fails to provide concepts adequate to describe our moral lives...turn[ing] us to defective moral ideals” (Hacker-Wright, 2010, p. 205). As this is the case, Murdoch argues towards the position, not to change the sciences, but to ensure that the sciences do not hold dominion over the realm of philosophical enquiry. Murdoch presents us with a vision of the world, including the domain of science, which is not about merely looking, but about morally struggling to perceive the world. The reward of this struggle is the capacity to conceive the world ‘as it really is’ (Murdoch, 1998, p. 377). She presents us with a vision of the world that recognises that moral struggle shapes our character, and guides us to respond to others with “unavoidable actions” (Hacker-Wright, 2010, p. 219).

Some Problems of the Influence of Scientific Naturalism on Moral Philosophy

Science is not philosophy, yet scientism has influenced philosophical ideas. The advent and influence of science upon society and moral philosophy, coupled with what Murdoch, (1998) identifies as a “simple minded faith” in its tenets, has engendered a “dangerous lack of curiosity about the real world” (p 293). The necessity to explain the moral direction for humanity through scientific method and to obscure the inner life because it cannot be accurately represented, demonstrates this dangerous lack of curiosity. As articulated above, “‘not a report’ need not entail ‘not an activity’” (p. 318). If moral actions are beyond measureable actions and choices, then there is a necessity to look beyond the assumed objectivity of science. An appreciation of the opacity of human individuals and an attentive way of looking at the world needs to be developed in order to fully appreciate reality.

Subsequent movements that determine moral principles and encourage individuals to act in a systematic fashion also need to be questioned for their presentation of a mechanistic image. Murdoch (1992) asserts:

Philosophers who feel able to dispel all ambiguity also have to explain that a philosophical schema is not like the literal account of the functioning of an engine, but is a special *method of explanation*, not easy to understand, but having its own traditional standards of truthfulness. (p. 236)

Philosophical schema that do not point out these caveats – subtleties and inherent biases – cannot represent nor appreciate reality. Reality is constituted through the complexities and the particulars of real human relationships.

The moral lives of individuals, and morality *in toto* cannot be explained scientifically or empirically. Murdoch (1992) writes:

moral value cannot be *derived* from fact...our activity of moral discrimination cannot be explained as merely one natural instinct among others...The possession of a moral sense is uniquely human; morality is, in the human world, something unique, special...an intimation of ‘something higher’”. (p. 26)

Here Murdoch draws from a metaphysical position to defend morality as something beyond the realm of objective facts, something innately human. In order to appreciate the uniquely human nature of morality, the integral nature of the complexities of life and the opacities of human individuals need to be embraced. Scientific empiricism cannot contain morality because it cannot contain an accurate rendering of the particulars of humans or human relationships within a general theory.

Initially, the argument regarding the separation of ‘knowledge’ from ‘appearances’ was derived to illustrate how certainty can only be objective if it is shifted from the internal to the external; internal ‘certainty’ was deemed uncertain until it is assessed against external views. This view designates internal activity to be analysed and defined from the ‘outside in’ to be verified through a logical, empirical (scientific) view, but this is to deny the knowledge that our inner life and our experiential understanding has developed through processes, which Murdoch, (1998) describes as “something...we find exceedingly familiar” (p. 317). Understandings of the world wrought through attention requires no observers and even if they did exist “the question of their *competence* would still arise” (p. 317). Others may not understand moral positions, the internal work may not produce rational public reasons, but they are “none the worse for that” (p. 326). Where the objective view would describe this internal process as ‘hazy’ due to its inability to be captured and presented externally, Murdoch asserts that this activity “is hard to characterise, not because it is hazy, but *precisely because it is moral*” (p. 317, original emphasis). Our moral activity is not hazy because it is

difficult to rationalise, it is hazy because it is beyond the vision of the world maintained by scientific rationality.

Moral activity is the intimation of ‘something higher’, the goodness that we are magnetically pulled to in our lives. This the point at which knowledge and appearances indeed do connect and internal certainty does not need to be assessed against an external consensus. Murdoch, (1998) states:

it is perfectly obvious that goodness *is* connected with knowledge: not with impersonal quasi-scientific knowledge of the ordinary world...but with a refined and honest perception of what is really the case, a patient and just discernment of what confronts one, which is the result not simply of opening one’s eyes but of a certainly perfectly familiar kind of moral discipline (p. 330).

The ‘objective’ approach is characterised as a simple undertaking of ‘opening one’s eyes’, but it does not enable the viewer to exercise the moral imagination in order to make sense of the details (Murdoch, 1992, p. 349), nor, subsequently, to access reality. The objective view does not enable the viewer to appreciate the particulars, for science seeks out generalising theories to explain the world. Yet, if we can move away from generalities “toward the accidental and particular we introduce muddle but also variety and space” (p. 349). These varieties and spaces need to be preserved in order to access true reality, for if it is not just philosophical schema, but humans who are (mis)represented akin to the ‘functioning of an engine’ (as with the mechanistic dictums of moral principles), then questions beyond the standard questions of freedom and autonomy need to be raised. We need to ask specific questions about why this imagery is ascendant when it is not an appropriate representation of human engagement the moral world.

The Neuroscientific Turn in Early Childhood Education

Neuroscience is a branch of scientific research that is becoming integral in many arguments for increasing financial investment or governance of early childhood education. Advocates of applying neuroscientific findings to early childhood educational practice argue that neuroscience affords an insight into the functioning of the individual that can influence the processes of education, arguing, “the translation of neuroscience into principles that can inform sound policymaking offers considerable promise” (Shonkoff & Levitt, 2010, p. 698). Neuroscience is being viewed as the way in which to look into the mind of the child, situating early childhood education as a primary location for interventional practices to maximise the

potential of the brain. Within the document *Understanding the Brain: The Birth of a Learning Science* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007) the following statement is made:

neuroscience observations and their explanations of educational phenomenon is like looking at education through mysticism...like looking at education from the eyes of a seer or sage, who is aware of each and every happening inside the organs, tissues, and cells or even further down the line, when an action is taken or an idea is thought. The question is – like wise men, can the research findings in neuroscience influence the learning in desired manner? If yes then how and where to begin? As far as “where” is concerned, nothing is more apt than early childhood education and care (ECEC) platform. (p. 177)

Neuroscientific findings are utilised to prove that the early years are the crucial time to support the growth of the child and to underpin economic arguments about early childhood education as the best investment into children’s learning and development. The report *1000 Days to Get it Right for Every Child: The Effectiveness of Public Investment in New Zealand Children* (Grimmond, 2011) makes the claim “The early years are critical due to intense neurological development during those years. It is to these years, therefore, that government policy and public investment needs to be targeted for the best returns” (p. v). Other reports have also correlated the findings of neuroscience with the necessity to invest in early childhood education (Allen, 2011; Council of Australian Governments, 2009; English, 2015; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017). The neuroscientific turn is not just affecting educational policy, but is being used to inform pedagogical practice. The recent revision of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) included neuroscience as an underpinning theoretical foundation to the document. This section describes the young child’s brain as “far more impressionable” (p. 62), a condition described as “plasticity” (p. 62). These images are then connected to the necessity to situate children in a space that will enhance the child’s brain to learn, for this plasticity renders children vulnerable, again necessitating intervention.

The neuroscientific turn in early childhood education has become a highly significant point in developing (and succeeding) in arguments for the intervention into the lives of young children. Featherstone, Morris, and White (2013) identify the use of neuroscience within arguments for interventionist strategies in early childhood to be “influential if not hegemonic” (p. 1736). However, neuroscience doesn’t just describe an objective world, it

describes a particular vision of the world and, in doing so, shapes it. In creating a picture of the human conceived, measured and identified through neuroscience as a modality of ‘truth’, it follows that such a picture becomes the human through a recursive motion of knowledge; the position is adopted, then confirmation of the ‘actuality’ of this position is reinforced by filtering ‘fact’ through the evaluative neuroscientific gaze, limiting opportunities to develop alternate positions. As Murdoch (1998) writes, “Man is a creature who makes pictures of himself and then comes to resemble the picture” (p. 75); there are socio-political implications for describing humans through neuroscientific discourse. Vandebroek (2017) draws attention to preconceptions within neuroscientific research, writing “what is considered true is not a-historical, and what is considered as valuable and valid Science is always related to the socio-political context” (p. 34). In light of these considerations, an important question to ask is, ‘If the images being created hold socio-political implications for humans then what does this mean for the humans involved within the educational relationship, particularly within targeted realm of early childhood education?’

Due to the influence of neuroscientific findings upon early childhood education, questions are being raised about the power effects of neuroscience, specifically regarding the ways in which neuroscientific information is being used in educational policy and practice. Millei and Joronen (2016) highlight the ubiquitous nature of neuroscientific findings within governmental policies relating to young children. They identify the use of neuroscientific arguments to develop strategies for early intervention, designed not only to intervene in order to prevent harmful practices, but to ensure the development of an entrepreneurial (future) workforce. In these cases, neuroscience is not being utilised for its ‘objective’ findings but to indorse a particular vision of the young child: that of the child as (future) human capital. Millei and Joronen (2016) describe the neuroscientific turn in early childhood as “an example par excellence of what Michel Foucault calls biopolitical government: a politicization of certain condition(s) of life that is premised on enhancement and positive improvement in human capacities” (p. 390).

Gillies, Edwards, and Horsley's (2017) research into the uses (and misuses) of neuroscientific findings raises questions about how findings are being applied to educational policies. They argue that the application of neuroscientific findings in educational policies needs to be questioned, for although these findings should be positioned as ‘provisional’ in educational policy they are infrequently situated as such. They draw attention to the frequent utilisation of the discourse of ‘proof’ when drawing from neuroscience, even when the findings are less than conclusive. The identification of neuroscience findings within these

policies as ‘high quality’, and the frequent relocation of findings from one milieu to another, are (colloquially) identified as instances of “scientific bullshit” (Gillies et al., 2017, p. 14). White and Wastell (2017) echo this call, identifying that “‘evidence’ in the policy world knowledge is actively *made*” (p. 67), citing several cases where neuroscientific evidence is used inappropriately, shortened, augmented or otherwise distorted in ways to make the findings more simplistic and ‘hard-hitting’. They assert “Neuroscientific understandings are also working their way into professional practice in early years provision” (p. 37), and in a previous paper, that “the co-option of neuroscience has medicalised policy discourse, silencing vital *moral* debate and pushing practice in the direction of standardised, targeted interventions” (Wastell & White, 2012, p. 397, emphasis added)

Moving away somewhat from the ‘misuse’ argument, Broer and Pickersgill (2015) identify the ways in which neuroscientific findings are used to promote a particular ‘sociotechnical imaginary’, authenticating the dominant ruling class image of society while dually reinforcing the forms of governance employed by the ruling class to address these ‘problems’. The problem of the potential of the human brain becomes an individual issue, devolving governmental responsibility for addressing wider societal issues of inequity. Within this hegemonic vision, addressing the failure to actualise the potential of the human brain becomes an issue of addressing the “soma, however, they do so in order to expand the *outcome* of the intervention to include society writ large” (p. 60). While the problem is laid at the feet of the individual, the benefits should become the property of the state. In this instance, neuroscience becomes another technology of government in the power/knowledge relationship between the government and the individual. A recurrent theme within all of these discussions is the way that neuroscience is used or misused to promote the ideologies of certain dominant bodies – be they governmental, non-governmental organisations, or otherwise.

Furthermore, neuroscientific information is lauded for the way in which it mechanises the individual, as it creates a more concrete and simplistic image of the child and development in comparison to the image of the (opaque) mind (Bruer, 2011). Bruer, critiques the mechanisation of the individual, revisiting his ‘myth of the first 1000 days’ document to expand further upon his initial arguments. He discusses the ways in which the ‘mechanistic image’ of the brain through neuroscience – where the brain is likened to a computer system and behavioural traits are ‘hard-wired’ into said system – becomes more convincing to the wider public. The image of the brain as a system, and therefore more akin to a mechanistic form of function, is more appealing than the messier arguments of behaviour or attitudinal

evidence; Brain chemistry – particularly the ‘cortisol effect’ – and the ‘materialist’ elements are more tangible and therefore more ‘real’, than abstract mental images (p. 3). With a mechanistic brain, there are more grounds to develop mechanistic processes towards educating the brain, divorcing the brain from the rest of the child. In effect, pedagogy runs the risk of being “reduced to the development of effective methods to achieve predefined goals...pedagogy is then reduced to the search for ‘doing things right’ while leaving out the question of what is the right thing to do” (Vandenbroeck, 2017, pp. 34–35). This concern aligns with Murdoch’s (1998) concerns with the ‘moral correctness’ of the ‘ideally rational individual’, which consists of “how you choose, not what you choose, doing what you intend, not doing what is right” (p. 197). When the actions eclipse the decisions that lead towards action, as Murdoch argues, we lose touch with the moral background for our actions. This goal can be found within the applications of neuroscience to pedagogy; assuming that neuroscience will discern an “increased understanding of individual differences in learning and the best ways to suit input to learner” (Goswami, 2004) and invoking the ‘technician’ approach to education through the determinations of science.

There are significant limitations to the image of the human when we seek to describe individuals through the neuroscientific lens, as though the brain was the totality of the human being. This concern is brought into strong focus when Harris (2010, 2011) argues for a vision of morality and moral conduct fully contained by science through the development of neuroscience. Harris (2010, 2011) contends that moral decisions are contained within the ‘moral landscape’ of the brain, and can be confined to the interaction of neurons through synaptic connections. He asserts that when the brain can be adequately mapped out, or ‘landscaped’, then all decisions – including moral decisions – will be determinable. This vision of morality and neuroscience is echoed by others who seek to contain the world of morality within the world of science (Hauser, 2006; Tancredi, 2005). I contend that this is a vision of the world significantly worse than that of ‘objective reality’, and if adopted will have ramifications for conceptualising the world of human relationships. Early childhood education, which has been so quickly affected by the neuroscientific turn, will not remain unaffected by these claims. There will be implications for the early childhood world, particularly in relation to appropriate teacher-child relationships.

When Pedagogy is Based on (Neuro)Science: Some Fundamental Problems

The following discussion against the dominance of neuroscience will not follow along similar lines to the arguments developed in the papers cited within the previous section. These arguments have presented a robust analytical counterpoint to the dominance of neuroscience along their projected lines of intention. Instead, this section will echo and support the concerns that Murdoch expressed: there are deep assumptions left as yet unquestioned regarding the application of neuroscientific findings within the domain of education. The loss of the ‘background’ of concepts was connected to the intrusion of scientific rationality by Murdoch. Furthermore, in modelling itself upon the scientific method, philosophy would suffer from both a loss of concepts and a general relatability to the lives of everyday individuals. This section will argue that these concerns are equally applicable to the notion of neuroscience and its effect upon the domain of education and the relationships between the teachers and children who constitute it.

Education suffers a loss of concepts when education is reduced to standardised approaches of pedagogy and children are viewed through a narrow neoliberal lens (as argued in the previous chapter). When pedagogy is set with the task to seek and find the ‘correct’ approaches to teacher/child interactions, the question of what constitutes morally right approaches can be lost (Vandenbroeck, 2017). In the neuroscientific turn, something deeper about education is being endangered, something that echoes Murdoch’s concern about relatability. Images projected through neuroscience cannot accurately represent pedagogy, not because it is hazy but precisely because it is moral. The promotion of a ‘neutral’ image belies the role of the moral imagination and the potency of developing educational values towards an unending horizon. Furthermore, the delusion of objectivity undermines the value of attachment and the primacy of the teacher who develops an intimate knowledge of children through their attentiveness. The teacher, through attention and the exercise of the moral imagination, brings an altogether different notion of the reality of the educational relationship; one which does not resemble the objectivity of science, but is a deepening and broadening of appropriate educational values. The objective image presents an illusory representation of the reality of educational relationships. When images of the human generated through the scientific method are promoted as a ‘truth’, an understanding of education as a complex endeavour is diminished. Education is a meeting of individuals, comprehension of this undertaking is complex to unravel. The necessary task of every teacher is to resist simplicity in order to move beyond a mechanistic approach, towards a more

responsive and intricate mode of human interaction. In developing possibilities for pedagogy within education, attention offers the potential to move beyond the desire to ‘explain’ the child as though the functioning of an engine and respect the opacity of children as a necessary and rightful aspect of their individuality as moral beings.

Resisting the Neuroscientific Illusion: The Moral Act of Education

In promoting the eminence of choice and autonomy, the world of ‘facts’ is been situated as the ultimate interpretation of reality. In seeking to remove value from the situation and ‘step back’ to assess the situation, individuals are positioned as self-determining beings; governing goodness is a function of their agency. Yet the point Murdoch (1992) seeks to make is that that “‘facts’ are set up as such by human (that is moral) agents” (p. 26) and are therefore never objective. Equally, our movements towards objectivity are futile due to the small slow processes that incrementally, and obscurely, build up structures of value around us. We may be encouraged to see scientific empiricism as objective, but science is performed by (moral) individuals who make (moral) evaluations on the road to creating ‘facts’ and, in doing so, create and promote a certain picture of the (moral) world. Assumptions and suppressed premises are missed when they are overlooked because of a presumed objectivity. The illusion of objectivity can encourage individuals to attempt to emulate it, becoming deprived of the opportunity for a deeper understanding of morality and moral progress. Furthermore, if objectivity is believed to be a condition of our being, then we run the risk of becoming beholden to a very narrow view of how to investigate existence, as Murdoch cautions, a “dangerous lack of curiosity about the real world” (p 293) may come to pass.

However, presenting the human being through the neuroscientific lens invokes a vision of an objective human world, despite being entrenched in moral evaluation. Through this image we are encouraged to believe that the workings of the human brain can be contained within the world of common facts, and morality – in the form of human choices and behaviours – stems from facts and exposition of the brain. Here is where it is imperative that Diamond’s (1996) echo of Murdoch’s point is fully comprehended: “Our thought about *anything* is the thought of a morally live consciousness, a consciousness with its own moral character” (p. 102, original emphasis). Conscious and, as Murdoch argues, morally evaluative thought, precedes the edicts of neuroscience, for the necessity to evaluate precedes the genesis and discrimination of ‘facts’. As Murdoch (1998) argues, “we are obscure to ourselves because the world we see already contains our values and we may not be aware of

the slow delicate processes of imagination and will which have put those there” (p. 200). Presenting neuroscience as an objective representation of the ‘inner life’ of the human mind involves the misrepresentation of the brain as the mind (Standish & Williams, 2016) and another imperative misstep: the failure to forewarn others of the role that evaluation plays in the movement towards factual conclusions. This can be unwittingly undertaken, or actively exploited to press a particular moral stance and attempt to disguise it as a truth of being. It is necessary to reconsider conclusions that ‘objectively’ separate fact from value, particularly in the case of neuroscience, in order to reconsider their implications for a broader vision of education.

The hard objective world cannot contain, nor accurately explicate conceptual understandings, “moral concepts do not move about *within* a hard world set up by science and logic. They set up, for different purposes, a different world” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 321). Moral *concepts* do not conform to the ‘hard objective world’. Moral *individuals* invoke this conformity and attempt to shape moral philosophy to fit. Scientistic philosophers seek to promote the possibility of a ‘hard objective’ world, but need to return to the suppressed premises which underpin their argumentation. To recognise that objectivity cannot explain the sum totality of existence. This is equally so for early childhood educators. Teachers may create images of education by drawing from visions of children projected through curriculum, research findings and neuroscientific information, but who also develop conceptual understandings by pulling this information into their ‘inner selves’ to deepen comprehension. They may find that these external visions do not fully explicate their experiences or conceptual understandings of pedagogy and relationships with children and synthesise a new understanding from their inner cogitations.

Neuroscience would seek to make the internal process external, and to move the ‘hazy’ inner life to external ‘knowledge’. Supporters argue that neuroscience derives “cognitive neuroscience methods...to deliver important information relevant to...the quality of teaching” (Goswami, 2004, p. 2). But, it is equally necessary to draw attention to how education, as a moral undertaking, cannot be contained nor constrained by an allusion to scientific fact. Education and science do not intersect in this way; education does not move about within the world of science, but is a part of a different world with different purposes. We need to defend pedagogy as a complex and intricate act, and the inner life of education as a critical part of teachers’ understanding of children. Not dismiss them because they are hazy, but preserve them because they are moral. We need to appreciate the role of the inner life of the teacher within education. We cannot depend upon the fallacy of the ‘objective’

neuroscientific view to guide us towards appropriate pedagogy, instead we can move our attention to a different moral vision of the educational world.

As articulated earlier, Murdoch resisted the vision of moral actions as objective principles in order to preserve the opacity of each moral agent, and the particulars of each situation. A mechanistic aspect to interactions and an infallible orientation is brought to the fore when moral individuals ascribe to unwavering moral principles. Moral principles can encourage systematic and uncompromising adherence, invoking an automaton image of the moral individual. This approach to morality was identified as problematic for its mechanistic presentation of the human. The same assertion needs to be directed at the application of the findings of neuroscience within the domain of education. Neuroscience seeks to provide principles for action in educational contexts; principles derived from neuroscience in order to shape policy (Shonkoff & Levitt, 2010, p. 698). This form of 'objective' vision for policy and principles of education leads to a mechanisation of the educative act. Principles can prescribe and proscribe what to do, channelling actions into a particular direction and determining a set of responses. Principles can serve to mechanise the actions of the moral individual, becoming unquestioned edicts for behaviour in all contexts. These principles, when applied to education can imbue a 'technician approach' to pedagogy, which is stimulated through an unassuming 'objective' view. As argued previously where moral principles become moral directives, neuroscientific findings become directives for pedagogical practices but are 'cleansed' of the stigma of moral bias through the unquestioned assumption of the 'objective' view of scientific investigation. As argued in Chapter Three, the neoliberal vision of education could reduce the depth and breadth of concepts necessary to appreciating the human relationship at the centre of education; supported by the 'objectivity' of neuroscience as explication of the human mind, there could also be an invigoration of principles for action within education. The idea of fallibility is necessary in order to maintain continual moral progress and reject the (blind) certainty of moral principles, but this idea is dependent upon a complex vision of education, one beyond the comprehension of science or neoliberalisms. We need a different image of the moral undertaking of education incorporating the use of the attentive moral imagination.

The fact/value distinction was originally determined in order to protect moral values from the domain of science. But there is a danger, in the legacy of this division, and contemporary commitment to the certainty of scientific knowledge, that neuroscience will become a 'newspeak' (Orwell, 1983) of education, one which was adopted in the hopes of its clarifications, but occludes important aspects. The nature of reality, when viewed to be

informed by the moral imagination, is “soaked in the sensible²²” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 40): our existence does not involve simply looking at the world, but accepting our affective responses as a part of our apprehension of the world which comprises of not only moral *choice* but also moral *vision*. The task of the moral individual is to appreciate reality through the persistent act of attention: through a just and loving gaze which moves moral individuals not just to *see*, but to *apprehend* reality through moving beyond the desires of the self. When the world is comprehended through the neuroscientific lens, the attentive individual needs to question such a vision for its failure to “provide concepts adequate to describe our moral lives...turn[ing] us to defective moral ideals” (Hacker-Wright, 2010, p. 205). When the objective view is imposed upon education, and the fact/value divide underpins policies and practices, then these too must be rejected as misapprehensions of the role of morality within education. The objective mode of ‘looking’ creates a fantasy of objectivism, failing to comprehend the inherent morality underpinning this position and subsequent judgements. Education is not concerned with just looking, or limited scientific strategies that proscribe principles for action. Pedagogy needs to be reconceived as a complex *task*, resistant to standardisation due to the demand to remain attentive to the particulars of each unique situation. Any vision of the world that does not apprehend the act of education as a moral undertaking, limits teachers’ abilities for enhanced responsivity to children and impoverishes education.

Conclusion

We seek to clarify things further with sciences, at times it would appear that we do indeed seek to see the workings of the human as though the ‘functioning of an engine’. Murdoch (1998) argues that the desire to insist upon a scientific view of morality is an attempt to secure ourselves against the ambiguity of the world (p. 90). Such a claim can be seen in the neoliberal movements for standardisation and teaching as a technical undertaking. But when teaching is understood as an equation, we lose the potent potentiality of the idea of perfection, a perfection that can be infinitely refined and worked towards; an ideal that grows and develops as we do in our teaching practice, enabling a deeper understanding of the unique nature of pedagogy beyond the notion of ‘standard practice’. The act of education is

²² Recall the earlier point that moral concepts are not only thought of in words, but are pictured, remembered in relation to events and a part of a sensory experience. The use of the word ‘sensible’ is in reference to this form of sensory experience, and not the definition which would mean ‘wise’, ‘prudential’ or ‘practical’ (although it could be argued that Murdoch would assent that the moral imagination should be considered in light of all of these descriptors).

not hazy because we have not devised the right scientific understanding yet. It is not hazy because we have not developed the technology yet to fully comprehend the human (despite the movements of neuroscience). The reconsideration that is needed is not to refine scientific procedures, but to reconsider the fact-value divide: to reassess the marginalisation of metaphysics. The act of education is hazy *precisely* because it is moral, and the idea of limitless perfection (as opposed to objective certainty) needs to drive our moral movements in this. As articulated prior, reality is inexhaustible and limitless, and our attempts to understand it are guided by our moral concepts.

If the assumption that everything can be explicated through science is accepted, or the explanations of the human presented through neuroscience are adopted as a ‘truth’ of child development, there will be ramifications for the ‘truth’ of how children can and ‘should’ be taught. If we assume that everything can be explicated through science, or we adopt the view that neuroscience is a ‘truthful’ way to see the child, then possibilities for an experiential and lived philosophy are diminished. There can be room for appreciating neuroscientific findings while envisioning education as a moral undertaking, but if we lose touch of the opacity of individuals and ascribe to a falsifying whole, we negate the agency of children and the lived experience of education with unknowable possibilities. If these assumptions are accepted as the only truth, akin to the presentation of neoliberalisms as ‘there is no alternative’, there will be a loss of curiosity for exploring education as a complex and inexhaustible reality which evades quantification, but is nonetheless significant. In the ascription to scientific images of the human, and the adoption of neuroscientific approaches to educational ‘truth’, openings for alternate perspectives beyond education, as a set of pre-determined experiences and outcomes, are lost.

Supported by the Murdochian concept of attention, education can be reconceived as an undertaking magnetically drawing the attentive educator towards a deepening of moral concepts to enhance pedagogy. As Murdoch would argue, we do not need principled directives to understand the interrelations between human beings, we need a more detailed terminology, morally loaded words and a deepening and broadening of moral concepts, for that is how we can apprehend and appreciate education as an ethical undertaking. Neuroscience should not be the only, nor the predominant view to make ‘sense’ of education. A vision of education as moral engagement, and the exploration of the potential benefits of the act of attention, is what can open education up to encouraging possibilities.

Chapter Five

Love and Early Childhood Education

Introduction

Dahlberg and Moss (2004) call for an ethical approach to early childhood education, and highlight responsibility, respect for otherness and a rejection of rational thinking as leading themes within this approach. They call for the resistance of a cognition/emotion binary and a movement to a postmodern ethics in order to engage with “particularities and emotions rather than seeking the dispassionate application of general and abstract principles” (Dahlberg & Moss, 2004, p. 69). Relational, moral and ethical teaching can be enlivened by the philosophy of Iris Murdoch. Attention, as an approach to pedagogy, holds interesting possibilities for making sense of the moral and emotional connections between teacher and child in the early childhood educational context; attention is an undertaking of “moral agents; it is an exercise of *love* through which we come to know others” (Roberts & Saeverot, 2018, p. 36).

Attention is a demanding but invigorating task. As argued in previous chapters, it resists mandates for standardised practices, rejects predetermined learning outcomes and is a way of appreciating reality to remove the veil that denies clarity of vision when tainted by the desires of the self. Within the previous chapter, an argument was developed against the limitations of neuroscience as an ‘explanation’ of the inner life of the human. Instead, Murdochian attention promotes the influence of sensory aspects upon human experience. This next chapter will explore the concept of love as a sensorial aspect.

Love is identified by Murdoch as a means through which the moral individual remains open to the reality of other beings; moral vision is critical to developing a greater understanding of the world ‘as it really is’. Within the early childhood context, love is necessary to an understanding of education as a relational undertaking. When early childhood settings are constructed as spaces and places to develop children’s interests, seeing the child in order to notice, recognise and respond (Carr et al., 2000) requires the teacher to develop the moral imagination and appreciate the opacity of the child. Love is defined by Murdoch, (1998) as “the imaginative recognition of, that is respect for, this otherness” (p. 216). For Murdoch, an accurate appreciation of the other involves the work of the moral imagination. Love is positioned by Murdoch as the bridge to the other and reality beyond the self. Love is

the crucial concept within the act of attention and central to our ability to relate to others in life and in teaching.

Within this chapter, love is viewed as a means for developing an episteme of the other, an orientation to education as a moral and ethical undertaking. The first half of this chapter will focus upon an exposition of Murdochian love, particularly the connections to imagination, goodness, the direction of love and how love can be conceived as a *metaxu* between the self and the world. Love and the idea of perfection will also be explored to expand upon the necessity to maintain vigilant attentiveness and remain sensitive to the notion of progress. The second half will outline the relationship of emotions and love to neoliberal forms of professionalism and make sense of the ways in which Murdochian love can aid teachers' understanding of the act of education. Murdochian love will be also be investigated as a means through which educators can resist limiting visions of education; images of education that represent teaching as simplistic and formulaic.

Following the thread of Murdoch's (1998) assertion that "not a report need not entail not an activity" (p. 318), this chapter will argue against neoliberal views of pedagogy; that love between teachers and children is inconsequential due to its immeasurability. Attention, when undertaken sincerely, has the capacity to reconfigure relationships between people, and to enable teachers to more accurately see the child and reality. Murdochian philosophy makes room for the positive potential of conceiving the student-teacher relationship within the realm of the affective, placing love at the heart of the educative process.

Love in the Concept of Attention

I think love is my main subject...this is partly a philosophical development. I once was a kind of existentialist and now I am a kind of Platonist. What I am concerned about really is love, but this sounds very grandiose. (Rose & Murdoch, 2003, p. 25)

This quote from Murdoch is taken from an interview originally published in 1968. It demonstrates the centrality of love as a concept within her writing. Although this interview was conducted while Murdoch was overseeing rehearsals of a play adapted from her book *The Italian Girl*, philosophical considerations take a central role in reflecting upon choices made in her writing. Murdoch's statement identifies her movement – from existentialist to Platonist – as informing her decision to focus upon love.

In line with the main focus of Murdoch's statement above, it is necessary to any consideration of Murdochian philosophy, particularly that of attention, to articulate the

importance of love. Love is a central idea in the concept of attention, interlinked with other concepts in Murdoch's philosophy, such as the moral imagination and 'unselfing'. In order to fully appreciate and be open to the possibilities of Murdoch's (1998) concepts, it is important to make sense of how love is a part of a wider landscape of moral concepts and highlight her position that time and experience will deepen comprehension of these concepts, connecting them in ways that intuit a more clear and comprehensive moral vision (p. 322). Love is a moral concept which can grow and develop through experiencing it in the world. Love is not *contained* by public definitions, but rendered and refined through personal contemplation leading to a more gradual personal understanding, which is *negotiated* with public definitions (Antonaccio, 2000, p. 93). Although love is being 'made singular' in this section, love cannot be isolated from other concepts, a necessary entanglement that will become clear as the chapter progresses.

Imagination, goodness, and love

Murdoch (1992) states, "we are fantasising imaginative animals" (p. 323). To understand how imagination is guided by love and intersects with goodness, it is first important to understand how Murdoch positions imagination in relation to love. According to Murdoch, imagination is integral to our existence. Imagination is essential to our relation to others and the ability to "make real to oneself, the existence and being of other people" (p. 322). Inasmuch as it is a way into understanding other people as real beings, imaginative acts are also conducted entirely within ourselves, it is "an (inner) activity of the senses, a picturing and a grasping" (Murdoch, 1992, p. 325). As articulated in the previous chapter, the development of concepts within our minds is experienced in an "imaging, semi-sensible mode" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 40) and our thoughts about concepts are not designations of what they are, but rather "grasping, 'possessing'" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 41). Murdoch (1992) expands further by identifying the need for a "reflective 'placing' of consciousness" (p. 325) when considering the role of imagination in morality. With deliberate reflection we become more attuned to the network of values and concepts around an "intuited centre of 'good'" (Murdoch, 1992, p. 325), clarifying our ability to perceive reality and developing our concepts to apprehend it. The ongoing act of attention is deliberate reflection, which incrementally enhances moral perception and the ability to see the world as it really is.

The imagination is engaged constantly in human life, yet is so entirely pervasive that "it is in danger of seeming empty" (Murdoch, 1992, p. 322). Murdoch argues for an extended

understanding of imagination, proposing a separation between ‘good’ imagination and ‘bad’ imagination. Consequently, Murdoch delineates imagination from fantasy in moral terms to segment the more general use of the term ‘imagination’ into *bad* fantasy and *good* imagination (Murdoch, 1992, p. 322). The difference in moral direction is central to the understanding of both imagination and fantasy. Fantasy consists of the larger portion of one’s thoughts, guided by self-preservation or self-aggrandisement (e.g. vanity, vengeance, grandeur and power), but imagination is a “moral discipline of the mind...(and)...suggests the searching, joining, light-seeking, semi-figurative nature of the mind’s work, which prepares and forms the consciousness for action” (Murdoch, 1992, pp. 322-3). Fantasy limits our appreciation of the world and “can imprison the mind” (p. 322), whereas imagination “appears as a restoration of freedom, cognition, the effortful ability to see what lies before one more clearly, more justly” (p. 322). As Altorf (2008) articulates, “through fantasy, people only look after themselves, while imagination looks at the world...fantasy is mechanical, whereas imagination is connected to...exploration” (p. 69).

The moral imagination supports the attentive individual to explore a deeper understanding of reality, one that is not built from an egotistical standpoint but is open to the perspectives of others. It is difficult to keep our attention upon the real situation and “prevent it from returning surreptitiously to the self with consolations of self-pity, resentment, fantasy, and despair” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 375). However, as imagination is constantly employed and often fantasy is mistaken for imagination, how can we seek to distinguish between the two more accurately? This is where it is critical to unravel the intersection between imagination, love, and the call to the good as these connections will support the endeavour to direct the imagination and resist fantasy.

Firstly, Murdoch (1992) asserts that our experience of love stirs up our imagination and “reach[es] down into, the deep breeding places of imagery” (p. 346). Love is a catalyst for the imagination and opens us up to our best imaginative possibilities. Secondly, our ability to direct attention is through our capacity to love (p. 354). We direct our attention outwards when we love something beyond ourselves. However, as articulated above, imagination is something that is conducted entirely within ourselves. We love outwardly, but what is imagined through love is entirely inner. How do we resist the desire to distort what we imagine? How do we reflect in a way that remains true to the reality of the other person? Love’s connection to the good guides the direction of the imagination. Through love’s magnetic pull to the good, love is directed towards goodness, and when this happens “even impurely or by accident” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 384) love is purified. Murdoch recognises that it

is difficult for people to appreciate the opportunities extended to us through love because instances of love are frequently self-absorbed and ‘possessive’, it is difficult to see love’s connection to goodness when love is something rarely seen in its highest form. However, when love is viewed in this form we can instantly distinguish it from lesser forms and see how it demonstrates goodness. Therefore, love is an essential part of understanding how we are magnetically pulled to goodness.

Murdoch (1998) challenges the notion that selfish examples are indeed love. In as much as imagination is confused with fantasy, love is at times confused with ‘false love’, which moves to ‘false good’ (p. 384). This ‘love’ is characterised by the same identifiers as that of fantasy: self-serving, egotistical desires. In these examples there is a tension between the ego and humility, between self-interest and ‘obedience’ affecting our understanding of freedom (as explained in Chapter Two). Love is “capable of infinite degradation and is the source of our greatest errors” (p. 384), but Murdoch questions the accuracy of describing these examples as ‘love’, for in Murdoch’s conceptualisation of love, there is a connection to goodness. Although ‘love’ may lead individuals to make errors, “when it is even partially refined it is the energy and passion of the soul in its search for the Good” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 384). This is where love, freedom, and goodness intersect. As articulated above, where fantasy is mechanical, imagination is connected to exploration. Imagination directed by love is the ability to explore not only our connection with others, but our relationship to the good. Love is where our respect for otherness invokes the possibilities for humility, and acquiescence. When love and imagination are combined they are magnetically drawn to the good, and aid our developing understanding of goodness. Love is the “tension between the imperfect soul and the magnetic perfection which is conceived as lying beyond it” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 384). Through the development of the moral imagination, honed in the practice of loving others, we enhance our understanding of the good.

In everyday life, love is difficult to comprehend due to its complexity and a lack of appropriate examples within the world. Love is frequently mistaken for other emotions that are generated from fantasy; as argued before, these are created through innate human selfishness (Murdoch, 1998, p. 384). Yet love is also an ordinary and everyday human activity serving as a counterbalance to selfishness. Love is enacted within real human relationships which, when directed truly, are also an illumination of the world in the light of goodness. As a part of everyday human life love opens humanity to the possibility of making progress in the moral pilgrimage. Love accesses the best in us, for love is “an ultimate consolation and an ultimate saviour” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 346). Love enhances our developing

understanding of the good, for when we seek it we become appreciative of the desires of the other person whom we love, refining our imagery and concepts accordingly. As we progress, we can draw from our developing network of values around our 'intuited centre of good' and use this understanding in our imaginative reflection to check the direction of our love in order to resist that egotistical pull.

Love is directed outward in order to apprehend reality

Murdoch (1998) develops her vision of love, goodness and light from Plato's analogy of the cave. She likens the fire to the light of the self, a light that would appear dazzling and may distract one from moving beyond the cave into the light of the sun and goodness (pp. 382–383). She states, "the self is such a dazzling object that if one looks *there* one may see nothing else" (p. 324). If we are halted in our search by this lesser light, we may never realise there is more beyond its alluring brightness; the prisoners in the cave may mistake the fire for the sun, as we may mistake "self-scrutiny for goodness" (p. 383). The threat of narcissism looms large when love is predominately directed internally, this form of neurosis is a significant barrier to our ability to develop loving knowledge of the other (p. 216). Therefore the guiding direction for attention is "Outward, away from self which reduces all to a false unity, towards the great surprising variety of the world" (p. 354). Reality is "the proper object of love" (p. 355) and fantasy is "the proliferation of blinding self-centred aims and images" (p. 354). It is through our ability to love, which is to *see* the other in front of us, that we can remove ourselves from the fantastical world of the ego into the reality of a shared existence and, ipso facto, we can only truly love when we move towards an open and unselfish attentiveness (p. 372).

However, by merely 'looking' outward one will not apprehend reality, nor the more comprehensive moral vision that can be achieved through an appreciation of 'otherness'. Reality cannot be accessed by simplistic 'objective' looking, and even the assumption of a position of objectivity is flawed (as argued in the previous chapter); moral visions colour our understanding of the world. When the world is understood through excessive love of the self instead of love for others, our appreciation of reality is clouded, drawing us closer to the fire. But, the light of the fire only lights up ourselves, and vaguely sketches out others. It is the light of the sun that reveals the world as it truly is. When we are limited to the light of the fire, we hold an obscured view and, due to this clouded view, can only access a limited understanding of reality. Guided by love, our moral vision is refined and we are drawn to the

light of the sun; we are open to accessing an understanding of reality hitherto ‘unknowable’. Love is enacted through the practice of attention and “attention is rewarded by a knowledge of reality” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 373). Love is an integral concept necessary to attention and a means to access reality inasmuch as love *is* the way to attain a true perception of reality revealed by the good. Moral progress towards the good is beyond introspective looking, beyond the self and even beyond the immediate, as goodness is a distant metaphysical actuality. By realigning our vision towards “a distant transcendent perfection” (p. 383) that is thoroughly grounded within the everyday world, we develop our understanding of the good and how it guides our actions in our everyday lives.

The philosophical entanglements between ego, otherness, reality, and love demonstrate a point at which Murdoch is indebted to the concepts of Simone Weil (2002). In earlier discussion (Chapter One) about the influence of Weil upon Murdoch’s philosophy, Weil’s view that attention is a necessary prerequisite for love was identified. The Weilian claim that attention *presupposes* love illustrates its integral nature. Without love, it cannot be attention and in instances of pure attention, there is always love. This point is of particular significance where Weil writes “Among human beings, only the existence of those we love is fully recognized” (p. 64). Weil’s ideas influence Murdoch’s position that love renders others more clearly. Through love the other is more fully drawn, without love the other is rendered less ‘real’, or as understood through the analogy of light, the light of goodness which is revealed through love clarifies our vision of others. Without the light of the sun, we can only rely on a lesser light occluding our vision. We navigate towards goodness by love and the other is illuminated; love is the act of ‘bringing into focus’, adding pigmentation, shade and vibrancy to the image we hold of the other. This is not just to sketch an image of reality, but to render it through the medium of consciousness and attain clarity of the world ‘as it really is’. Murdoch (1998) exemplifies this in her scenario of M and D, stating “When M is just and loving she sees D *as she really is*” (p. 329, emphasis added) and also in her statement that the act of love “indicate[s] the connection of the good and the real” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 437). We not only see others more fully through the vision of love, but also become more attuned to reality located outside of ourselves, outside of the grasp of the ego.

Metaxological love

Love is a bridge, a *metaxu* between the self and the world, which enables individuals to be ‘stretched’. An exposition of metaxological thinking within the philosophy of Weil and

Murdoch highlights the ways that love stretches us away from our ego, towards the other (Larson, 2014). With Weil (2002), the goal is to remove ourselves entirely. Weil (2002) writes:

I must withdraw so that God may make contact with the beings whom chance places in my path and whom he loves. It is tactless for me to be there. It is as though I were placed between two lovers or two friends...If only I knew how to disappear there would be a perfect union of love between God and the earth I tread” (p. 41).

Decreation, a central concept of Weil’s philosophy, comprises a deliverance from ‘self’, and involves ‘piercing the screen’ between us and God. This screen is set up as a necessity, for without this screen, we would be absorbed entirely by the light of God, ceasing to be. The screen enables the space to develop individuality, personality and a sense of ‘self’ separate from God. But according to Weil, the ambition of all people should be to pierce this screen in order to lose the ‘self’ and become one with God, or as in the above quote, to serve as the vessel for God’s loving presence for others. For Weil, love is a bridge between ourselves and God and, once we have undergone the process of decreation, love flows through us from God to others.

Murdoch amends Weil’s removal of the self in her philosophy (as previously articulated). Instead, Murdoch seeks the removal of the ego and a movement towards an appreciation of the other through careful attention enacted through a just and loving gaze. The removal of the ego is through our loving attentiveness to others, which renders them more accurately and enables us to access reality. However, we do not withdraw entirely. The development of an appreciation of the reality of others does not require the destruction of one’s own unique individuality, rather it “*presupposes* the notion of individual consciousness as the necessary and inescapable medium of moral vision” (Antonaccio, 2012, p. 96, original emphasis). The moral task of every individual is not to remove themselves entirely, but to remove the egotistical elements that get in the way of seeing reality. This is the enigma of our moral lives: in order to fully apprehend the reality of our existence, we must push away our ‘self’ but can only do so through an appreciation of the world undertaken by our ‘self’. Murdoch (1998) recognises the complexity of this directive, asserting, “The direction of attention is, contrary to nature” (p. 354). As a part of developing values, one must also develop the distinction between the ‘self’ as the product of the ego, and the ‘self’ created through careful loving attention to others in the world. This is a crux of Murdoch’s philosophy and a point she laments frequently within her writing; we are selfish, egotistic

individuals, but love can be the bridge between us and others inspiring the transition of *our own personal* world view from fantasy to reality.

This moral task is undertaken from a uniquely individual perspective that is dependent upon knowledge and experiences comprehended through the unique consciousness. The form of ‘unselfing’ promoted by Murdoch is reliant upon the unique individual position in order to fully attend to others through a just and loving gaze; an accurate rendering of D is reliant upon the whole unique personality of M struggling to perceive D more justly. This wholly individual understanding creates a situation in which external analysis of her moral position may indeed be impossible, for a just and loving gaze is not a only ‘looking’ at something, it is not an undertaking which is seeking neutrality or objectivity, but is a form of deliberation undertaken from the singular position which M has built from the experiences in her life, her relationships with others and the inner development of her moral concepts. An external analysis of M’s moral reconsideration of D would not reveal the unique position which she draws from to come to her conclusions, and can only be summed up in the statement “‘I can’t explain. You’d have to know her’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 326). Murdoch asserts “I can only choose within the world I can *see*, in the moral sense of ‘see’ which implies that clear vision is a result of moral imagination and moral effort” (p. 329). This extends Murdoch’s assertion that to understand M’s decision would not only requiring knowing D, but also M (more on this is discussed within Chapter Seven).

A loving perception of other individuals is not through the extinction of the self, but through the acceptance of our position as moral individuals entrenched within unique experiences of the world. Love is a part of a patient regard for others, which is not the extinguishing of the self, “but as something very much more like ‘obedience’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 331) and obedience to reality is an exercise of love (p. 333). Unselfing is not the extinction of the individual, but rather the purification of moral vision through the undertaking of love, which is refined via the good. It is the movement our moral vision beyond the limitations of the ego, into a space of illumination (the light of the sun); the entrance into a realm where reality can be appreciated without the obfuscating illusion of the self (Antonaccio, 2000, p. 182). Through a form of moral discipline that is utterly familiar and yet infinitely perfectible, we can resist the pull of the ‘the fat relentless ego’ which eradicates our ability to apprehend reality (Murdoch, 1998, p. 342). Love maintains good moral vision, just as morally good vision invigorates love. Love is the proper determinant for our decision making and will bring us the ‘right’ answers only when we undertake the task of attention: “an exercise of justice and realism and really looking” (p. 375). As an integral part

of the task of attention, love is the force that acts as the bridge between the removal of selfish desires and the retention of the uniqueness of the individual. Love is “both innate and external” (Larson, 2014, p. 156) and can serve as the *metaxu* between the self and selflessness, self and others, the self and the good. This goodness “cannot be grasped apart from the evaluative and desire-laden gaze of a perceiving consciousness” (Antonaccio, 2000, p. 140). Yet love enables us to move beyond the desire-laden gaze that is a part of our *prise*²³ of the world, and purify our intentions through the good.

The endless task of love

The idea of perfection is necessary to developing a moral vision of the good. Love and justice are the primary concepts guiding our perception of others in the attentive gaze, and the utilisation of these concepts involves “the idea of progress, that is the idea of perfection” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 318). A loving gaze is not an undertaking that can be considered ‘finished’. The idea of perfection is necessary to ensure that the act of attention is never completed. Attentive individuals cannot say, ‘well, I have looked and this is my final reckoning’, attention is an endless process because the objects of our attention change and, in devoting our attention towards them, so do we. Love and the pursuit of the good transforms us (Murdoch, 1992, p. 222) and transforms our vision of others around us. Consequently, we must maintain our attention in order to appreciate these developments, refine our vision, and remain sensitive to our growing understanding of moral concepts. The endless task of attention is “guided by the existence of an ideal end point of love or knowledge *which always recedes*” (Antonaccio, 2000, p. 97, original emphasis). Perfection is conceptual, for it is never fully attainable; inasmuch as humans are finite and perfection is infinite, perfection will always remain distant (Widdows, 2005, p. 75). As attention, reveals the connection between the good and the real, ongoing attentiveness also reveals a “heightened sense of value and a vision of perfection” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 437). Attention realigns our perceptions of ‘finished’ and ‘enough’ through the revelation of the idea of perfection, which in turn alters our motivations in life because it “inspires love in the part of us that is most worthy” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 350). We seek something beyond our own selves when we are motivated by the desire to perfect our loving and just vision of others. Love, when undertaken as a part of the endless task of attention, guides the individual by steering his or her moral vision outward, revealing the world illuminated by goodness to which love is magnetically drawn (p. 384).

²³ Recall that our understanding of the world is through a “grasping, possessing” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 41)

Furthermore, when we undertake the task of attention we need to be aware of Murdoch's exposition of our developing moral character and our efforts to enhance perception, specifically, "where virtue is concerned we often apprehend more than we clearly understand and *grow by looking*" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 324). To appreciate the virtues surrounding our intuited, but infinitely perfectible, centre of good, we must remain open to reality as something we can partially discern, but always more than we can fully grasp. As articulated earlier, love is a catalyst for the imagination and when the imagination is stimulated by love, so is the attraction between the "imperfect soul and the magnetic perfection which is conceived of as lying behind it" (p. 384). Through practicing an endless loving gaze, we are offered the possibility to both grow our comprehension of virtues and learn more about our *capacity* to apprehend inexhaustible virtue.

In order to move forward in our moral progress why is it necessary to reach for perfection? Murdoch admits that it may appear more sensible to reach for improvement rather than perfection, but love shows us the critical differences between these two goals. Perfection moves us, and alters us in ways that improvement would not, for "it inspires love in the part of us that is most worthy. One cannot feel unmixed love for a mediocre moral standard" (p. 350). As argued earlier, when we view love in its highest form we have the capacity to distinguish it from lesser forms. The idea of perfection opens us up to the desire to keep searching for perfect love. If we reached for progress, then we would miss the possibilities of moral vision beyond the 'mediocre'; we may only reach 'average' and lose touch with the good. Furthermore, one must reach for perfection in order to avoid the trap of 'false love' moving us to a 'false good' (p. 384). The idea of perfection is necessary to maintain endless forward momentum in the right direction. This does not need to be conceived as a dauntless task, but can be welcomed as an opportunity to be incrementally transformed in the light of the good. At this point the discussion will turn towards early childhood education as a 'professional' practice, and the grounds for a Murdochian response.

Love in Early Childhood Education

In order to preserve the uniqueness of the child and argue for an ethical and relational model of early childhood education, Dahlberg and Moss (2004) draw attention to postmodern ethics, the ethics of care, and the ethics of encounter as essential themes in the ethics of education. They highlight the ideas of 'attentiveness' and 'listening' through the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and Loris Malaguzzi to navigate the ethical dimensions of education.

‘Attentiveness’ is defined as a form of distancing that “enables the Other to be in its difference, in contrast to the nearness which implies the possibility of grasping something and, hence, a potential for better control” (Dahlberg & Moss, 2004, p. 84). This study has considered the notion of ‘attention’ at length and this is a good point to comprehend what Dahlberg and Moss seek in ‘attentiveness’ and ‘listening’ and what Murdochian attention can offer.

The tensions between knowledge, control and respecting ‘otherness’ are of central concern to Dahlberg and Moss (2004) and are a central reason for drawing from Levinas in order to resist motivations to shape education into a procedural, technical, or instrumental rationality; education for Dahlberg and Moss is understood as an ethical and political practice, with early childhood centres functioning as sites for enhancing ethical fluency with strong and equal partnerships between all members. In doing so, Dahlberg and Moss identify the ‘ethics of care’ as a creative practice which can transverse linear notions of education, and highlight philosophers such as Foucault, Arendt, Heidegger, Lyotard, and Ricoeur as influential in notions of care. Additionally, they identify Weil and Levinas.

Murdoch and Levinas (1979, 1986, 1988) both seek to resist totalising processes in order to preserve the uniqueness of the individual. For Murdoch, others are wholly opaque, and for Levinas, the other is ‘invisible’, but not inasmuch as the other is absent, but rather there is an impossibility of reducing the other to a concept (Beals, 2007). For those within education who wish to resist codification and over simplification of the complexities of children’s learning, Levinas’ philosophical oeuvre, particularly his ideas of the ‘other’ and ‘unknowability’, support such an endeavour (Cheeseman et al., 2015). Levinas refers to the non-cognitive understanding of the other and instead conceptualises our relationship to the other as a ‘striving’ or ‘aspiring’ rather than knowing or believing (Morgan, 2011), a sense of which is similar to Murdoch’s appreciation that the other is wholly unknowable, and attention is guided by the idea of perfection. Specifically within the early childhood sphere, Ritchie (2007) describes the possibilities for Levinas’ ‘thinking otherwise’ in relation to supporting bicultural hybridities and resisting the colonising forces that reduce Tino Rangatiratanga (Māori sovereignty). This will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Akin to Murdoch, within Levinas’ philosophy, the ‘economy of satisfaction’ is rightfully interrupted by the presence of the other, so that interpersonal communion can be understood from the perspective of the other (Plant, 2003). Plant (2003) identifies Levinas as a philosopher who is not as distant from the concerns of everyday life and the potent power of love, as would be suggested by Alford (2002) who compares Murdoch and Levinas’

philosophy. However, in Levinas, love is cautioned against due to the ways in which it may do violence to others beyond the ‘pairing’ of love and it is suggested that the paternal relationship is the ideal model to understand an unambiguous relationship with alterity (Kourie, 2013, p. 2). The role of eros within Levinas is identified as ‘critical’ to Levinas’ philosophical understanding of love (Kourie, 2013), but is also critiqued for the ways in which the masculine and the feminine are compartmentalised through a patriarchal gaze which delimits the feminine (Irigaray & Whitford, 1991). Limitations are also expressed about the convenient image of the ‘neighbour’ within Levinas’ analogy of ‘interruption’ as it familiarises the face of the other, reducing the potential of the interruption if a stranger was there in his or her stead (Žižek, 2005). This is not to assume that the ‘other’ of Levinas is only restricted to the points of connection to the self, as Levinas was clear to identify the stranger should be an object of love as much as the ‘neighbour’ (Strhan, 2012).

But a critical separation between Murdoch and Levinas must be recognised: Murdoch remains adamant that the sublime can be located within the ordinary and everyday human interactions without recourse to distancing our philosophical cogitation from the immediate reality (Alford, 2002). For Murdoch, the sublime is within the ‘mess’ of everyday human lives and must be defended for within the ‘mess’ is the substance of existence; we can start from no other point (Roberts, 2010). Furthermore, “Contingency must be defended for it is the essence of personality” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 285). Every wholly opaque other (including oneself) is built from contingency and the particular, the starting point of which we are all immersed within. Love is a devotion to reality that does not seek to reshape the other, but reshapes ourselves within the ‘mess’; attention “wakes us up right in the midst of the mess...[and] its attendant, love, gives us a chance at vision” (Roberts, 2010, p. 124). Like the neighbour coming to the door within the analogy of Levinas, moments of attention are the way to wake us up, but not in order to move past the ‘mess’ but to stay within it and develop a clearer vision of it through a deeper exploration supported by the lens of love. Murdoch offers a way of conceptualising loving responses to others right in the midst of the pedagogical experience; attention is practical understanding of the role of love within our everyday relationships, demanding us to remain attentive to the reality that is in front of us and not focus upon the ‘interruption’ itself.

Ultimately, Dalhberg and Moss (2004) endorse a pedagogy of listening, explicated by the writings of Loris Malaguzzi and enacted within the early childhood education in the province of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Malaguzzi’s ‘listening’ and Levinas’ preservation of the other draw many parallels with Murdoch’s attention. Each of these foci are reaching towards

concepts addressed in the concept of attention; a deeper understanding of Murdoch's concept of love can add to the philosophical consideration of early childhood education as an ethical encounter. Malaguzzi and Murdoch both sought a way to understand others without containing them. 'Listening' and 'attention' both support a necessary awareness of the contextual particulars and an outward focus concerned with a deeper appreciation of reality of the child. The pedagogy of listening and the philosophy of Iris Murdoch can produce a synergy that can enhance pedagogy and a broader understanding of the act of education. The concept of love developed by Murdochian philosophy enhances 'listening' by philosophically supporting the 'ordinary and everyday' pedagogical practices as an inextricable part of education.

Looking more closely at the Aotearoa New Zealand context, *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) promotes a vision of pedagogy that recognises the complexity of emotions when working with young children. Teachers' emotional expressions towards children are important in the act of education (Hargreaves, 2000). Working and living with young children as an early childhood teacher is an emotionally charged undertaking. Young children's expressions of emotion can be intense and, subsequently, teachers' responses to it cannot be devoid of feeling. Arguably, impassive responses are not encouraged of early childhood teachers; it is recognised within the early childhood community that teaching must be emotionally *responsive*. Indeed the good teacher "must know not only how to look and listen but also how to speak and to respond" (Roberts & Saeverot, 2018, p. 41). The abilities to listen and look are encouraged through the Learning Stories framework of assessment (Carr et al., 2000), in which attention to children is a necessary first step in the assessment process: 'Noticing' is the first step of the framework, followed by 'recognise' and 'respond'. Teachers are expected to "listen to [children] attentively to understand their perspectives" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 45). In order to understand their perspectives, and to build the bridge between self and other, between teacher and child, Murdochian love holds potential for early childhood educators to comprehend the critical role of the emotions in order to realign pedagogical responses towards an appreciation of the child within the early educational context.

Consistent with the focus of the curriculum, children's emotional development is central to pedagogical practice. But, importantly, teachers' emotions are also acknowledged as a significant element within educational relationships, where it states "The wellbeing of each child is interdependent with the wellbeing of their kaiako" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, p. 20). I take the stance that 'well-being' is inclusive of emotional well-being, a

stance supported by *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017). In associating teachers' emotions with those of children, a symbiosis of emotional stability is highlighted; children and teachers are interconnected through an intricate web of affections, sensitivities, and empathies. Within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) an appreciation of the connection between individuals is considered necessary in order to ensure children develop a sense of well-being. The teacher is described as integral to this growth, and the child is 'anchored' by the emotional support of the teacher (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 14). Emotions can be viewed as a point of connection between the self and other, between the teacher and child, enhanced by loving attention. The movements towards 'knowing' children as a scientific, or scientific undertaking (as discussed within Chapter Four), need to be reconsidered against the ambiguity of other ways of 'knowing' beyond the epistemological, including the ontological and axiological.

However, such an interpretation is in tension with neoliberal designations of feelings and emotions. Tesar (2012, 2014) draws attention to the ways in which neoliberal technologies seek to govern children through the expression or suppression of emotions; designating 'right' and 'wrong' ways of performing feelings. As articulated within Chapter Three, tensions emerge between the distinction of neoliberalism as a set of policies and as a lived rationality. This point is equally relevant to the governance of behaviours within the early childhood context. Professional boundaries around intimacy are established to demarcate the 'professional teacher'. In England, Powell and Gooch (2012) identify situations in which physical expressions of intimacy (kissing babies) are explicitly forbidden due to 'professional' requirements stemming from blanket policies adopted by management. The teachers expressed their hesitation about such comprehensive approaches, but also admitted that an expectation of 'professionalism' would alter their pedagogical practices despite these hesitations.

Within New Zealand, neoliberal technologies of governance extend to teachers' expression of emotions through externalised criteria designating appropriate forms of professionalism. Despite the expectation that emotions are interdependent (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017), there is a tension that needs to be explored between *The Code of Professional Responsibility* (Education Council New Zealand Matatū Aotearoa, 2017) and *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017). Within code 1.2: 'Engaging in professional, respectful and collaborative relationships with colleagues', the code attempts to demarcate professional boundaries through articulating examples of behaviour that breach the boundaries of ethical and professional relationships, including instances of "intimate contact

with a learner” (p. 12). Although this could be considered to be limited to the context of sexual intimacy, such a reading is blurred by being described as “sexual *or* intimate contact with a learner” (Education Council New Zealand Matatū Aotearoa, 2017, p. 30, emphasis added). What does this mean for the early childhood teacher who is directed by *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) to “communicate positive feelings... warm and *intimate* interactions” (p. 30, emphasis added)? If emotional interdependence is understood to be a part of the early childhood curriculum and necessary to pedagogical approaches within early childhood, then how does this fit within the ‘professional’ life of the teacher? It is questionable to assume that intimacy assumes sexual expression. Likewise, it is questionable to remove ‘intimacy’ due to these entanglements with sexuality. Similar to the tension illustrated by Murdoch – that the inner life should not be discarded due to the difficulties of representation – something would be lost if intimacy was discarded from pedagogy altogether. A ‘professional’ determination should consider what intimacy may mean for the teachers and children who are participating in educational contexts up to fifty hours a week. The concept of love within Murdochian attention can offer another way of viewing intimacy in pedagogical relationships. As articulated earlier in the chapter, love opens us up to our best imaginative possibilities, and supports us to focus our attention so that our selfish desires may be overcome in the apprehension of the other. Through its connection to goodness, love cannot be understood as possessive or inappropriate forms of physical action, and these lesser forms of ‘love’ can be identified through the light of goodness. Reality, is the proper object of love, and attention to reality is the demand of the early childhood educator who seeks to pedagogically respond to the real child(ren) in front of them.

The understanding that pedagogy is an act of love can be enhanced through the moral vision of Murdoch’s concept of attention. The demarcation between ‘professional’ and love has elicited the conditions for love to become a ‘ground up’ notion of professionalism, but due to the marginalised nature of this discourse, there are fewer opportunities to engage in wider critical discussion on the concept of love to deepen and broaden philosophical argumentation. Consequently, opportunities to extend understanding and appreciation of the professional *and* loving teacher are lessened. However, movements towards a deeper appreciation of the role of love in early childhood pedagogy are advancing. In theorising love and caring, Page (2011) draws from Noddings (2013) and Goldstein (1998) to articulate the importance of considering care as a form of action, or as written by Goldstein (and highlighted by Page) caring is “not something you are, but rather something you engage in, something you do” (p. 246). More recently, in an edition of the *International Journal of Early*

Years Education, devoted to the consideration of the concept of love in pedagogy, Page (2018) sought to conceptualise the notion of ‘Professional Love’, by setting out principles for practice, including the “intellectual capacity to become self-aware” and the ability to “de-centre” (pp. 135-6). Noddings’ (2013) ethic of care is built from Murdochian attention, but love is critically investigated by Murdoch enabling a deeper understanding of its role in attention (the genesis of Noddings’ concept of *engrossment*). An understanding of ‘self-awareness’ and ‘de-centring’ are enhanced by Murdochian attention, and offer new ways of reconsidering the role of love in pedagogy to ensure room is made to explore possibilities beyond a principle-based approach to ethics. In education, morality is more than principle-based ethics; an appreciation of value attributes can add a critical dimension to ethics in education (Chapman, Forster, & Buchanan, 2013). As argued by Murdoch, when morality is determined to be ruled by actions, something is lost; the loss of the background underpinning moral actions and delimiting the role of the inner life in moral decisions. Furthermore, a critical distinction is articulated when love in education is labelled as “Professional Love” (Page, 2018). It is important to consider what may be gained from this distinction, and what could be lost.

Limitations placed by externally constructed codes of conduct are akin to moral principles; dictums to be upheld (potentially at all costs). Such an approach invokes the problems of Kantian rationality, which Murdoch finds problematic when considering the reality of human relationships (as discussed in Chapter Three in the image of the ‘ideally rational individual’ who is considered capable of divorcing ‘fact’ from value in order to determine moral actions with others, or assess others’ moral actions). Arguing along similar lines, Taggart (2011) asserts the ‘hegemonic status of Kant’ underpins the correlations between neoliberal projections of ‘professionalism’ and performances of ethical behaviours within the domain of education. Objective reason is viewed as the sole requirement to determine ‘right’ from ‘wrong’ behaviours, in a manner akin to that expressed by Murdoch (1992) to be post-Kantian: “survey all the facts, then use your reason” (p. 26). Taggart (2011) writes:

Being ethical, in this sense, is about observing principles and justifying actions in the light of them. Such an approach is routinely used to underpin the assessment of teachers so as to allow standardised value judgements to be made concerning their performance. (p. 86)

Such an understanding is not without its ramifications for teachers' understandings of moral sensibilities. Chapman, Forster and Buchanan (2013) found tensions between rational communication and emotional expression in pre-service (Secondary sector in Australia) teachers discussions of ethical dimensions, with "the pre-service teachers opting to be seen as rational and preferring to tie their emotions to the rational discourse of fairness for the students, rather than care for them" (p. 137). Chapman, Forster and Buchanan (2013) equally argue that 'professional' entanglements can shape teachers' developing professional identities insofar as emotional reactions are situated as "not professionally ethical" (p. 141).

The distinction of 'professional love' from love needs to be carefully considered in light of the considerations of principle-based ethics and the neoliberal desire to codify. This is the predominant approach to the governance of ethical encounters in early childhood, yet it is recognised as insufficiently narrow, raising questions about the validity of this approach. Page (2018) and others (Aslanian, 2015; Claxton & Atkinson, 2000) resist such narrow codifications and indicate the value of the intuitive within education. This is a space where Murdoch's understanding of the idea of perfection can support the claim that love in education is the love of attention and is necessarily unquantifiable. There is a distinct inability to fully define nor apprehend love in its totality, for it is ever refined and clarified through its practice and understood through a sensory appreciation of its magnetic pull to the good. A Murdochian understanding of love can broaden the notion of love in education through the concept of attention as an 'inhabited' philosophy, supporting the notion of a philosophical understanding of love within teaching built from pedagogy (more on the notion of attention as an 'inhabited' philosophy will be discussed in Chapter Seven).

Love as a central concept of early childhood education which is developed through the practice of attention has much to offer early childhood education. Dalli (2010a) articulates that the 'expectations' of professionalism generated by scholarly discussions lose touch with the realities of teachers. She states:

I have argued that the traditional alignment of early childhood work with the role of mothering, and the attendant discourses of love and care, have acted to disempower early childhood practitioners from claiming professional status...At the same time, discourses of love and care persist in early childhood teachers' talk about their work... these discourses should not be ignored in scholarly discussions on the nature of early childhood professionalism...rather, it is timely to re-vision notions of love and care so that they may be transformed into pedagogical and political tools. (p. 174)

Moving through dominant discourses are the counter-discourses of the teachers or the ‘ground-up’ constructions of professionalism that reconceive the educational act as one of ‘emotive labour’, including the concept of love (Dalli, 2010a). Emotionality is recognised as a space that is constantly negotiated, and carefully managed; emotions can be positioned as a part of the professional role built from personal and intimate relationships (Dalli, 2010b, 2010a). Reconfiguring professionalism to recognise the work of teachers as both an act of love and intimacy requires an appreciation that professional teachers are aware that “keeping an appropriate professional distance requires emotional work of the highest calibre” (Elfer, Goldschmied, and Selleck, 2003, cited in Osgood, 2010) and a respect for teachers’ abilities to negotiate these delicate emotional boundaries.

Problems of ‘performativity’ and the incongruence between neoliberalisms as a set of policies and as a lived experience, can be partially mitigated by counter-discourse movements of teachers working within the early childhood settings (Dalli, 2010a; Osgood, 2010). Instances of ‘top-down’, hegemonic expressions of professionalism are reinterpreted and critiqued by educators working within early childhood settings, who are capable of expressing a reimagined definition (and determination) of ‘professionalism’ from within. Teachers within Osgood’s (2010) study sought to resist externalised ‘competencies’ as the sole criteria for determining the ‘professional’ teacher. The definition of the professional teacher is critiqued as a gendered reading, and the teachers’ counter-discourse an act of disruption to the correlation of the ‘hyper-femininity’ of emotional expression to ‘unprofessionalism’ (Osgood, 2010). But these opportunities must be read in light of other ‘realities’ of neoliberalisms raised by Powell and Gooch (2012): teachers may experience a desire to resist ‘professional requirements’ but are dissuaded by the potential ramifications of doing so.

Neoliberal ideas promote the notion of the professional teacher as apolitical and innocuous, yet to do so within the context of early childhood education is to eradicate the long history of feminism, social justice, and child advocacy movements that have fostered the growth of early childhood education and underpinned ideological and philosophical tenets within pedagogy. The call to the moral and the ethical has been a part of early childhood education since its inception (May, 2009). To consider the early childhood professional as one who needs to go ‘beyond caring’ is to ascribe to “the persistence of an outdated equation between caring and female irrationality or anti-intellectualism” (Taggart, 2011, p. 85). Osgood (2010) identifies the tenuous position ‘professionalism’ places teachers: within a space which encourages them to enact a fantasy and suppress the authenticity of pedagogical

practice, particularly when it was counter to ‘professional’ requirements. Osgood (2010) writes:

The early childhood workforce is readily constructed through neo-liberal discourses as comprising docile bodies that yield to the discourse...as ‘technicians’ willing to comply and unquestioningly deliver prescribed practice and meet externally set occupational standards. (p. 127)

A reconceptualization of the role of Murdochian love within pedagogy offers substantive arguments against the image of the technical teacher, raising questions about the fantastical nature of this image, generated through the egotistical desire to control the limits and boundaries of ‘learning’. Although the desire for control is generated through the ego, love magnetically draws us to the good, purifying our movements with others. When education is directed through love, the fallacies of neoliberal forms of ‘professionalism’ are clearly identified. Murdoch argues although goodness has many ‘false doubles’ when coupled together, love and goodness cannot be led astray. We can immediately distinguish lesser forms of ‘professionalism’ from those that support pedagogy as a form of attempting to see another individual through a just and loving gaze.

When love is the underlying motivation for intimacy with children and discerned from ‘false love’, then intimacy cannot be mistakenly characterised as something untoward. Love, illuminated by goodness, is a movement that cannot be concerned with egotistical desires, rather attention seeks to place the object of love in the position of ultimate concern; the centre of one’s focus. Within the keynote address at the 2005 Te Tari Puna Ora/New Zealand Childcare Association national conference, Dalli (2006) focusses upon the complexities of the ‘professional’ teacher and the concept of love. Despite the strength of love as a motivation for appropriate pedagogy, the incompatibility of love as a legitimate form of ‘knowledge’ invokes an association between the discourse of love and reduced professional status. This problem can be likened to Murdoch’s earlier concern with the dissection of ‘knowledge’ and ‘appearances’ in the assessment of morality through the objective lens (as argued in Chapter Four). This demarcation was invoked in order to relocate ‘knowledge’ to the observable evaluation of actions rather than a part of the ‘hazy’ inner life. However, Dalli also comments that this correlation invokes an unnecessary hierarchy, situating “the brain above the heart” (p. 7) and delimiting the potential power of love as a discourse of strength in pedagogy. What is needed, Dalli argues, is the development of an understanding which would not only position care and love as ‘feeling’ words, but also enhance a deeper theoretical

framework: part of “a newly theorised discourse of professional practice” (p. 11) beyond a ‘personality trait’ (p. 11) and part of a relationship concerned with the “unending obligation to meet the other” (p. 11).

In order to undertake this work, I contend that Murdoch’s arguments against the dismissal of the inner life as hazy, irrational, and unable to be externally validated, are of significant value to developing a newly theorised discourse of professional practice based upon the centrality of love within pedagogy. As Murdoch argues, love developed by the moral imagination is hard to characterise “not because it is ‘hazy’ but *precisely because it is moral*” (p. 317, original emphasis). Such an understanding of the relationships between pedagogy, evaluation and performativity can enhance a lively debate on the validity of the concept of love. If teachers enter the educative space with loving attentiveness, their moral imagination is brought to the fore, and mechanical processes built from fantasy can be diminished. Murdochian love encourages teachers to consciously reflect upon their judgements and think deeply about how they are developing inner thoughts of others, guided by the need to remain responsive to the “reflective placing of consciousness” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 325).

This loving reflection will support current forms of narrative assessment and offer a new way to consider the moral vision within assessment as a matter of *gestalt*. Pedagogy is based upon moral vision and the motivation to understand children through the moral imagination; the task set before teachers is to view others through the lens of love. Love is bound to imagination and through the light of goodness the world is clearly illuminated. Teachers are expected to ‘see’ the child and when assessment is undertaken through attentive love, teachers can be opened up to the possibilities of the child by gaining a clearer understanding of reality beyond themselves; beyond the limitations of performative forms of assessment towards a greater appreciation of the possibilities of pedagogy based upon attention. Differences may be understood as differences in moral vision. Rather than seeking more effective ‘tools’ to articulate and describe the reality of the child, first we would be encouraged to reconsider the moral vision that pictures them (Murdoch, 1998, p. 82).

Love is a moral concern, it is an individual task not undertaken through the extinction of the self, but through the acceptance of our position as moral individuals entrenched within our unique experiences of the world. Teaching is also a moral act in which knowledge of the individual affects the negotiation of ‘education’ between teacher and child. Love allows the teacher to ‘see’ the child and enhance a conceptual understanding of the educational relationship. The act of education can be enlivened through an appreciation of pedagogy as

an achievement of a loving and moral teacher, understood through the philosophy of Iris Murdoch.

Conclusion

It is doubtful that neoliberal ideas will support the notion of care coexisting with professionalism (Ailwood, 2007). In effect, teachers and bureaucrats will be speaking at cross purposes when seeking to find common ground. Although the same could be said of love, the potent power of ‘ground up’ conceptualisations of pedagogy and professionalism can be philosophically grounded by the substantive nature of the Murdochian concept of love, supporting pedagogy as an attentive act which is ‘inhabited’ (a point to be extended within Chapter Seven). Love opens a space for teachers to validate their intimate understanding of children by acknowledging the necessary incremental moments that build an understanding of children and improves comprehension of the pedagogical process. These small developments are essential within early childhood pedagogy, and critical to an appreciation of education as a relational undertaking that resists technical processes. Technical directives for practice undermine teachers’ loving understanding of children, and the craft of the attentive teacher to weave a curricular approach that meets the child’s individuality and draw from love’s knowledge to encourage the child on an educational journey. When understood through Murdochian attention, love can be viewed as a means to reorient systematic and formulaic understandings of education and renegotiate the professional and loving teacher in early childhood education.

Chapter Six

Attention and Aroha

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the critical role of love within the concept of attention was explored in order to develop a philosophical grounding for the necessity of love in pedagogy. Love was defined as ‘respect for otherness’ (Murdoch, 1998, p. 216) and conceived as a metaxu between self and the world. In this chapter, the centrality of love within the concept of attention will be brought in conversation with the Māori concept of aroha. Respect and consideration will be given to allow for an interweaving with mātauranga Māori, such as tapu, mana, manaakitanga, and āta, to develop a fuller picture of aroha. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the shared vision of attention and aroha. Attention has much in common with aroha and when brought together, the synergy of these concepts can strengthen an understanding of education as something more than what is offered through neoliberal interpretations.

In order to contextualise the direction for this investigation, at the outset of this chapter I will situate myself as a researcher, describing some of my history and role at the time of conducting this study. Following this will be a section outlining some of the dilemmas I experience in relation to bicultural development as a teacher born outside of New Zealand and some supportive ideas from research for how to navigate them. Next, the concept of aroha will be sketched with a view to exploring the harmony between aroha and attention and how they can be aligned to enhance each separate concept, and build cohesive synergy between them.

Contextualising Personal/Professional Approaches to Bicultural Development

As a non-Māori teacher and researcher, the purpose of this section is to offer some contextual information as a means of grounding my personal-professional position in relationship to these concepts. In order to achieve this, I will share a little about my history and present, my own cultural positioning and my relationship and engagement with mātauranga Māori. Necessary to this discussion will be an articulation of the professional expectations of early childhood teachers in relation to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Tino Rangatiratanga and bicultural

development and how these affect my approaches to being a teacher, researcher and person living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Presently, I am an early childhood teacher who works in an education and care setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. I am employed as a 'Lead Teacher' within the room where I teach with one other teacher. Together we teach up to 12 children each day, but due to the part time enrolments of some of those children, there are approximately 18 children who are enrolled in this group. This group is one of four across the learning centre, divided primarily by age into 0-18months, 18-30 months, 30months to 3½ years, and 3½ years to school leaving age (anywhere between 5 and 6). The overall teaching team totals 15, representing a very diverse range of cultural backgrounds with over half of the teachers originating from countries other than New Zealand, including myself.

I was born in the United States of America. My family (Father, Mother, elder sister) moved out to Aotearoa New Zealand because my father was enlisted in the United States Navy, and the Navy stationed him in different places internationally. He was stationed in Christchurch to work in the 'Deep Freeze' Antarctica Programme, and we immigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand when I was six years old. My father was raised in Louisiana, in a very large family. My mother was an only child, adopted into a childless Mexican-American household (she is also of Mexican-American heritage). Raised with Mexican-American and Cajun cultural traditions and a strong focus upon valuing and participating within the cultural traditions of the places we were stationed (California, Hawaii, and New Zealand over the course of my life), the experiences of my childhood have developed in me both the desire to know more about differing cultural understandings of life, and the desire to make sense of how these impact upon my ontological, epistemological, and axiological orientations.

When we came to Christchurch, we were perceived by many as a novelty. There were no other Americans at the school I attended, and certainly no Mexican-Americans. There has been a disconnect with the United States as a space of 'home', as despite strong patriotic threads from my father and a staunch pride as a Chicana instilled in me by my mother; we have never returned to the United States since our departure. My cultural orientation is strongly 'Kiwi', but this does not encapsulate my experiences and ways of knowing and being, for the strong ties to my Mexican-American heritage and the ongoing experience of being recognised as a foreigner by people within New Zealand (due to my accent) still affect my everyday experiences.

From this position I begin my encounter with 'biculturalism'. I have experienced the notion of 'biculturalism' through exposure to the Māori and Pākehā cultures in New Zealand,

viewed initially through the influences of my family and later through teacher education programmes. Some foundational understandings were generated from the stories my mother would share of colonising effects which impacted my mother directly and indirectly through her community. She would share with me her experiences as a person of Mexican heritage in America and connect these to the necessity for us (my elder sister and myself) to respect appreciate and uphold other cultural heritages, especially when we are the ‘guests’ in another country. The correlations in colonising effects between Mexican and Māori peoples were not lost on my mother; she would tell me of her experiences of coming from a Spanish-speaking household and attending an English-speaking school. My father would share his views of tolerance and acceptance, having seen racism first hand through the effects of the subjugation of African-American people living in Louisiana. Every time we moved my Mother and Father would encourage me to try to see the world through the eyes of the local and indigenous people living there and embrace cultural diversity as a strength. They also were adamant that I remain true to my own self, my upbringing and *mi familia*. Consequently, although I am a teacher in New Zealand, I am not fully ‘kiwi’ and bicultural practice is understood through this interpretation of myself within New Zealand culture.

Over the course of my teaching career I have been working towards enhancing my appreciation of mātauranga Māori woven through the fabric of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996, 2017). At the outset, *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) was hailed as a landmark document for supporting the equal footing and co-habitation of colonial and indigenous approaches to children and childhoods and particularly as a document that unified a pluralistic and at times competitive sector. As a ‘bicultural’ curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) is described as a ‘meadow of opportunity’ for presenting post-colonial possibilities that can “disengage us from the constraints of bicultural dichotomies, moving into terrain that validates and legitimises multiple subjectivities which enrich the possibilities for Māori to live as Māori” (Ritchie, 2008, p. 202). The present edition of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) was enhanced to strengthen the bicultural framing, and extend guidance relating to kaupapa Māori as an integral element of teaching in the Aotearoa New Zealand context (Kaye, 2017). Whakatauki are utilised for their metaphorical quality to support educators’ ability to see education differently and to consider the implications of this vision for pedagogical practice. In this revised edition, there has been a move to represent Māori concepts in ways that are not transliterations of English concepts, but separate and unique. Wellbeing is defined as “children have a sense of wellbeing and resilience” (New Zealand

Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 26), whereas Mana Atua is set apart with the following definition: “children understand their own mana atuaatanga – uniqueness and spiritual connectedness” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 26). The distinctions between these values and subtle points of separation and convergence infer the nuance that teachers need to apply in order to orient their teaching approaches towards bicultural development. It is also critical to resist the ways in which neoliberalisms pervade bicultural themes surreptitiously; the ‘bicultural child’ is not exempt from the neoliberal lens and is constructed to normalise neoliberal discourses. In a view of childhoods as ‘assemblages’, Duhn (2012) highlights this slippery aspect of neoliberalisms, which may appear impermeable, but can be brought into focus by identifying the tensions, contradictions and ambiguities in the ‘ideal bicultural child’ of the first edition of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). Arguably, the same concern can be extended to the neoliberal construction of the ‘bicultural teacher’ (or *kaiako*) within the most recent edition of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017).

The movements I undertake in my bicultural development are further influenced by the expectations for all teachers as partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. As party to this document, teachers must remain cognisant of and active in, the necessity to uphold Tino Rangatiratanga (Māori sovereignty). Additionally, these professional expectations are extended through my status as a registered teacher, which is guided by *Our code, Our standards; Ngā tikanga matatika, ngā paerewa* (New Zealand Teaching Council Matatū Aotearoa, 2017). These expectations are evident where this document guides teachers to work in the best interests of students by “affirming Māori learners as tangata whenua and supporting their educational aspirations” (p. 10) and “demonstrating a commitment to a Tiriti o Waitangi based Aotearoa New Zealand” (p. 12). The enactment of this expectation is through a shared responsibility to enhance the educational success of Māori learners and understand the “histories, heritages, languages, and cultures of the partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (New Zealand Teaching Council Matatū Aotearoa, 2017, p. 18).

Although an understanding these professional responsibilities guides my engagement with Māori concepts, deeper understanding of the concepts and how they are translated into practice is not part of these documents, and must be sought elsewhere. I have been informed by publications, but I have also gained knowledge from relationships over the course of my teaching and research career. Here my understanding is indebted to the generosity extended by whānau of the Māori children I have taught. They have taken the time to further elucidate these concepts and enhanced my understanding immensely. Furthermore, in conversation

with Māori researchers, I have been alerted to critical points of alignment between Murdoch's concept of attention, and kaupapa Māori. This has furthered my conceptual development. My approaches to pedagogical practice, underpinned by a desire to enhance my comprehension of mātauranga Māori is beyond notions of performativity of professional requirements. Sensitive to the Murdochian arguments for the notion of philosophy as inhabited (which will be expanded further in the next chapter) I do not see my approach to bicultural practice as governed solely by principles (do this, not that), but more as the progressive motions and incremental developments in moral vision. A 'lived philosophy' moves me to an enactment of pedagogy that must be understood through contemplation, but also through experience; the lived philosophy is one that must be embodied, inhabited and lived.

Furthermore, this lived process demands the understanding that morality affects all human decisions and interactions. The ethical entanglements that accompany interpersonal relationships are brought to the fore, particularly when the contents for discussion are cultural values. In this way, I seek to acknowledge and uphold bicultural development as something beyond the epistemological and ontological, and attempt to include the axiological, inasmuch that values are essential to the conceptual understandings which I am moving to grasp. Murdoch conceives the development of conceptual understandings as such a 'grasping', although there needs to be a distinction between grasping to know, contain, and possess (potentially in order to appropriate, disseminate and control), and one which is underpinned by the concept of attention. Through a just and loving gaze, the focus is to displace the ego and to continually re-evaluate the individual reality which is the object of attention. As such, the notion of finality, one which would render a concept as 'complete' is inappropriate.

Humility, is essential to this position and representative of Murdoch's ideal individual, therefore it is critical for me as a researcher seeking to respond to the moral call of attentiveness to remain humble about how I interpret and present Māori knowledge when they are not a part of my own cultural heritage. This is important for,

In Māori terms, knowledge is widely viewed as a taonga, to be guarded and protected and to be passed only to those who can be entrusted with preserving and using it wisely, for group rather than individual benefit...from this perspective, the sharing of knowledge is viewed as an act of generosity. (Love, 2004, p. 1)

I am not Māori, and the following account of Māori concepts is undertaken from readings, conversations and experiences with Māori concepts from my own unique cultural position. I approach this task with great respect and humility. Any claims to knowledge need to be

considered carefully, with *āta* (care and deliberation). I hold in esteem the individuals who have shared their conceptual understandings in order for me to be able to develop a deeper appreciation of mātauranga Māori. I also seek this conceptual development as a response to the call to improve bicultural development (Ritchie, 2003) and to honour my parents' expectations for me to venerate indigenous cultures in order to behave a courteous guest who should understand the mores of the country I reside in. I hope that the analysis undertaken within this chapter will be seen as an effort to work towards a way of responding to the call for stronger pedagogical practices enhanced by aroha, for the benefit of all the children of Aotearoa New Zealand.

On Knowing and Teaching as 'Other'

As an early childhood teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand, developing an understanding of concepts which are a part of the traditions of tangata whenua (especially as a person from another land) requires sensitivity to the concept of 'otherness'. Murdoch was clear to argue for an image of an 'inner life' and the ways in which this inner life is wholly opaque to external individuals, but nonetheless a critical part of the individual. Although we attempt to see another person more clearly, they will remain entirely opaque. Furthermore, the vision of the human as an individual who (when engaged in the moral task of attention) is a pilgrim on the moral journey through life, enhances the image of the unknowable other as separate and distinct but also undergoing a process shared by all humanity. The 'other' in the educational relationship may well be fully unknowable, but we are still connected through the commonality of an inner struggle and the external magnetic force of the good, which pulls all attentive individuals in the same direction. The task of attention focuses our awareness of others and the necessity to remain open to looking differently at the possibilities presented by the unknowable other. Biesta (2017) asserts that our subjective existence involves a dialogic approach to the other, one that is not exclusively concerned with internalised intentions and desires, but also "intimately bound up with the ways in which we engage with and respond to what and who is other, with what and who speaks to us, addresses us, calls us, and thus calls us forth" (p. 3). de Vocht (2015) highlights the necessity for understanding teacher-child dialogue through the Bahktinian lens of moral answerability. Yet, in the recognition of an 'other' there is the potential to misalign good-intentions with homogenous practices. Through a Kristevan 'foreigner' lens, Arndt (2018) challenges us to consider the foreigner within and

remain open through the unknowable within ourselves, and draw on this experience to appreciate a commonality with others.

The following discussion hinges upon the concept of the obscure and unknowable other and our responses towards that otherness. In looking critically at bicultural understandings and attempting to embrace another way of knowing, being and valuing in the world, the question of ‘who is the other’ can be raised and Murdochian strategies can be developed in order to improve one’s moral vision in relation to the other. Here, a question is raised about the notions of subjectivity, agency and what could potentially be identified as the ‘visionary’ – a critical element within Murdochian (1998) images of the human (p. 332). Whilst there is no necessity to remain bound to one image of the human or another, if the notion of moral vision and the developing capacity for acting differently is absent, then this image of the human has lost an element which is essentially Murdochian. Responsivity to the other is not only about personal actions, or how we are subject to another’s actions, but also a question of moral vision.

The movement to enhance conceptual understandings of mātauranga Māori presents me with a central dilemma that needs to be identified, explicated and navigated. I am aware of how this dilemma could undermine my attempts for seeing different. The dilemma is identified in part by Ritchie (2003) who articulates some problems for educators who seek to ensure that their pedagogy is enhancing ‘bicultural practice’. She is particularly cautious about educators who are undertaking this and are non-Māori, raising the question:

...to what extent can (and should) non-Māori emulate qualities of “Māoriness”? Can non-Māori early childhood educators learn to act as Māori do, in situations such as urban kohanga reo, where modern non-kinship based whanau have been created and operate from a kaupapa (philosophy) of aroha, manaakitanga and whakaiti? (Ritchie, 2003, p. 6)

These questions resonate with me as a non-Māori and as a non-New Zealand born individual with Mexican-American heritage. How do I make sense of kaupapa Māori, and what are the ways in it will impact upon pedagogical and philosophical understandings of education?

Warren (2014) also highlights this dilemma for non-Māori educators who are expected (as an aspect of professional responsibility) to develop bicultural understandings. She undertakes a post-structuralist self-study of discourses and professional subjectivities in relation to navigating ‘biculturalism’ and resisting colonising discourses. She articulates that there are several discourses at work that affect the individual: professional discourses, Te

Tiriti social justice, and cultural identities. She argues that it is important to articulate each discourse in order to evaluate how they may impact personal/professional practices. Understanding how discursive practices operate can offer opportunities for transformation. Engaging in a Foucauldian ‘post-structuralist’ lens (with due awareness of Foucault’s resistance of this designation), Warren (2014) reinforces the stance that power/knowledge relationships are ever present within interrelations with others and discourses of biculturalism. To analyse myself through this lens is to situate myself according to multiple subjectivities. As a teacher of young children, my position is one of privilege and my orientation within the learning setting – how I position myself philosophically, and how this is expressed to children, whanau and teachers – must consistently navigate the omnipresent power dynamics between myself and others. This is necessary in order to resist the potential approaches of ‘sameness’ that I may unconsciously produce and make room to move into different, and potentially confrontational, spaces of transformation.

To navigate this dilemma, Ritchie (2003) highlights the qualities of responsiveness, respectfulness and reciprocity (central elements of the *Te Whāriki* approach to education) as the means through which individuals can navigate problematic issues of professional subjectivity. Respect is:

certainly a fundamental quality for Pākehā educators to demonstrate, and one which is related to that of whakaiti...adopting a whanaungatanga approach requires the reconceptualising of the construct of teacher as ‘expert’, since we cannot be experts in another person’s culture if we do not share that cultural background. Teachers from the dominant Pākehā culture will require both humility and openness, so that in remaining vigilant as to the limitations of the role of a Pākehā facilitator of bicultural development they may avoid pitfalls that can easily befall those who come from an uncritiqued paradigm of ‘expert’ or ‘person responsible’. (Ritchie, 2003)

The bicultural character of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) encourages non-Māori teachers to work with Māori concepts. This is problematic when non-Māori educators assume a position of knowledge in relation to these concepts, or conversely avoid engagement with them; a recognition of the hyphen between Māori-Pākehā, as a more-than-grammatical gap (Stewart, 2018). Stewart (2018) asserts that critical kaupapa Māori theory holds a long-standing tradition of acknowledgement of the challenges of the hyphen gap, and promotes a vision for kaupapa Māori which will meet “kanohi-ki-te-kanohi...the critical Pākehā response of seeking entanglement, bearing guilt and maintaining commitment

to productive disappointment of the recurrent urge to want to fully understand the Other” (p. 8). Yet also within *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) teachers are specifically positioned to recognise they are not exclusive holders of knowledge but respectful learners (altering the power/knowledge dynamic). This aligns with Murdochian ideas about the other as unknowable and opaque; the process that must undertaken in order to revise moral judgements relies upon the respectful attention of the educationist, validating the importance of the inner life of teaching. In the recognition of their limitations of knowledge, teachers can “move beyond conventional models of delivering ‘culturally appropriate practice’ as defined by teachers/experts” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 9). Humility and openness are identified as key concepts within this process (Ritchie, 2003); they are ways in which the teacher can orient themselves to move towards transformation.

Humility and openness are central to Murdochian ideas. According to Murdoch, the humble individual holds the possibility of being good; this person is able to displace personal needs, desires, wants, in deference to the other through the task of attention. Attention is defined as ‘a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality’ and is a way in which individuals can see others justly, lovingly, and clearly. It is an endless task, for as other people grow and change over time, so does our moral vision through the practice of attention. Murdoch developed the concept of attention as a practice through which individuals can move beyond the pull of the (selfish) ego, and attempt to see the reality of another person. “Fantasy (self)” Murdoch (1998) argues, “can prevent us from seeing a blade of grass just as it can prevent us from seeing another person” (p. 357). Furthermore, “our minds are continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying *veil* which partially conceals the world” (p. 369). This ego gets in the way of our innate abilities to seek and discern the good. However, if we can remain ‘humble and open’, as suggested by Ritchie (2003), then we can have the opportunity to see the other and respond appropriately and ethically. If we can move towards a form of selflessness that suppresses the ego, but also holds on to our individuality, then we can develop our conceptual understanding of Māori concepts from our own unique personal viewpoint.

Selflessness is the key to a just and loving gaze, and therefore the key to seeing the world as it is. Humility also enables individuals to embrace the idea of perfection and see their efforts as steps along the way, not the end point in the journey. Yet the humility that is necessary to engage in the act of attention is hard to attain as “humility is a rare virtue and an unfashionable one and one which is hard to discern” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 385). Unfashionable or not, (arguably still the case in present day neoliberal times), humility is critical to

remaining open to learning, to seeking alternate viewpoints and to accepting that the misunderstanding may lie with oneself. Furthermore, humility encourages teachers to remain open to the thought that the ‘other’ can retain their individuality. Claims to a position of ‘knowledge’ or ‘understanding’ are realigned when we are open to the possibility of being the ‘other’ in the educational relationship and to seeking to appreciate different ways of knowing, being and valuing rather than enforcing one’s own. The moral task of attention can assist my understanding by supporting the ‘development’ aspect of bicultural development, seeing incremental growths in understanding as a progressive move that are underpinned by the idea of perfection, humility, and a movement away from the ego towards an appreciation of the other. It is through this orientation that I engage in the following investigation into the synergistic possibilities of aroha and attention.

Aroha: Foundational and Interdependent

Aroha is a foundational concept within kaupapa Māori, argued to be foremost in the three kete of knowledge (Patterson, 2014). Additionally, aroha is interdependent with other concepts that add meaning to the way aroha is to be understood as a concept and a practice. As both a noun and a verb, aroha is multifaceted (Tate, 2010). Consequently, there is no single English word that can encapsulate all the facets of aroha. Comprised of: aro – to direct, focus, presence²⁴; oha – generosity; and ha – the divine breath or life force, (E Tū Whānau, 2016). Aroha can translate directly as the focus and presence one generously extends to attend to the divine force within others. Yet the constituent parts which combine to create the word are not sufficient to explicate the concept in its entirety, there is an experiential and enacted aspect to aroha where understanding is deepened over time and practice (Patterson, 2000, p. 112). Aroha is described as an “all-encompassing quality of goodness, expressed by love for the people, land, birds, and animals, fish, and all living things” (Barlow, 1991, p. 8). Further to the expression of love, the concept of aroha can contain the emotions of grief and pity (Metge, 2015; Patterson, 2000), and also the concepts of affection, compassion, sacrifice, and generosity (Tate, 2010, p. 137).

To gain an understanding of aroha, this concept must be considered in relationship with tapu and mana. Tapu can be defined as a state of being which is derived from the supernatural realm (Metge, 2015, p. 284). Henare (2001) articulates tapu as a cosmic power imbued into all beings at the time of creation. Its connection to mana is understood as being (tapu) with

²⁴ Aro is also defined as “mind, seat of one’s feelings, desire...to know or understand” (Best, 1954, p. 39).

potentiality for power (mana). Shirres (cited in Rameka, 2012) states “It is from the spiritual powers that we receive our worth as human beings, our intrinsic tapu, and it is from them we receive our power; our mana, to carry out our role as human beings” (p. 135). The mana is the potency that grows from the spark of tapu within; where tapu is the potential for power, mana is the enacted power (Rameka, 2012, p. 136). Another aspect of tapu, which emanates from this other-earthly spark, can be understood from the set of relationships which stem from the energy of tapu and the subsequent restrictions, privileges, and constraint due to the effects of contact (Durie, 1998). This aspect of tapu establishes and determines conduct with spaces, places and beings (Metge, 2015, p. 284) and should not be considered static, but rather a part of the dynamic flow of tapu which can be channelled, enhanced, or advanced (Durie, 2001, p. 80). Understood as ‘te tapu i/being-in-itself’ and ‘te tapu o/being-in relationships’, tapu is a multidimensional force present within individuals and within relationships (Tate, 2010, p. 44). Tapu needs to be treated with awe and respect for its origination from atua and divine beings and its relationship with mana.

Although not the same, mana and tapu are interdependent as mana is derived from acts that sustain or enhance tapu (Tate, 2010, p. 84). The delicate relationship between tapu and mana is characterised within a ‘spiral of life ethics’ which seeks to ensure the balance is maintained through generative relationships between hearts, minds, being, and matter (Henare, 2001). Tapu rises in relation to mana, which is key to attaining the fullness of tapu (Mead, 2016, p. 50). Tate (2010) contends that the purpose of life (te wā) in Māori theology, is to possess the fullness of tapu (p. 252). The origins of this power is inherent within each individual through the prestige and power of the ancestors through the lines of whakapapa (Mead, 2016). Makereti (1998) explains that the tohi ceremony celebrating the birth of the child endowed the child with tapu and mana from the gods and beings of above and below (those who have moved onto another plane of existence). Indeed, time is part of the spiral of ethics but only insofar as it is considered as reflective rather than projective, as for Māori the past and present are brought to the fore as cohabiters, whereas the future is unknowable and therefore envisaged of as ‘behind’ oneself (Rameka, 2016, p. 387). Whakapapa is a part of this time/space cosmology where the past is always embodied in the present through the connections of the individual to the spiritual plane (Rameka, 2016, p. 389). The development of tapu, which leads to a fuller life is a form of becoming-in-relationship with the spiritual, driven by the desire to remain under the influence and power of the gods (Barlow, 1991). This aspect of tapu – as a progression – is enhanced by due attention and diligence to the conditions whereby which one increases this tapu (Barlow, 1991).

Although tapu and mana are inseparable (Mead, 2016; Rameka, 2012) these concepts can only be understood with due consideration for the roles that aroha, pono and tika, (loosely translated as perception and right conduct respectively) play in their achievement (Tate, 2010, p. 246). Aroha, pono and tika govern three core relationships of existence – between atua, tangata and whenua (godly beings, people, and land/creatures) (Tate, 2010). Patterson (2010) also alludes to this interdependency, describing the world as *tapu* inasmuch as objects of the world carry the mana of atua denoting within them an intrinsic value from this tapu, and designating care to be taken when engaged in relationships. Aroha is a divine power that emanates directly from atua and guides individuals' conduct to respectfully respond to the divine spark within (Tate, 2010, pp. 49-50). Aroha is the highest response to te tapu i – the divine spark within – when enacted through relationships. Through relationships, aroha flows outward in ways that are productive, creative, empowering, and enhancing (Tate, 2010). As a force that flows multi-directionally, there are outward/downward motions of the one giving and upward/inward motions of the one receiving, both aspects of which are contained within te tapu o - being in relationships (Tate, 2010). These are also described as 'transcendent' and 'immanent' flows, which allude to the metaphysical nature of aroha as an externally derived force.

Mana is also defined as a metaphysical concept. Mana is an energy and a potent state of being, one which holds transformative potential when harnessed through everyday human activities of generosity (Pere, 1994; Webber, 2019). Aroha plays a prominent role within this flow of mana through the affirmation that can be felt when this mana is upheld by others, and inversely the whakamā (shame, shyness) and diminishment of mana when inappropriate behaviours are corrected. It was very important for the mana of the children and the wider whānau that children are encouraged to be strong in spirit and to assert themselves (Hemara, 2000, p. 13), for if children are encouraged to feel safe in a stable and loving environment then they are assured to carry on and enhance the mana of their community (Hemara, 2000, p. 47). Makereti (1998) also explains the interplay between aroha and mana, for in her time a child was “never ordered, but was always asked in a kindly way to help” (Makereti, 1998, p. 26). Aroha is seen as a way through which children can be guided without physical reprimand, particularly as this results in their loss of mana, as articulated by Hohepa (1998) through a Kōhanga Reo song:

Ko te mea nui ko te aroha
Kaua e patu taku mokopuna

Me awhiawhi ko i taku mokopuna korikori e

The greatest thing is love

Don't hit my grandchild

You must embrace and care for my mischievous grandchild. (p. 63).

Aroha given and received is required to be shared with the giver and extended to others. Pere (1994) explains that aroha, mana and utu (reciprocity) are integrally interlinked (Pere, 1994). Mana is a form of authority which demands a response (Leuluai, 2018). Utu is the response which seeks balance; anything given or taken – good or bad – will be reciprocated due to the necessity to maintain the balance. Individuals are often expected to offer or return generosity to others in order to maintain this reciprocity and, conversely, steps may be taken (overt or subtle) to redress mana imbalances due to inappropriate actions (Pere, 1994, p. 37-8). The focal point of utu is not to do worse to others than was done to oneself, but to ensure that the balance is maintained towards equivalence, and always with a view to the notion of ea - the successful closing of events due to the restoration of relationships and a successful achievement of revenge or attainment of peace (Mead, 2016).

The mana of each individual in a community is bound together and mana is bound to community. Patterson (2014) writes, “The mana of an individual is their standing in community. Without community, there can be no mana – it cannot just arise; mana has to be mana ‘over’ or ‘among’” (pp. 78-79). Consequently, the concepts of mana, aroha and whanaungatanga (kinship, which may extend to those who are not blood related) are connected. Aroha is a foundational concept within whanaungatanga (Mead, 2016), an integral dimension of kinship ensuring the functionality within and between communities. Metge (2015) explains “respect and affection for older relatives was a strong sanction against seriously bad behaviour...whakamā was an effective sanction in its own right because it diminished a child’s self-image and mana” (p. 86). The feelings of whakamā were intensified due to aroha; admonishment delivered by one you loved brought heightened feelings of shame individually and collectively (to the family as a whole). Affirmation is similar inasmuch as the aroha felt for the person giving the affirmation enhanced its prestige for the individual and the collective.

Stemming from the root word ‘mana’, manaakitanga is frequently defined as generosity or hospitality (Metge, 2015). Webber (2019) extends this definition in response to the concepts which constitute manaakitanga. Comprising of mana, akiaki, and tanga, manaakitanga is the practice of honouring and uplifting the mana of others. Webber (2019)

writes “This is what manaakitanga means - to akiaki (cherish/nurture) the mana of others.” (p. 130). This definition of manaakitanga motivates extensive consideration of what it means to be a generous host beyond mere formal hospitality; manaakitanga requires one not just to cater to others, but also to uplift their mana. Such an act of generosity not only positively affects the mana of the guests, but also the mana of the host. Inversely a miserly act produces negative effects and repercussions. This understanding of manaakitanga deepens the understanding of this concept to be not only inter-relational, but synergistic. Caring for others becomes connected to our own mana or conversely, a sense of whakamā due to the ways in which we avoid this duty. To act with generosity towards others and to attend to the divine power within them is an undertaking of aroha (Mead, 2016).

Aroha generously focuses ones attention to attend to the divine spark within others – te tapu i – so that the mana of the person receiving aroha is upheld. Similarly manaakitanga is about careful attention to the needs of others. When mana is carefully enhanced through aroha, it is defined as soft mana as opposed to hard mana. Patterson (2000, 2014) delineates between these two aspects of mana: where hard mana is transferred (‘zero-sum’) when won through battle, soft mana can be remedial and additive when attained through compassion, kindness and love. Through the legend of Tāne-Mahuta who wrenched his parents Ranginui and Papa-tūānuku apart so that light may enter the world, Patterson (2014) articulates how Tāne-Mahuta gained mana by taking it from his parents through this act of strength, yet also enhanced their collective mana from acting with aroha after this severance by adorning his parents with clouds, comets and rainbows, and vegetation, trees and birds. The first is an acquisition of hard mana, the latter an enhancement of soft mana. Patterson (2014) argues that the ‘spectacular’ ways which are used to win hard mana (which is a transference of mana from one to another) are often easier to see than the softer, more subtle actions which build soft mana (which adds mana to all). Yet, the “fame of the provider of the food is more permanent than that of the warrior” (p. 76) meaning that the less extravagant daily acts of aroha are to be valued more than flashiness. Metge (2015) contemporises these aspects of mana by articulating how they are enacted in life: children may be reproached for wrongdoings through public chastisement and physical reprimands, with the resultant loss of mana, but mana would be restored through acts of aroha following the reprimand by the admonisher. In an interview with Māori elders, she quotes one as stating, “they would wipe away your tears with the same hand that chastised you and give you a hug. After a beating there was always aroha” (p. 88). Mana won through physical strength disturbs the balance,

invoking redress, but the enhancement of soft mana through aroha ensures the advantage of all and, and in the case of Metge's (2015) example, the restoration of mana and relationships.

Aroha is loving unconditionally and gratefully, and manaakitanga is about giving generously and graciously. In both of these concepts, consideration and carefulness are highlighted as a form of precision and conscientiousness (Tate, 2010). Both aroha and manaakitanga are about careful movements and actions, invoking a connection with āta. The concept of āta is woven through this conceptual node of aroha – through the notion of consideration and care that must be a part of engagement with others. Aroha is a process which is undertaken with a form of mindfulness for the object of aroha. As a take pū, or basic principle of Te Ao Māori, āta conveys the intention to move 'with care' or 'with deliberation' (Forsyth & Kung, 2007). Āta is described as a process with 'renewing possibilities' through a revisualisation of the position of oneself in relation to others and movements as a response to this reflection (Pohatu, 2005). Like aroha, āta is a theory-in-practice'; conceptual understanding of the meaning of āta can only be wrought through its enactment within life (Forsyth, 2006). Āta is described as essential to any conscientising process in which there are challenges to understanding the perspectives of another person. Within āta, there is an inherent necessity to move carefully and respectfully in order to preserve and enhance mana and avoid the repercussions of breaching tapu (Pohatu, 2005).

As āta is described as a renewing force, aroha is also defined as a creative energy, working with the three essential elements – pū the positive force, kē the negative force and hā the life giving energy or force (Barlow, 1991). Barlow (1991) explains that the ways in which these concepts are bound together through aroha in this statement:

Pū ana roto

Kē ana waho

Ka pū te rūhā

Ka hao te rangatahi

I runga i te mahi aroha

The nucleus or positive force is at the centre

The negative force is the outer shell

The old elements are discarded

And the new elements are created

By the power of aroha (p. 8)

Aroha maintains the power of renewal, working through the positive force at the centre (te tapu i) to shed the negative forces which would contain and restrict individuals from becoming anew with aroha. Tate (2010) confirms aroha as a creative force, stating that while tapu manifests aroha, mana is the power to cultivate the creative and productive nature of aroha (p. 145). The interplay between mana and aroha – where mana induces the creativity of aroha – must be considered in relationship with the earlier assertions of the dependency of mana upon community. If mana is dependent upon community, then the creative potential of aroha is only possible within communion with others. In this way, aroha is reaffirmed as an enacted concept, one that must be understood in practice. Tate (2010) establishes aroha as a motive power, a celebratory and renewing power, and an expressive power (p. 139). Through the enactment of aroha with others, individuals are motivated to yearn for communion, their relationships are renewed and celebrated, and inner feelings are expressed in ways that alter individuals unequivocally for the better through enhancement, restoration and empowerment.

Aroha also functions as a governing force for relationships and a principle for interactions (Tate, 2010). The three main relationships need to be considered within this communion: between atua, tangata and whenua. Attending to the tapu of all beings motivates the practice of aroha to be considered as a communion not only of mind and body, but also of spirit. The Māori concept of wairua (literally meaning two waters) is the culmination of the spiritual and the physical, and a recognition of the inseparability of the two within the Māori world cosmology (Rameka, 2016, p. 388). The expression of aroha is not restricted to the physical, as it contains a movement that “reaches inwards and outwards from the very core of one being to the very core of the other” (Tate, 2010, p. 139). Through aroha, our wairua is joined with that of others and demands the necessity to respond respectfully. These physical and spiritual potentialities are joined at conception through the mauri – the life giving force bestowed by the gods and imbued in the body within the physical world (Barlow, 1991, p. 83). The mauri is also a force within all objects, with the consequence that no object is ever truly inanimate; all objects contain this gods given vitality which is responsive and dynamic with other objects (Durie, 2001 p. x). But, unlike the divine spark of tapu, mauri is extinguished at the time of death. The mauri is critical to mana as mana flows through the mauri (Leuluai, 2018). Acts of aroha which enhance mana are connected to the mauri, affecting those we express aroha to and rippling outward through this dynamic tension. Through the mauri we are bound together physically and spiritually, and through aroha we have the ability to radiate the positive effects of aroha beyond those we immediately contact.

The interrelationship between mauri and aroha reveal the positive potential and creative power of aroha to renew and restore.

In the case of children, mana is a strong part of the binding force linking the two parents, and their differing families and communities together. In this way, the child is an embodiment of the connections between these two communities and a reflection of the hopes and aspirations of the future of these two communities (Hemara, 2000). Through aroha, the mana of the child is to be protected as such. Children maintain and connect the lines of whakapapa, linking the ancestors to the present, and represent:

...the personification of the worlds of yesterday he purapura i ruia mai i Rangiatea, e kore e ngaro. Precious seeds dispersed from Rangiatea (the famed homeland of the Māori gods) will never be lost. As precious seeds, the child was nurtured for survival and inculcated with an understanding of their own importance (Reedy, 2003, p. 55)

The act of shared aroha for children is mana enhancing, encouraging the child to be strong in his or her sense of mana to build towards the ability to stand up and contest the loss of mana and seek utu to redress the balance (Rameka, 2012, p. 134). Such a view is endorsed within the Māori text section of the 1996 edition of *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) where it states:

Mā te whai mana o te mokopuna ka aea e ia te tū kaha i runga i tōna mana Māori motuhake me tōna tino Rangatiratanga

Through the pursuit of mana the child will be able to stand strongly in her/his sense of Māori independence and self-determination. (Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014, p. 97)

Mana is a part of a strong sense of self, a strong standing in the community and aroha is a part of this empowerment. Through aroha, individuals are “mutually enhanced, restored, and empowered” (Tate, 2010, p. 139).

As articulated at the beginning of this section, the concept of aroha is deepened through experience and enactment of aroha (Patterson, 2000p. 112). The necessity to reciprocate aroha received is to be understood as something akin to an ‘obligation’. It is worth quoting Reedy (cited in Reedy, 2003) at length where she states:

Aroha is an overworked and misunderstood concept...Misuse of this word is a result of our lack of responsibility to teach the rule of reciprocity on which aroha flourishes. Aroha is not something anyone can command from others because they imagine it’s their right. To accept and enjoy the loving, the sharing, the caring of aroha means you

give back a little more than you received. This keeps the networks alive and functioning. The acceptance of aroha in any shape or form places one unequivocally under obligation to that person, that family, that group. (p. 58)

The choices one makes about what actions to take in life become a part of aroha. The necessity to respond to the aroha of others can direct individuals' responses and actions shifting the direction of their life remarkably (Tate, 2010, p. 141). Yet aroha still hinges upon the freedom of the giver to resist the compulsion to express aroha and the freedom of the receiver to resist the call to accept it and reciprocate (Tate, 2010, p. 145). Here, pono and tika are behind the movements of aroha. Tate (2010) writes, "If our aroha is to be pono (to have any truth, honesty or integrity) there must be action behind our words" (p. 141) and if aroha is to be tika (correct action), then there are moral obligations to be upheld which relate to a deeper conceptual understanding. Developing with aroha and understanding the implications this has for subsequent actions within one's life can greatly alter the direction of life, but aroha is the "act of love that adds quality and meaning to life" (Barlow, 1991, p. 8).

Attention and Aroha

At the outset it is important to articulate that there is a definitive epistemological difference between mātauranga Māori and traditional Eurocentric understandings of the world which is brought into focus by Mika's (2017) discussions of 'worldedness'. Mika (2017) problematizes the notion of the self and other as things separate and absolute, arguing that an indigenous notion of 'worldedness' (in which all things are constituted with each other, and a single object collapses the 'all' into one) is incongruent with the image of the sovereign self. He argues that there are fundamental differences for the Māori student when the underpinning logic of the Platonic tradition of philosophy is foregrounded at the expense of a worlded metaphysic. Tate (2010) also states "Tangata is not merely an individual. Tangata is, by virtue of his or her relationships with Atua, with other tāngata and with whenua" (p. 47). As argued in other chapters, Murdoch also sought to resist the restrictive notions of self, individualism and the persistence of a non-metaphysical image of the world. Murdoch (1998) asserts, "The humble man²⁵, because he sees himself as nothing, can see other things as they are" (p. 385). Perhaps there is a connection here between the humble man and the vision of kaupapa Māori inasmuch as the aversion to the idea of a singular self allows for a more

²⁵ See Note 2

accurate vision of everything else (with due hesitation about the idea that there is a separate and distinct ‘everything else’). Although grounded in differing understandings of the world, there are resonances between the two concepts that can enhance comprehension of each concept, introducing some cohesion through an exploration of their synergistic potential.

As articulated earlier, aroha is comprised of: aro – to direct, focus, presence; oha – generosity; and ha – the divine breath or life force, (E Tū Whānau, 2016), literally meaning ‘the focus and presence one generously extends to attend to the divine force within others’. Aroha is the highest response to te tapu i, the divine light in every being. Through this divinity, we are all interconnected. In paying respect to the tapu within another being, you honour the tapu within yourself and the relational tapu that binds everyone together. Through the response of aroha, we behave best with others and encourage the best in others as a necessary response. Attention is also defined as a generous form of focus which seeks to look for the best in others – to focus our attention upon them with a just and loving gaze. Attention is likened to prayer, which Murdoch (1998) describes as an “attention to God which is a form of love” (p. 344). Deriving the concept from Weil, Murdoch sought to investigate the question, ‘what is a non-religious form of attention like, and what could be the benefits of this attention?’ Rameka (2015) asserts that Western traditions frequently situate spirituality as a challenge to rational thought. Murdoch wrestled with this divide in her own philosophy and developed the concept of attention to maintain many foundational theological aspects by promoting the benefits of their preservation. Many of these aspects resonate with the concept of aroha (and supporting concepts) which are inseparable from a spiritual epistemology and ontology.

Aro is also understood as “mind, seat of emotions, feelings, desire...to know or understand” (Best, 1954). In this definition of aro, towards the ha – the divine life breath or force – can be seen another way of understanding the synergy of attention and aroha. The practice of attention is based upon the moral imagination, the ways in which the moral imagination can enhance our moral actions in the world, and our understanding of moral concepts, as Murdoch states “where virtue is concerned we often apprehend more than we clearly understand and *grow by looking*” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 324). The interconnections between the conscious mind, the emotions, and the desire to know and understand are culminated within attention, which is also akin to the definition of aroha.

Through the analogy of Plato’s cave, Murdoch defines her concept of goodness as something external. Goodness must be located outwards, for within ourselves there is only the small fire of the ego, which is hypnotic but can never be the true light of the sun.

Attention and love is directed away from the self in order to resist the narcissistic pull that would interfere in our progress towards a deeper understanding of goodness. We attend to the external in order to resist this call. Yet with aroha there is a differing relationship with the internal and the external. Tapu originates from atua (Tate, 2010), but is something external as well as internal. Tapu is within us, outside of us, and within relationships between atua, tangata and whenua. It is not wholly externalised nor internalised, it is omnipresent. The tapu within all beings is representative of a deeper holism, in which the individual is inextricable from the whole. However, some parallels can be drawn between externalised goodness and the description of tapu as ‘sacred’ and something set apart (Barlow, 1991). Here, tapu is still connected to us, as is goodness, through the relationships between atua, tangata and whenua, but there is still something beyond within the concept of tapu, which must not be considered completely within our grasp. Goodness is also beyond us, and akin to aroha being the highest response to te-tapu-i, love is the magnetic pull between us and goodness, drawing us ever closer through a lived practice.

Aroha is an orientation to life which enhances quality and meaning (Barlow, 1991), yet it is not the only choice. There are alternate paths that move us away from aroha. Likewise, attention is a moral task set before us. With aroha, one may choose to resist this call and suffer the resultant detriments through loss of mana and the lack of fulfilment of tapu. Through inattention, the pilgrimage towards a fuller understanding of the good will be derailed. Integral to both of these processes is the assumed understanding that aroha and attention is indeed a practice: an inhabited philosophy that must be lived in order to develop conceptual understandings. Likewise, in both practices the love that is given to others is underpinned by humility and generosity. Although Murdoch would argue that love is not given in order to ensure its return, aroha is given with an expectation of reciprocity, with more given than received. It could be argued that Murdoch resisted the idea that love should be returned in order to withstand the pull of the ego to turn acts of love into something that would benefit oneself. The generous return of aroha can be considered in relation to the worlded view, with the understanding that the expectation of the return of aroha is not to the benefit of the individual but to the benefit of the connected whole (here the additive value of soft mana is invoked). Murdoch looks to reduce the individualistic push and the negative effects of the narcissistic ego, a process not at odds with aroha as an “all encompassing quality of goodness, expressed by love” (Barlow, 1991, p. 8). Conversely, any thought of individualism or ego would be a movement away from kaupapa Māori *in toto*; a foreign ideology, an alien concept and one outside of philosophical consideration in the Māori world.

If aroha is a shedding of the 'old' for the new' (Barlow, 1991), then the use of the moral imagination to re-envision what has been previously 'seen' could be drawn into conversation with this 'shedding' action. Murdoch describes the world as seen through a 'veil', and the act of attention is the process in which love moves us to see reality more clearly; through the virtues, we seek to pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and see the world as it really is (Murdoch, 1998, p. 376-7). Removing or piercing the veil through the 'just and loving gaze' could be likened to the shedding motion inasmuch as the shell of the ego, which is hardened around the individual, is pierced and falls away to reveal a new way of seeing. Attention and aroha are the key tasks in both of these processes. In this way, the progressive motions of the pilgrim are not so much about forward momentum but the shedding of old ideas like the skin on our bodies. Perhaps, (as with the notion of freedom in the concept of attention) like our own shedding of skin this process happens so incrementally that we do not notice. Indeed, we are hardening or shedding our skin continuously as we 'rub up against' other 'objects' and conceptual understandings of the world and choosing to develop the ego or attention and aroha. Through relationships with atua, tangata and whenua, we can choose to shed our ego, allowing new understandings and ideas to emerge, or develop callouses which close off the flow of energy and thickens the veil. This shell could inhibit future prospects of shedding; the more egotistical we are, the more likely our shell is calcified and unshifting. Attention and aroha enhance our sensitivity to the divine spark within others and our receptiveness to accept other ways of knowing and being.

Conclusion

Murdoch strongly argued against a philosophical view of humanity that wholly excluded the spiritual and privileged the empirical, quantifiable, and scientific as the sole ways of knowing and understanding the world. The connections of attention with aroha and kaupapa Māori enhance her definitions of the immeasurable. These epistemological understandings are critical within early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori are tangata whenua, and educational approaches are developed from this grounding. The forms of measurement undertaken within the neoliberal approaches to early childhood education are viewed to be in opposition to a Māori epistemology, as articulated by Ritchie:

“...the individualism of neoliberalism directly contravenes the collectivism of te ao Māori, as expressed through Māori values of whanaungatanga (relationships, connectedness), aroha (the reciprocal obligation to care, respect), utu (reciprocity),

manaakitanga (generosity), and kaitiakitanga (guardianship of the earth)” (Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014, p. 136).

Murdoch argues that an image of the world as something able to be counted and controlled is an illusory product of the ego. The world cannot be calculated and measured for the messy and chaotic nature of existence resists such quantification; the interconnections between individuals or, as highlighted within this chapter, the holistic nature of existence, is beyond enumeration. Processes of education are equally unable to be ‘planned for’ in this controlled and orderly fashion as each connection between individuals is unique and a part of a greater whole. Each and every child is a part of this greater body of being, and the utmost response to it is one of attention and aroha²⁶.

²⁶ It is essential to assert the view that “there should be a recognition that non-Māori cannot speak for Māori” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 7). Due to the finality of the written word upon the page, the Māori knowledge I outline within this chapter does not have the opportunity of rebuttal. I maintain the desire to resist further colonising practices that could be invoked by claiming a position of ‘knowledge’ in relation to these concepts. Therefore, here I express my humility and hopes that this undertaking is seen as an act of aroha for the children in early childhood education.

Chapter Seven

An ‘Inhabited’ Philosophy: Attention and Teaching

Introduction

The focus of this study is to resist the dominance of neoliberal strategies that foster limiting interpretations of education and to develop an argument for essential aspects of education that, if irretrievably lost through the prevalence of neoliberal ideas, would deform the act of education. Within Chapter Five, it was argued that the practice of Murdochian attention enables educators to enhance the moral imagination built through the ‘ordinary and everyday’ experiences of the attentive individual. In Chapter Six, *aroha* was introduced as a concept that holds synergistic possibilities with attention. Here, it will be argued that attention and *aroha* offer a way to reconsider thinking and being with others in education. Together, these concepts support a new consideration of the moral task of education and bring together the epistemological and the ontological aspects of human experience to reconceive pedagogy. Furthermore it will be argued that both attention and *aroha* are difficult to quantify, but these concepts are nonetheless worthy of extensive consideration and enactment; considering how teachers can be part of a ‘lived’ pedagogy is supported by attention as an ‘inhabited philosophy’ and *aroha* as a motive power to enhance the community. These concepts should be continually considered alongside the intentional, externally observable (and more ‘measurable’) actions of the teacher.

Over the course of this study the concept of attention has been drawn upon to question models of education that promote standardised practices and visions of children constituted from a limited conception of the human, formed from an overreliance on scientific methods and inappropriately applied to education. Attention is a means through which the lived experiences of those involved in the educational relationship can be enhanced, and the act of education deepened as a process which (re)defines our vision of the child and the world. Brought together with *aroha*, attention holds the potential to enrich the educational experiences of all people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

In this chapter, the pivotal aspect of attention as a lived philosophy, one that maintains the necessity to value education as a practical *and* philosophical undertaking – progressive, developed and enhanced over time – will be brought to the fore. The first section will explore different aspects of attention, including the notion of *askesis*, the concept of reality in relation

to the moral imagination, and the Murdochian defence of the ‘real impenetrable person’. As these sections progress, the concept of *aroha* will be brought alongside attention to address and resist unnecessary processes of measurement and quantification made prominent within neoliberal ideas, and to emphasise the intuitive aspects of teaching that are part of the ‘lived experience’ of education.

Askesis, the Lived Practices of Attention and Teaching

The notion of *askesis*, derived from the Greek ἄσκησις meaning ‘exercise’ or ‘practice’ is differentiated by Antonaccio (2012) from the Christian notion of asceticism. She describes *askesis* as a philosophical form of thinking considered to benefit individuals by inculcating wisdom-enhancing habits of mind. *Askesis* is the enactment of a form of self-regulation through which we move progressively towards an ideal, maintaining the notion of philosophy as a ‘lived ethics’ or an “art of life” (Antonaccio, 2012, p. 128). Antonaccio (2012) argues that there is a contemporary philosophical turn towards *askesis*, driven by the concern to realign moral inquiry to the concerns of everyday moral lives and limit the domain of moral principles and rules that have marginalised the reality of the moral agent. Yet this turn is also constrained by the movement towards ‘antitheory’, a central element of which is the assumption that there is no external universal order beyond the agent. Antonaccio (2012) expresses apprehension that the essential quality of *askesis* – to attain the overarching rules beyond the particularity of the self – is lost in this modern translation, risking subjectivism (collapsing the good into the predilections of the self) and voluntarism (that the doctrine of the will is the fundamental element in the search for the good). She asserts the claim to reconceive *askesis* in light of Murdochian philosophy, as the notion of ‘practice’ and inhabited philosophy is central within Murdoch’s concept of attention; a ‘reflexive’ model of *askesis* which, based on Murdoch’s concept of attention, would strengthen complimentary aspects of antitheory whilst maintaining the benefits of a metaphysics of goodness. The Murdochian ‘reflexive’ model is favoured because it forefronts the notion of *askesis* within the notion of ‘personal resonance’. She writes:

...instead of positing an ontological connection between ‘human reason’ and the rational order of the cosmos, the reflexive model posits a correlation between consciousness and the good which can be accessed only through consciousness itself. In other words, the good is not conceived as existing solely outside us in the order of the cosmos; rather, it is located in the very texture of consciousness. Moreover this

universal good resonates in the consciousness of *individuals* and thus is mediated through human particularity. (Antonaccio, 2012, p. 142)

The model of reflexive askesis presented by Antonaccio (2012) resonates strongly with Murdoch's claims that moral vision is necessary in order to motivate us to situate moral sources of energy outside of the self and appreciate external reality via the inner workings of the moral imagination. The moral imagination is the medium, the motivation is other beings (or art/literature/beauty) and the good is the transcendent perfection incrementally revealed through this reflexive practice. However, goodness is also resonate within us, for the process of askesis must draw upon the resources of our consciousness (imagination, vision, reflection) to perfect our orientation to the good. The inner is inextricable from the whole self (and also inextricable from the good) but attention to what is 'outwards' from ourselves is how we hone our sense of the good.

In highlighting the tension between the inner and the good, Murdoch's reflexive model recognises the threat of the ego to derail moral progress by resorting to narcissistic tendencies. Reflexivity with external objects, brought into focus by the task of attention, works to (re)align our moral compass. Browning (2018) highlights the reflexive nature of Murdoch's philosophy, arguing that Murdoch resisted *a priori* forms of moral philosophical inquiry, preferring to sustain philosophy as a means of representing and navigating the real moral experiences of 'everyday' people. He writes that Murdoch supported and enhanced a form of metaphysics that "locates individuals on a general map of experience, which relates its messiness to a supervening goodness that can be accessed so as to guide a moral life" (Browning, 2018, pp. 174-5).

In directing a just and loving gaze outwards from oneself, structures of value are built within us incrementally and almost imperceptibly (Murdoch, 1998, p. 329). Through this work of consciousness the individual is connected to the transcendent good not through a 'choice' but rather an 'obedience'. In order to strengthen the connection to the good without and within, one must undertake the task and practice of attention frequently and live out the 'just and loving gaze' in everyday experience. The act of attention is specifically described as a process that is not limited to philosophers or spiritual leaders, it is something enacted by ordinary people in everyday lived experiences. The reflexive askesis, which is a part of the moral task of attention, ensures that we do not move too far beyond the reality of the world, but this is challenged by the pull of the ego. Attention is an 'everyday' moral task to

moderate the ego and enhance moral vision to more accurately perceive others in the world; to make progress in this moral task, one must practice.

When viewed through the lens of askesis, there are many parallels between philosophical notions of the ‘lived ethics’ or ‘art of life’ and the role of the teacher within the educational relationship. Teaching is not a simplistic process but a negotiation between individuals to demand a deeper consideration of the ethical orientation of the teacher. Through the Murdochian concept of attention, the notion of askesis resituates the educational relationship and, more directly, the practice of teaching as something realigned to the concerns of everyday moral lives within the educational setting. These relationships are not easily measured in order to be reproduced, eliciting a limitation on the dominion of procedural standardisation. Furthermore, the turn to askesis as a means through which to limit the domain of moral principles can support the movement to promote educational practices that esteem the reality of the lived experience of education. Such a turn would equally resist the interpretation of teaching as a technical endeavour.

As with the philosophical movement towards askesis, caution must be applied in order to avoid teaching falling into the traps of subjectivism and voluntarism. The reflexive nature of attention offers a way of ensuring that the good of teaching does not devolve into the predilections of the self, by the necessity to look, relook, and look again at the world beyond ourselves. Is what I am thinking about this child really true? Am I reconsidering this assumption in light of what the child is doing now? What do others think of the child? These are questions that can motivate this movement away from the self, and uphold the reality of the child. These questions are also built from the continual growth of moral vision, enhanced through the moral imagination. The work of the moral imagination is undertaken prior to, and in tandem with, action. Subsequently, moral concepts cannot be separated from the actions of the teacher.

When askesis is understood through attention and alongside aroha, teaching cannot be considered a set of predetermined actions. The work of the moral imagination precedes such action, and continually informs action. Aroha guides us to live generously with others through validating our intense feeling for the other in the educational relationship. Aroha is the governing force for our relationships with others, between atua, tangata, and whenua. Aroha supports attention to reconsider the roles that spirituality, people and place hold within our lived experience of philosophy. The good of education is within the texture of our conscious enactment with education, and the feelings that we bring through aroha to education. Love, but also the nuances of love, grief, pity, compassion, sacrifice and

generosity (Tate, 2010, p. 137). When pedagogy is considered through attention and aroha, the teacher is open to a broader understanding of education as ‘obedience’ as well as generosity and sacrifice. Our developing understanding of goodness enhances our understanding of children, the domain of slight control we have in order to influence their learning and the responsibility that comes with it. The inner life of the teacher is a strength to preserve, not an action to control. The role of the teacher is to engage in the lived practice of philosophy through pedagogy.

‘Reality’, the Moral Imagination, and the ‘Everyday Individual’

Murdoch proposes that our understanding of reality is enhanced through the practice of attention. It is not simply through being alive that one can access the reality of other beings within the world, but as a philosophical practice – as an ‘inhabited’ philosophy – attention enables us to incrementally reveal a deepening of moral concepts, enhancing our understanding of reality in the light of goodness. As has been articulated earlier, attention is a moral task that is concerned with removing the veil produced by the ego. The ego works to promote only selfish desires, obscuring reality in favour of a delusion fabricated to support the satisfaction of egocentric desires. Through paying attention to the ego, we are blinded from seeing the reality of the world and, more crucially, the world illuminated in the light of goodness. If we attend to the ego, we are obscured not only from deepening our understanding of reality, but limited from perceiving and developing an understanding of goodness.

Murdoch identifies that reality is complex, and difficult to defend if any single notion is given to illuminate its entirety; reality is not a ‘given whole’ in the sense that misuses of empirical science would maintain. However there is an understanding of reality as perfectly familiar to ordinary people: that human beings are not simply a combination of rationality and will, but something more complex. There is a greater intricacy to the ‘moral self’ than the representation of the ‘thin as a needle’ agent that Murdoch seeks to refute. The combination of this complexity and unity makes it difficult to express ‘reasons’ for moral choices as they are built from moral concepts, visions, and some slight exercise of the will. Murdoch (1998) states, the moral individual is “a unified being who sees, and who desires in accordance with what he²⁷ sees, and who has some continual slight control over the direction and focus of his vision” (p. 322). Despite the difficulties of expressing the inner workings of the medium of

²⁷ See Note 2

consciousness, the moral vision is still significant. As Murdoch writes, “‘reality’ as that which is revealed to the patient eye of love is an idea entirely comprehensible to the ordinary person” (p. 332).

As articulated earlier, morality is not the sole domain of philosophers, but something accessible to ‘everyday individuals’ and certainly within the domain of teachers. The example of M and D is identified as “something more ordinary and everyday” (p. 312). This is not to belittle this exemplar. Rather it is to illustrate Murdoch’s appreciation that everyday individuals, through their practice of attention and the moral imagination, can develop a clear vision of reality. The moral individuals who are negotiating the world are not bound to action through a shared rationality as the Kantian image would suggest, rather that they are drawn to the good through the practice of attention and the ‘patient eye of love’.

Although reality is more than our attempts to border or describe it (Antonaccio, 2000), moral progress is open to every individual who attends to reality through love. Our understanding of how aroha enhances attention can support a deeper appreciation of reality. Our appreciation of reality is drawn from the common concepts that are individually rendered and honed through everyday experiences. Aroha is based upon an understanding of the connected whole, the woven universe (Marsden, 2003; Mika, 2017). Aroha is given and expected in return as a benefit to the collected whole. Tapu infuses every object, and the individual is not separate from this whole, but woven into it. An understanding of reality is based upon common concepts, consequently aroha can broaden the conceptual frameworks that traditionally support English version education documents. Although *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) supports mātauranga Māori, the synergy of aroha and attention can support a broader appreciation of how everyday experiences are a part of a philosophical understanding of reality. We view children through our understanding of how the world works, through our epistemological gaze. Honing our gaze by engaging with attention and aroha in our everyday experiences enhances our moral appreciation of pedagogy. This is a lived experience developed through everyday practice of the moral imagination. As earlier identified, Murdoch argues that everyday individuals may well have avoided the trappings of moral philosophical images of will, reason and exposition, stating “Perhaps the virtuous peasant has got out of the cave without even noticing the fire” (p. 383). Indeed, perhaps the beginning teacher may have a moral vision of pedagogy illuminated by the light of goodness. However, there is a necessity to remain sensitive to the ongoing pilgrimage. Reality is inexhaustible and, through multiple attentive relationships, the opportunities to enhance and develop a broader view of reality is afforded to the teacher and

the ‘virtuous peasant’ alike. There is a common appreciation of the everyday possibilities of attention insomuch as “M knows what she is doing when she tries to be just to D, and we know what she is doing too” (p. 332). Even though we are unable to understand the inner life of the teacher, through Murdoch’s philosophy we are not the ‘thin as a needle’ agent and can be appreciated as something more complex.

The Notion of the ‘Real Impenetrable Person’ and the Incapacity of Language to Represent Moral Decisions

As articulated at various points over this study, Murdoch (1998) was concerned with the retrieval of the ‘real impenetrable person’ (p. 294). This ‘impenetrability’ is described as a fundamental tenet of liberalism Murdoch seeks to defend, one that is done a disservice by the liberal notion of freedom (as argued within Chapter Three). Respect – for the contingencies of life and the particulars of human experiences – is necessary to this defence, but must be mediated by the concerns outlined above regarding the potential of the destructive voluntarist and subjectivist turns. We must respect the particular, but it must not occlude the universality of the good. Here is a point where aroha offers another way of considering universality, through the worlded connection we share with all life in the universe through te tapu i. However, the tensions that are revealed when reality is misconceived as a singular truth (as cautioned earlier in relation to empiricism) need to be explored. The ‘truth’ of reality is moderated by the respect for the contingent, underpinned by the significance of the ‘real impenetrable person’.

In the reassessment of D, Murdoch (1998) characterises M’s revision as wholly unique to M, who asserts, “I can’t explain. You’d have to know her” (p. 326). Two main supporting arguments will be developed to defend M’s statement. First, the notion of the ‘real impenetrable person’; second, the incapacity of language to fully explicate M’s assessment. The arguments for these two concerns hold the potential to defend education against limiting technical visions of the teachers and are discussed at length below.

Firstly, M’s assessment is based upon her recalled experiences with D and her (re)consideration of D’s demeanour through a just and loving gaze. As explained within the previous section, this undertaking is within M’s consciousness and is not concerned with a change in the behaviour of either individual. Therefore, this undertaking cannot be viewed as a change in M’s externally observable actions. Murdoch writes, “M’s outward behaviour, beautiful from the start, in no way alters” (p. 313). The purpose of this is to defend the notion

of the inner life, for the predominant arguments Murdoch (1998) sought to refute represented the inner life as hazy and therefore “largely absent” (p. 311), meaning that only observable actions could be referred to as evidence of one’s morality. She likens this externally observable (and assessable) model of morality to the mechanisms of a machine, relentless and without the need of the agent until the moment of choosing, reducing individuality to the point of pure will. Murdoch seeks to resist an image of morality solely as movements or “salvation by works” (p. 311) and the determination that the ‘what’ of the moral decision is only discernible via external evaluations. In order to do this, she defends the ‘inner life’ of the human as something that does not necessarily need to be presentable nor explicable to others in order to exist²⁸. Murdoch sought to rescue the notion that there is moral worth in this form of internal activity and, in doing so, reclaim the authority of the real impenetrable person beyond the assessments of external observers. Here there is a connection to aroha that can be explored further. Aroha is described by Johansen²⁹ (cited in Benton et al., 2012) as a “pure feeling in the sense that it can be quivering in the mind...without giving birth to any will” (p. 48). Aroha can then be appreciated as something that can be contained within the self, without being only measured by action in the world. Where attention supports an idea of conscious reflection within the mind, Johansen’s description of ‘quivering’ in the mind could be enhanced further to include an appreciation of the sensory aspect of aroha, as an embodied feeling of “overwhelming passion” (Benton et al., 2012, p. 48). As Murdoch (1998) stated “where virtue is concerned we often apprehend more that we clearly understand and *grow by looking*” (p. 324). The interconnections between the conscious mind and the emotions through desire to know are culminated in attention and aroha; alongside each other, these concepts enhance another understanding of the nuances of pedagogy.

Furthermore, and essential to the argument being built within this study, M’s assessment of D would not have occurred without this notion of inner privacy. Murdoch (1998) contends, “M could not *do this* thing in conversation with another person” (p. 317, original emphasis). The task of attention is not only dependent upon M’s inner workings of the mind, but her wholly impenetrable self. Where rational assessment would seek M to present a defence based upon impersonal reason, Murdoch argues for the individual

²⁸ Although it is also important to note that Murdoch also defended the necessity for moral actions within life and not simply the predominance of moral thought. Yet, the purpose of the defence of the inner life is to demonstrate the dependence of actions upon the inner workings of our mind including our moral vision and that these aspects of existence are necessarily and inextricably interrelated

²⁹ While there is the necessity to remain sensitive to this statement as written by a Danish scholar, its containment within the book *Te Mātāpunenga: A Compendium of References to the Concepts and Institutions of Maori Customary Law* (Benton et al., 2012) offers some credence.

consciousness underpinned by personal and private concepts (Antonaccio, 2000, p. 98-9). When M asserts, “‘I can’t explain. You’d have to know her’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 326), M’s inability to explain her assessment is something Murdoch hastens to defend, not as irrational, but as a demonstration of the ways in which human beings are necessarily obscure to each other. M’s development of moral assessment in relation to D, through the moral task of attention, is entirely and utterly unique to M and undertaken from the singular position M has built through her life experiences and relationship with D. The act of reassessing and redefining her position in relation to D is wholly a function of an *individual* history (Murdoch, 1998, p. 320). Language could not fully explicate the movements that have taken her to ultimately land on the conclusion that D is not ‘undignified but refreshingly simple’ (etc.), and therefore this position would not be defensible through the forms of rational or linguistic analysis Murdoch seeks to refute. Language cannot convey the sense of quivering of aroha that would guide the moral imagination. M would be demanded to make a true and accurate – and rational – defence for the change in her position through the use of language, in reference to empirical evidence, and justifiable by external observers. Yet as Murdoch argues, such a view of ‘objective reality’ requires modification if it is to be considered according to the impenetrable, historical and progressive individual. To demand M to accede to the notion of ‘objectivity’ impedes M’s claim that she is unable to fully explain the motivation for this decision, not solely because she is incapable of using language to defend it, but because language itself is unsuitable to wholly represent what M experienced to make this shift.

As articulated earlier in this study, Attention cannot be understood or undertaken without the notion of surrender (as discussed in Chapter Two) and likewise, aroha contains an aspect of sacrifice. However, it is important to understand what is to be surrendered. In Chapter One, some differences between Murdochian attention and Weilian attention were described. In Weilian attention, there is a more comprehensive relinquishment of the ‘self’ to the focus of attention, but in Murdochian attention, the individual self is defended and history, moral concepts, and progress are not only defended but also considered necessary to reveal reality. Reality is a complex notion, which cannot be defined simply when in relation to human experience and existence. Apprehension of reality is considered as an ideal end point, and similarly individuals are conceived as progressively developing towards an ideal. Our end goal is the fullness of te tapu i, the fullness of tapu within, without and between us and others. Our apprehension of goodness is also eternally developing and the interplay between reality, goodness, and the progressive individual intertwine to illustrate a complex

and inextricable matrix of moral value. We move towards understanding goodness not because it is dependent upon our predilections, will or choices, but because of the “difficulty of the task of apprehending a magnetic but inexhaustible reality” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 333), and inasmuch as reality is inexhaustible, goodness is a part of this reality and therefore a part of this elusiveness. Humans, as a part of this reality must also be considered according to this metaphysical image. Furthermore, we can only appreciate others as *real impenetrable people*. That a person is impenetrable is indivisible from the ‘real-ness’ of that person and, more generally, to a wider understanding and appreciation of a ‘reality’ outside of oneself. It is important to note that it is easy for the notion of reality to become confused with the scientific notion – as ‘photographic’. Murdoch argues that scientific language seeks to be impersonal and exact, to represent the ‘truth’ of the situation, but moral language is infinitely complex, “often unavoidably idiosyncratic and inaccessible” (p. 326). Scientific language cannot contain an understanding of aroha as a response to te tapu i. Reason is based upon the language of the scientific: rational, detached from emotion, and universally accessible, but morality precedes our scientific consideration of the world. Any claims to an ‘objective reality’ of humanity must move cautiously to comprehend the inability of language to represent the universality of the good (as argued above) and appreciate sensory aspects as a part of human experience. A more accurate appreciation of reality is developed through loving attention and aroha, which imbues reality with the sensory aspects necessary to perceive it. An image of reality that disregards the emotive and the sensory domains is not an image of reality at all.

Here, Murdoch (1998) asserts that it is of no use to defend an ‘inner reality’ in the same way that reality has been crudely represented through empirical sciences: as something externally representable, objective, and open to all viewers. Instead, the inner life should be characterised as inherently and necessarily personalised and contingent. Our appreciation of reality outside ourselves builds from this notion of a particular and singular consciousness. However Murdoch cautions, it is important to note that this claim to authority must be mediated by a necessary humility, which moves against the assertion of infallible inner knowledge. Individuals can be mistaken in determining their thoughts and emotions (as is the initial case with M) and furthermore be unclear about the contents of their thoughts (p. 316). Yet, Murdoch maintains the advantage of the inner life lies in how individuals can be encouraged to account for their state of mind and the qualities of their thoughts (Antonaccio, 2007, p. 18). The moral task of attention enables the individual to refine conscious clarity, which through ongoing practice, becomes increasingly apparent to the individual. It is

important to reiterate that this inner clarity is still hazy to external evaluation, because it is incrementally developed over time and contingent upon individual human experience. This inner reflection cannot be represented externally because it is a part of the slow incremental processes of attention that builds the moral vision of the individual, which are difficult to articulate. Despite the inability to externally represent this inner life, the incapacity to produce a 'report' of such moral work does not mean that the attentive moral individual has remained inactive. As Murdoch (1998) asserts, "'not a report' need not entail 'not an activity'" (p. 318). There is value in this inner work beyond the values of what can be externally evaluated and measured (this will be expanded upon later in the chapter).

The responsivity of the attentive teacher to the child will appear at times immediate and almost instinctive. Due to the small and incremental processes that have formed the wholly individual consciousness of the teacher, coupled with the specific moral language of this teacher, these actions cannot be fully explicated others. Nor will these processes be fully comprehended by others. Objective externalised assessment of teachers' actions comes into question here, due to the slippages in conceptual understandings between individuals. When it is assumed that teaching is a set of actions without this inner life, which is replicable by any individual who can perform these actions, the 'background' to the moral act of teaching can be lost. Eradicating the inner life through an externalised 'behaviouristic' description, lessens the appreciation (and arguably the value) of the work of the attentive teacher.

The defence of the inner life is expanded through Murdoch's argument that moral language is conceptual, personalised, and specialised over time. The moral individual makes use of conceptual language in making moral decisions and this conceptual language is necessary to all inner thought and development of moral ideas and potential moral actions. This is the second aspect of the dovetailing argument outlined above. As articulated previously, language is not only defined within the common world, but is taken within and made personal according to how it is related and (re)defined through personal experience and reflection upon these experiences; through the medium of consciousness, language is individually refined. Murdoch (1992) asserts:

...language depends upon areas of 'agreement', but is also continuously lived by persons. Fine shades of behaviour, imponderable evidence, looks, glances, gestures, tones, whistling. Such modes of human communication are everywhere fundamental, defeating general 'exactness', but performing precise jobs in individual contexts.

Thinking, communicating, must admit the individual, the moral, the aesthetic. (p. 281)

In holding to this argument, the reason that M cannot fully explain her opinion of D is not only due to the small and incremental processes that have formed her wholly individual consciousness but also because the moral language M needs to explain this understanding is not fully comprehensible to others. ‘Objective’ observers will hold their own personalised and individual notions of the terms M will use, they will not be privy to the definitions unique to M. Furthermore, these ‘objective’ observers would not necessarily be a part of the relationship between M and D and therefore would not hold the contextual knowledge appropriate M’s experience. Although M may do her utmost to explain herself to others, there will always be slippages. These slippages produce tensions between the idea that the truth of the human can be captured through empirical means and the image of the real, impenetrable person. Murdoch, (1998) illustrates this through M’s statement “‘I can’t explain, you’d have to know her’” (p. 326). Furthermore, understanding of M’s assessment is contingent upon not only knowing D, but knowing M as well. M’s reassessment of D is built from her *specific* life experiences and her individual inner reflections upon these experiences over the course of her life (as explained in Chapter Four). Murdoch (1992) writes “we know very little even about the people who are closest to us. We depend upon intuition and rightly accept many things as mysteries” (p. 282). Within education, teachers make decisions within moments of teaching that respond immediately to the movements of the child; in the case of the attentive teacher, these responses are built from a just and loving gaze. There is an inner life to teaching beyond the expression of words. The reflective and experiential background of the teacher, which works to inform moral decisions and actions, must be dually considered for its influence upon the individual and its inability to be transferred fully to others. Even if this experiential background was able to be translated, M’s emotive and sensory experiences saturate cognition and cannot be replicated; if these experiences were laid out like a film, they would be incomprehensible without the sensory experiences that comprise conscious lived experience. As articulated earlier, the quivering of aroha within the mind cannot be explicated either. As is the case with M, attentive teachers who draw from aroha might not fully explain their motivations for decisions or subsequent actions within teaching, but “‘not a report’ need not entail ‘not an activity’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 318). There is value in this inner work beyond that can be externally evaluated and measured.

As Murdoch articulates within the example, M’s behaviours are entirely separate from this inner life: before and after M undertakes the task of attention, M behaves beautifully with D. The behaviours of individuals within the world are not fully representative of their inner ‘private thought-being’, an inner state beheld by every individual through the sense of

separation which Murdoch (1992) claims is one of our deepest experiences. Although actions are contemplated within this ‘private thought-being’ they may never be brought to fruition. Viewing M from a linguistic-descriptive perspective, or from an observational perspective, eradicates the inner life that is essential to every individual. Furthermore, in reducing M to what can be seen and described we limit her whole experience to a set of behaviours, producing a behaviouristic picture. This form of behaviourism denies the holism of M, and diminishes the awareness of the inner life necessary to our moral development. More worryingly, the behaviouristic view reduces our perception and awareness of the moral necessity to regard others as ‘impenetrable’. In recognising that we are continually confronted by something other than ourselves, and that this other is obscure to us, we can be morally moved to a position of humility, and observe this individual with respect through a just and loving gaze. Assuming that individuals can be understood through clear, precise language and observation is to invoke an arrogance of ‘knowledge’ about inner motivation, and a compartmentalisation of their being. This is a part of the ‘too grand’ image of ourselves, which Murdoch (1998) accuses us of holding, bolstered by a misguided faith in empirical science to produce a ‘truth’ about the world (p. 338); human reality is more complex than can be observed and described.

The ‘Ordinary and Everyday’ Task of Attention and the Value of the Inner Life

Although the explanations one may give for moral decisions may be difficult or even impossible to fully explicate, the deliberation of consciousness is described by Murdoch (1998) as “exceedingly familiar” (p. 317). Communication about the workings of the inner life may break down, but the activity itself is a part of a “perfectly familiar kind of moral discipline” (p. 330). Of the great merits of Murdoch’s philosophy, the accessibility of sustained moral reflection to anyone and the notion that philosophy is able to be ‘lived’, are considered to be foremost (Antonaccio, 2012, p. 3). According to Murdoch (1992), moral philosophy should be ‘inhabited’ and critical moral reflection is accessible to all due to the pervasiveness of morality and the ways in which human consciousness is tied to evaluation. Value is seen everywhere, unavoidable, and inevitable within human existence. The nature of this ubiquity demonstrates the unbounded nature of morality within humanity (Brugmans, 2001, p. 48). Morality is not the exclusive property of philosophers, but accessible and enacted by everyday people.

Goodness is apprehended through the moral task of attention when due recognition is paid to the combination of intuited unity *and* complexity/detail (Murdoch, 1998, p. 379). There is a ‘double revelation’ explored by Murdoch in which attention to detail in the world reveals a greater unity of excellence. Although unity is beyond us and the whole can only be seen from the top, we can only achieve a sense of this unity through a keen appreciation of the diversity, difference and detail within the world. This sensitivity to the detail alone cannot be relied upon to set us in the right direction towards a greater understanding of the whole, we must rely upon intuition to aid our further progress. Such intuition can be attained by the ordinary person, and can be a part of our everyday discernment when it is informed by paying attention outside of ourselves towards an external reality through a just and loving gaze (p. 383). This form of attention is not concerned with the planning of specific moral actions, but rather about looking outside of the self towards an externalised perfection. Attention is kept in alignment through the magnetic pull of love towards goodness, as Murdoch (1992) states “I intuitively know and grasp more than I can yet explain” (p. 393). Widdows (2005) expands upon Murdoch’s arguments for the ordinary and everyday nature of intuition, describing the intuitive (and equally transcendental) expansion of moral knowledge as “a familiar method by which we comprehend the world” (p. 94). Moral progress enhances the concepts of the ‘ordinary’ person, not to indicate a conclusion but to offer the possibilities of transformation. Yet, to transform we need to move beyond the rational consideration of knowledge and listen to the intuitive part of our consciousness, bringing us closer to the good.

The ordinary and everyday nature of attention supports the view that philosophy should be ‘inhabited’. Philosophical ideas are not to be considered separate from life but an integral aspect of existence and a deeper appreciation of philosophical concepts is wrought through their enactment within life. Attention is a moral task set before us, but it is also a *practice*. To develop moral vision, attention needs to be practiced. This may or may not occasion subsequent actions; M’s behaviour to D remained the same throughout. However, actions are not the sum totality of morality (Murdoch, 1998, p. 357), there is value to the ‘inner life’ not only with externally assessable ‘action’, but also inner contemplation. The fundamental nature of the inner life to existence and the invaluable role of consciousness “may be elusive or hard to describe but it is not unimportant” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 265). The work of M is a form of activity unlike externally observable activity. According to the stance that morally appropriate action can be viewed externally and assessed by others, this form of activity would be disregarded unless it became ‘action’. Yet Murdoch seeks to reclaim ‘inner’ activity as something of value irrespective of the ability for external observers to comprehend it. It is

an experience that is active, not observable and nonetheless valuable. It is “the function of the progressive attempt to see a particular object clearly” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 317), but does not need to be viewed by others as ‘active’ in order to be considered worthwhile. Such conceptions of ‘activity’ are maintained within the arguments Murdoch seeks to refute and cannot be patched or reworked into a philosophical grounding that ‘works’. Lesser philosophical ideas “cannot by tinkering be made, the philosophy we need” (p.337). Instead, it is a different form of ‘activity’ that needs to be expanded upon, as a “patient and just discernment and exploration of what really confronts one, which is the result not simply of opening one’s eyes, but of a certainly perfectly familiar kind of moral discipline” (p. 330).

Defending the Ordinary, Everyday, and Intuitive Nature of Education

In this study so far, the educational relationship has been conceived as a series of movements between two (or multiple) beings with a history lived experiences. The educator draws upon the moral imagination within this experience, a way of thinking and being that affects how they engage in the moral task of education. The moral imagination is difficult to quantify, but it is essential to the way in which the educational relationship is experienced and the way in which it progresses over time. Within this chapter, some points have been argued for. First, the turn to *askesis*, which seeks to redeem the applicability of moral inquiry to everyday lives, is enhanced by Murdoch’s reflexivity. The moral imagination focuses upon the outer world, building structures of value around us incrementally, but only when the initial notion of *askesis* as a *practice* is maintained. With the concept of *aroha*, the ongoing *practice* of attention is reinforced as a lived experience of philosophy, one that considers *tangata* (people), *whenua* (place) and *atua* (spirituality) as essential parts of the lived experience. Second, the work of attention undertaken by the ‘real impenetrable person’ must be defended. The notion of impenetrability is a valued part of the individual that leads them to a moral vision, formed as a part of a just and loving gaze. Some considerations need to be made regarding the worldedness of people – the separate and absolute nature of the individual – that is not a part of *mātauranga Māori*. Third, that linguistic analysis is insufficient to defend the position of the attentive individual, as moral concepts are taken internally and move beyond ‘common’ understanding. Morality is “not the words, but the words occurring in a certain way with... a certain force and colour” (p. 34). Attention and *aroha* hold a substance, a ‘quivering’, a ‘force and colour’ that is beyond linguistic expression; something felt and experienced. Furthermore, the attentive individual’s position is based upon an intuition of

goodness as a part of a ‘double revelation’, in which the unifying *and* particular nature of goodness is revealed. Fourth, reality is progressively revealed through attention and are akin and bound to love and goodness when considered in light of the idea of perfection. The light of te tapu i is attended to when one attends with aroha, but the progression of knowledge is a shedding of old ideas to reveal the new (Barlow, 1991). Finally, that all perception is ‘soaked in the sensible’, resisting the idea that reality is only comprehensible through the empirical sciences, or rational thought, but accessible to the ordinary individual through the everyday practice of attention. Again, the ‘quivering’ of aroha is brought to the fore. At this point, it is necessary to bring these points into further conversation with the notion of teaching within neoliberal models of early childhood education in order to illuminate some limitations and alternate possibilities.

The notion of an ‘inhabited’ philosophy and the idea of the ‘real impenetrable person’ are the concepts this chapter seeks to defend for varying reasons and from varying positions. The impenetrability of the teacher must be defended against evaluative techniques of governance that would limit understandings of the act of education. It is critical to defend the impenetrability of the child in order to defend his or her right to be depicted as more than a quantifiable object, knowable through empirical science. Furthermore it is crucial to defend the relationship between the teacher and child as a part of a moral vision of education that resists technical approaches to education. These points have been touched upon over the course of the chapter. At this point, the purposes for such a defence will be explicated in more depth to describe the benefits of Murdoch’s philosophical vision for human engagement through the practice of attention, and the synergistic value of aroha with attention.

As Murdoch (1992) writes, “we know very little even about the people who are closest to us. We depend upon intuition and rightly accept many things as mysteries” (p. 282). This is true of the act of education as much as other aspects of human existence. The intuitive moments within teaching that inform practice are built from the relationship the teacher builds with the child and the historical knowledge the teacher brings to pedagogy. As explained by Murdoch, although moral actions are important within life, they cannot be the sole concern; the focus of the act of attention is to reflexively meditate upon our ‘knowledge’ with an appreciation of an externalised perfection. Likewise, teaching cannot consist solely of the planning of actions, but must be responsive to the growing knowledge of the child, pedagogy, and the moral concepts that underpin education. Space must be made for responding to the tapu within the child as a basis for educational choices, which may or may

not be explicable to others. Although there is a place for ‘intentional’ teaching, it must not overtake the role that ‘intuitive’ teaching can play within education.

It is important to assert that this is not a claim to omniscient knowledge of the child. Murdoch was careful to assert that humans are wholly unknowable to each other. Yet neither is the role of the ‘intuitive’ to be dismissed simply because it is unable to be fully explicated. The intuition built from attention should not be considered ‘immeasurable’ and therefore worthless. Through a just and loving gaze, a moral *vision* of pedagogy is progressively developing in the light of the good, and there is value in this progress. Pedagogical *practice* is then built from a more realistic image of the child; one that resists movements to standardise teaching approaches or ‘quantify’ children’s experiences in order to make a claim to knowledge of the child. Attention motivates teachers to see their progressive movements as an endless task which resists quantifiable finality and is necessarily fallible, but not unworthy for it.

As articulated above, Murdoch appreciated that individuals are wholly obscure to each other and, insomuch as children can express themselves outwardly, children are still wholly obscure to the teacher. However, Murdoch is also careful to situate this obscurity not as a ‘problem’ to be solved, but demands individuals to respond to the moral task of attention, and approach each other with a necessary humility. Responding with *aroha* to the *tapu* within another being pays respect to the *tapu* within ourselves, which is beyond conscious comprehension but is nonetheless extant. Through *tapu* we are interconnected, but no matter how well we know other individuals, we can never fully know the contents of their inner thoughts. This is not a flaw but an opportunity. Through attention and *aroha* we can open ourselves towards another person, to see them justly and lovingly, to develop a connection with *aro* as the seat of our emotions and to enhance our own personal moral vision. There are possibilities for education within Murdoch’s presentation of the moral life. If obscurity is not a ‘problem’ to be solved, but an opportunity for developing moral vision, then it is an opening to reconsider the purpose of education beyond economic rationality promoted through neoliberal modes of governance. As articulated within other chapters, the fact/value divide promotes a scientific vision of appropriate ‘knowledge’, relegating the moral, metaphysical, and sometimes the ethical to the periphery. When the lived experience of teaching is viewed as a possibility to enhance the moral concepts of pedagogy and the overall moral vision of education, what is of ‘value’ within education can be shifted to acknowledge aspects which may have otherwise been deemed immeasurable and therefore useless. The notion of the child as a real impenetrable person creates the space to resist modes of

education which consider children akin to vessels waiting to be filled similar to the notion of banking education denigrated by Freire (1970), or the industrial model of education criticised by Robinson and Aronica (2015). When education is guided by a just and loving gaze, there is substantive philosophical support for those who seek to resist a vision of education as determining boundaries, regulation of management, and the assessment of predetermined learning outcomes. Instead, the ‘ordinary and everyday’ moments between the teacher and the child can be brought to the fore. There is value within the intangible, sensory, and transcendental aspects of human experience, which are difficult to quantify, but invaluable within the educational encounter.

But there is more than this at play. The teacher and the child will develop and share a lived historical experience. Within the responsibilities of the early childhood teacher, as determined by *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) there is a necessity to develop a clearer understanding of the child by gaining knowledge of the contextual setting – the home and life outside the centre. There is also an experienced life within the centre, one that is incrementally built from the teacher and child’s interactions with each other. M is unable to explain her assessment of D. This is something Murdoch (1998) critically defends, as earlier explicated M asserts “‘I can’t explain. You’d have to know her’” (p. 326). This is due to the ways in which humans are necessarily obscure to each other and the inability of language to fully communicate the motivations for a moral position without a deeper understanding of the contextual basis for the decision. Murdoch argues that the work of attention imperceptibly builds up structures of value around us and, through a just and loving gaze, an understanding of ‘choices’ is different to that which views moral decisions as a function of the will. It is through this loving, patient regard that much of the ‘decisions’ of education can be made, but they must stem from an appreciation that in many cases the ‘decisions’ of education are already made through attentive relationships. Murdoch argues that through the imperceptible structures of value and the compulsions which are generated through attentive relationships, much of our moral ‘decisions’ lie elsewhere (p. 331). Aroha is also appreciated as something that can be contained within the self, but is not necessarily directly connected to will and outward expression. For the teacher, decisions can be made through the an appreciation that much of the pedagogical direction will be generated from the child; much of the ‘decision making’ lies beyond the control of the teacher, and this is not only an acceptable experience, but welcomed and desired. As Murdoch (1998) says, “If I attend properly, I will have no choices, and this is the ultimate condition to be aimed at” (p. 331). Pre-determined teaching ‘choices’ are less important and less obviously something to

be ‘cultivated’ when there is an ‘obedience’ to the child; an attention to the tapu of the child, a just and loving approach that is not rendered from a fantastical idealisation, nor an egotistical desire for control, but a patient and just regard for what really confronts one. Standardised processes can be likened to the ego – they seek to control, contain, and akin to the moral movement refuted by Murdoch, they are like a ‘grandiose leaping about’. There is no room for the intuitive within standardised practice. Murdoch advocates for including the intuitive; education is built through the small and incremental moments that build relationships. When they are built from the moral task of attention, small and incremental moments hone moral vision and moral development. These small and incremental moments build a deeper appreciation of the intuitive nature of teaching which is necessary to the life of the attentive teacher.

Attention holds the potential to reconsider the value of the teacher within pedagogical practice. Neoliberal measurement aimed at the child can be equally aimed at the teacher, impacting upon an understanding of teaching. Roberts and Saeverot (2018) articulate, “It is the logic of performativity, the drive to assess and measure everything, that is the problem” (p. 40). Murdoch argues that viewing individuals from a linguistic-descriptive perspective, or from an observational perspective, eradicates the inner life. Reducing pedagogy to what can be seen and described limits the ‘lived’ aspect of teaching and advances a behaviouristic/technical picture of education; the *aro* of aroha is diminished and relegated to the background. The limitations of this picture invoke a reduction of whole individuals to observable ‘parts’ and may elicit the view that an inner life is unnecessary to teaching. An unintended extension of this behaviouristic view is the claim to ‘knowledge’ of the teacher through observed behaviours. Murdoch counters this claim, arguing that the assumption that individuals can be understood through clear, precise language and observation is to invoke an arrogance and compartmentalisation of others’ being. This is a part of the ‘too grand’ image of ourselves that Murdoch (1998) accuses us of holding through a misguided faith that empirical science produces ‘truths’ about the world. The inner life of teaching is more complex than can be observed and described.

The crucial movements of the inner life are lost when teaching is understood as a set of behaviours or written words. As argued above, M cannot fully explain her change in opinion for D because the moral language M needs to explain this change cannot be fully apprehended by others. Although she may be able to use the common language, her interpretation of moral concepts are contextually grounded and unique to M. When the teacher is involved in explicating his or her motivations for decisions undertaken in the early

childhood context, these suffer similar issues of obscurity to external observers. The slippages between ‘what happened’ and ‘what is explained’ will be vast, and innumerable. These slippages reveal the inability to capture the ‘truth’ of the teacher through an observational or linguistic form of analysis (quantitative analysis even less so). The stance I am arguing for is not seeking to disregard the value of reflective explanation, for there are benefits in reflecting upon one’s decisions as the case of M and D illustrates. Rather, it is to challenge instances where reflections are conducted for external evaluation rather than inner moral progress. Linguistic explanations (verbal or written) are not the sum totality of the educational experience and cannot be the primary means of evaluating the effectiveness of teaching. The performative nature of such an undertaking will limit opportunities for an enhancement of moral vision and the appreciation of pedagogy as a philosophical investigation which is lived.

Conclusion

Teaching can be understood as a *moral task* guided by aroha and the just and loving gaze. The reflexive nature of Murdoch’s concept of attention aids the teacher to develop a clearer understanding of the threat of the ego and the paths that lead us away from aroha. Within early childhood education, these alternate routes can be understood through the desire to promote forms of educational practice that are not generated from a just and loving vision of the child. There can be moments when a ‘pendulum of reciprocity’ can swing away from the carefully negotiated space where the teacher works from a deep understanding of the individual child, towards an approach which is more generalised and ‘technical’. Procedural practices that occlude the child from the teacher can be realigned by the focus of aroha and attention. Threats to the reciprocal relationship of education can be mitigated by realigning our moral compass to lovingly view what is truly in front of us, a form of understanding that resists controlling or containing the other. Through the attentive gaze, teachers are not pushed back into the ‘cave’ but pulled outwards into the light of the sun; they are not immobilised by the hard shell, but are drawing from the power of aroha to shed old understandings for the new. Through attention and aroha, the possibilities of moving away from pre-determined, structured ‘intentions’ as a sole basis for pedagogy, and responding to the reality of the child can be revealed. The opportunities for teachers to extend their thoughts further about pedagogical practice need to be guided by this vision and expectation; a vision of attending to the child with justice, love, and aroha.

A behaviouristic vision of education limits the possibilities that the inner life can offer and the moral responsibility of teachers to regard others as equally ‘impenetrable’. If teachers appreciate that they are continually confronted by something other than themselves – the child as an ‘other’ which is obscure and impenetrable – then there is a strong motivation to move to a position of humility. There are benefits to approaching education with humility, and a just and loving orientation. These have been argued for in relation to teachers and children, but there are arguably similar benefits to be anticipated for external evaluators; when assessing others, humility and an appreciation of moral vision needs to be brought to the fore to mitigate the trappings of the ego. The behaviouristic assumption that children or teachers could be wholly understood through evaluation of behaviours described with clear, precise language compartmentalises the individual and invokes an arrogance of ‘knowledge’ about inner motivation. This invokes the ‘too grand’ image of empirical science as producing a ‘truth’ about the world. Attention and aroha are not concerned with this form of ‘truth’ nor the notion of objectivity. Attention illuminates the tensions between the complexity of lived experiences of teachers and children and contesting ideas that would otherwise represent life as homogeneous and uniform.

Technocratic notions of teaching – that teaching is a series of behaviours and actions underpinned by an assumption of the objective truth of reality, revealed by rational and impersonal observation – will inform one interpretation of how to understand education. Attention and aroha offer another view of life saturated with moral concepts. Consequently, teaching is a *moral* endeavour. Neoliberal approaches to education assume that educational practices are translatable and interchangeable. When the act of education is informed by the aroha and attention, the teacher is called to appreciate the way that experience and consciousness is ‘soaked in the sensible’, the power of ‘aro’, and the ‘force and colour’ of emotions for both the teacher and the children in the educational space. Murdoch was concerned with “the qualities that individuals possess in attending to and caring for other individuals and the truth” (Browning, 2018, p. 175). If education is concerned only with actions and how those actions can be explained, then the inner life of the teacher will be disregarded and education will be the lesser for it.

It is the role of the ‘ordinary and everyday’ teacher to resist simplistic observational and objective claims to knowledge that would contain the child. Through aroha and attention, teachers can (re)claim the validity of unmeasurable pedagogical practices; teachers can lay claim to the benefits of remaining attentive to children. Murdoch’s argument for the obscurity of the inner life of the individual is as true for children as it is for adults. If this understanding

of the human is appreciated, teachers' intuitive responses to this obscurity can be validated despite the problems of explication. As articulated earlier, Murdoch (1992) states "I intuitively know and grasp more than I can yet explain" (p. 393). The intuitive nature of everyday experience is familiar, but not necessarily rational or fully explicable. Despite its inability to be codified, the value of the lived experience of teaching is integral to the act of education. The lived experience is built from the knowledge the teacher brings to pedagogy and a shared history of experiences between the teacher and child. These aspects are integral to the act of education. Intentional teaching can be a part of education, but intuitive teaching cannot be excluded simply because it cannot be measured. Despite the ways in which the intuitive motions of the teacher remain obscure, there is worth in this experience.

Conclusion

Over the course of this study, a philosophical investigation into the concept of attention has supported an argument against the limitations of a performative, technical, scientific view of education and promoted a vision of education that respects the role of the inner life of teaching, guided by a just and loving gaze. Neoliberal ideas enacted through multiple forms of policies, practices and lived experiences were outlined with a view to developing a different understanding of the ethical and moral task of education. This understanding is not limited by objective, measurable and scientific understandings of the world. This study has argued that the ethical and moral domains are significant, despite their marginalised status and the ways in which they resist codification. The ethical and moral domains support a vision of education as a uniquely human endeavour. As articulated within the introduction, Murdoch (1998) writes, “Man is a creature who makes pictures of himself and then comes to resemble the picture” (p. 75). It is clear from the argument developed over the chapters that neoliberal visions are not the only ways of seeing early childhood education. There are alternate visions for supporting differing pedagogical directions. Murdoch’s philosophy offers a harmonising yet distinct voice to add to those who are already prominent.

Over the course of this study, important points have been made in order to articulate particular tensions and illustrate a Murdochian response. In Chapter Three, the neoliberal agenda in education was brought into question through Murdoch’s defence of the inner life and the role of freedom within self-determination. Murdoch was clear to argue against images of the human that misrepresent the role of morality within human life. Arguing against a dominant iteration of the liberal individual, Murdoch fought against the ‘shallow and flimsy’ notion of the human as confidently rational, yet alienated from the world through the ‘objective’ vision of scientific empiricism. Such an image produces a twofold failure: the failure to represent the human realistically, and the failure to support the metaphysical background necessary to understanding the reality of the human. The ‘ideal’ depiction of humanity needs to be reconsidered entirely. Murdoch (1998) defends the liberal individual as “substantial, impenetrable, individual, indefinable, and valuable” (p. 294) but also identifies that the image of the ‘ideally rational individual’ is built from false premises, affecting the validity of this image from the outset. This depiction is too skewed to be rescued and a new image is needed.

Murdoch develops the image of the ‘real impenetrable individual’: an individual who humbly acknowledges his or her slight control over moral vision, but who works to enhance

it in order to see the world as it really is and obediently respond to it. The moral individual is capable of more than conceited self-reflection or unrealistic judgements, but it takes humility to admit that one may be wrong. Furthermore, it takes modesty to acknowledge that moral work is continuous and only incrementally achieved. It is through obedience to the ties that bind us to others in the world that we can be shaped by changes within us and the changing view of the world around us.

Murdoch's concept of attention holds exciting possibilities for a new understanding of the role of the teacher within the ethical and moral dimensions of early childhood education. As attention positions individuals as moral beings developing their innate moral imagination, it can support a vision of education in which teachers can be encouraged to enhance pedagogy through love, justice, humility. Through such an understanding of pedagogy, the enlivening energy of goodness will develop the conditions for both children and teachers to flourish.

Although the image of freedom can be suggested to be a 'systematic' failure rather than a moral one – a failure to operate the machinery of will-desire-belief-reason in such a way as to enjoy the detachment of rational thought – a different understanding of the role of freedom can be conceived to shift the notion that education is directive, externally derived, and standardised. Through the concept of attention, an understanding of freedom can make room for interdependence, responsibility, obedience and humility. Through a just and loving gaze, goodness is not a matter of choice but a magnetic force we are drawn towards, revealing reality beyond the pull of the ego. This is not the 'reality' of standardised pedagogy or assessment and evaluation, but an understanding of education as a small and incremental process. Through attention, education can be viewed as a process in which the teacher attempts to see the child and respond to them. Understanding the critical role of the moral imagination in education is challenging. It is not something that can be developed quickly, to expect such expedition is to misunderstand the idea of perfection and moral progress that underpins the task of attention: that attention is built from ongoing practice.

Neoliberal ideas elicit a tension between individualism and community; while many expectations for entrepreneurial activity are within the realm of the individual, the benefits are situated as gains for all. Equally, while the individual is free to operate within the market, the government sets conditions to ensure that such participation limits the selfish, lazy and indolent nature of the individual. The strategies of neoliberalism are varied, but the message is clear: individuals are to be given the 'freedom', encouragement, and tools to become 'self-reliant' competitors. Murdoch also argued that individuals are naturally selfish, and

recognised the tension between individualism and community, supporting the notion of real impenetrable person and the rights of the individual, but a significant point of departure is within the neoliberal encouragement of the individualistic nature. Although Murdoch's writing was primarily prior to the advent of neoliberalism, Murdoch's philosophical position would clearly have expressed reservations about the selfish drives of the 'rational optimiser' as the ideal citizen of the neoliberal state. The problems of the early childhood 'market' would also be brought into question: when children are created in an image of their future entrepreneurial selves, and education is set up to optimise this (possible) future, does this accurately represent the reality of the child? Even more importantly, Murdoch would ask, does this look upon the child with love and justice? As educational relationships are lived experiences, education cannot be considered a finalised 'product'. The notion of the finalised 'product' is not representative of the reality of human existence, nor of education. Furthermore, to view an individual in light of a future possibility is not an accurate representation of the reality *in front of us*. Situating children as future workers to "compete in the global economy" (World Bank Staff, 2003, p. xvii) can be brought into question by the Murdochian demand for justice and love. As Murdoch argues, when we apprehend real instances of love we can immediately distinguish them from lesser forms and work to reimagine the world illuminated by the light of goodness through this love. Through the 'patient eye of love', the economic vision of the child can be seen as a lesser form and rejected due to the fantastical image it projects.

We can utilise our moral imagination in order to enhance our vision of the world, but to understand the function of the moral imagination is to also support a respect for the contingent. As Murdoch rightly argues reality is not a 'given whole, it is through an appreciation of the particulars – the small details of life – that our moral vision is pulled away from fantasy and the 'fire-light' of the ego. The neoliberal fantasy is far removed from the Murdochian imagination, but through the concept of attention, teachers hold the power to realign education, supported by a substantive theoretical backing for this vision.

Within Chapter Four, the role of the moral imagination was highlighted as a critical element to resist scientific images of the inherently moral human being. Current movements to promote the role of the teacher as technician, to situate education as a quantifiable endeavour, and to see the child or teacher as 'knowable', denies the role of moral vision within education. These movements uphold a scientific vision of human life, delimiting moral concepts. Murdoch argues that scientific delineations of the moral erodes the depth and breadth of concepts necessary to comprehending the intricate reality of human life. This

thesis has argued that a similar effect could be rendered through the dominance of scientism in education. Reality is comprehended through the ‘force and colour’ of morality and the medium of consciousness. Moral concepts add hue and tone to envisioning the world and colours all aspects of our lives. Educational relationships are not exempt from moral values and, despite the designation of an ‘objective’ view of education, relationships are preceded by moral vision. How the teacher sees the world and how the teacher sees the child are affected by moral concepts. When morality is segmented from ‘fact’, and the ‘mechanical’ brain is situated as the seat of all knowledge, there are suppressed premises that distort the drive, focus, and accurate depiction of pedagogy. Scientistic and technical approaches that interpret teaching as a procedural undertaking lessen education. A neuroscientific view can denude the powerful background of values that enrich the educational experience. Obscuring the role of morality within the educational experience does not obliterate its existence, but leads to an ‘understanding’ of education that is markedly impoverished.

Within Chapter Five, the critical role of love within attention was highlighted with a view to promoting the potent possibilities of love within pedagogy. Education is not simply the act of doing, it is also an undertaking of moral vision. Education is not only the concern of ‘doing things right’ but an endeavour to discover the right things to do. Such a move reorients the undertaking of education from a process primarily governed by moral action, to one concerned with moral vision. Murdoch argues that the human is “a unified being who sees, and who desires in accordance with what he sees, and who has some continual slight control over the direction and focus of his vision” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 322). This continual control over vision – however slight – is the aspect of teaching which is sovereign over other aspects of teaching; all other aspects of the education flow from this initial step. If this initial aspect is glossed over or undertaken without due consideration, then the potent potential of education as a deeper development of our comprehension of life is lessened. But love offers a way to navigate the moral task of education, and respond to others in a way that humbly accepts the impenetrability of other beings, and the way in which to attempt to ‘see’ others through a just and loving gaze.

The moral vision to underpin pedagogy is a vision of love: love is the way to attain an accurate perception of reality and hone our moral vision of the good of education. Through love, we are drawn to the light of the ‘sun’ and enriched through this magnetic tension, we are rewarded by an accuracy of vision and personal growth. Furthermore, this capacity is wholly innate – every individual holds the capacity to enhance an understanding of goodness through the task and practice of attention. Through the medium of consciousness and the

appreciation of love as a *metaxu*, we can develop pedagogy to move beyond the notion of ethical principles and appreciate moral concepts through the idea of perfection: incrementally developed, constantly refined, and limitless. When brought into dialogue with Murdoch's philosophy, arguments against the 'performativity' of the early childhood teacher are supported and enhanced. The professional *and* loving teacher is a vision, one that can be argued for with Murdoch's concept of attention.

As attention is not completed but continually enacted, it must be brought into conversation with other similar lines of thought that support parallel ideas within the domain of education. Chapter Six was an endeavour into seeking the synergies between attention and aroha. Attention and aroha both resist the pull of the ego, look towards humility, and deepen our appreciation of the ties that bind us to others in the world. When brought into dialogue with aroha, the notion of removing the veil is appreciated as a 'shedding' action, and the forward momentum of the pilgrim must be reconsidered in light of the way in which we walk backward into the future in order to keep our sights on the past. Murdoch appreciates the inability to encapsulate concepts such as love; keeping our sights set on the past supports us to appreciate 'the future' as an unknowable space. A deeper appreciation of the nuances of aroha and attention can aid the teacher's appreciation of the educational relationship as a space which is not only dynamic and unpredictable, but one we need to enter with an appreciation of the history and lived experiences that are brought to pedagogy. The moral task of attention highlights the necessity to see education as an endeavour that focusses upon what is in front of us. Between aroha and attention we can negotiate between the knowledge our past affords us and an attentive orientation to the present. Attention must be continually undertaken, with the opportunity to look and relook over the time spent with the child. Through attention and aroha, the educator has the opportunity to resist the egotistical pull of educational visions that would lessen our appreciation of reality; the neoliberal, economic, scientific. We are encouraged to draw from our historical understanding of the child and move towards an appreciation of pedagogy as an act of humble acquiescence; an act of aroha, love, and attention.

Education can include the experiential and 'intuitive' aspects of teaching. The role of attention as an 'inhabited' philosophy was considered within Chapter Seven, with a view to defending the 'ordinary and everyday' experience of teaching, and the role of intuition. Aroha was brought in alongside attention at points to develop the notion of synergy between these concepts. The educator needs to work constantly to enhance moral vision. As an ordinary and everyday experience, attention and aroha are constant undertakings honed

through ongoing practice. Attention is a moral training, which has the capacity to be developed and can be strengthened through correct enactment, but this is not an exercise of force through the will, as a ‘grandiose leaping about’. Attention is an acquiescence to the ties that bind us to others in the world and the necessity to respond to these attachments appropriately. Likewise, aroha was identified in this chapter as a ‘quivering’ within the mind that may not be directly connected to will. These are inner processes, resisting arguments that diminish the role of inner thought. Murdoch’s philosophy vehemently defends the inner life and the necessity of consciousness to discern reality from fantasy through the work of the moral imagination. The feelings generated through aroha, and the conscious understanding wrought by the moral imagination cannot be replicated nor fully explicated, but are “none the worse for that” (p. 326). This does not mean that teachers’ decisions should be unquestioningly accepted, but it does bring into question any measurement systems that prioritise written and verbal justifications as the sole means to defining and defending pedagogical actions. Murdochian attention defends the particulars of the situation, and the inner knowledge of the individuals involved. There are small details which are difficult to surmise without understanding the slow incremental work and processes of attention that are difficult to represent to others. There is value to the intangible aspects of human experience which are a part of the education. Moments between the teacher and the child – a look, a sound, a touch, a feeling, the ‘aro’ of aroha – can inform pedagogical decisions and be built from uncountable prior moments. For the attentive teacher, these decisions may be considered unquantifiable through evaluative strategies, but as Murdoch argued “‘not a report’ need not entail ‘not an activity’” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 318). Although many aspects of moral human relationships cannot be codified, this in no way detracts from their worthiness.

If the role of the educator is diminished in order to ensure that more predictable ‘outcomes’ are met and the ‘messy’ aspects of education are minimised, a deeper appreciation of the possibilities of the education relationship will be lost. Although in many countries what can be externally discerned, measured, assessed and predicted is of value, this study has been an attempt to support an alternate vision of early childhood education that maintains the invaluable place of the teacher to enhance education through pedagogy. In developing an argument for the role of the moral imagination, aroha and attention can be understood as means to resist fantastical visions and appreciate the reality of education. Education can be built from a ‘ground-up’ defence of what pedagogy is (and can be) as a lived experience, we can look again at early childhood education with a just and loving gaze; we can open ourselves to the possibilities of aroha. We can not only consider morality as a

fundamental aspect of human life, but also appreciate education as a moral and ethical undertaking. We can support teaching as an experience that develops moral vision, and understand education as a practice that enhances humility, aroha, love and an appreciation of the world illuminated by goodness.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused upon investigating early childhood education from a philosophical position. Although empirical research was not the focus of this study, the lack of applying these ideas within an early childhood setting with teachers, whanau, and children is a limitation. This is also a potential area of future investigation (and will be explained in more depth below).

Another potential limitation has been outlined within Chapter Six. Mātauranga Māori has been drawn upon to illustrate the synergy between aroha and attention, but it is undertaken from a pākehā position, not as tangata whenua. Although I have sought to remain respectful to the notion of knowledge as a taonga, it is a limitation that this knowledge is not a part of my whakapapa, nor my tipuna, but is something I have embraced as a part of my pedagogical and personal development. This experience has been bolstered by the opportunities extended to me by others to explore mātauranga Māori, and my personal desire to do it. However, it must be recognised that these understandings are not a part of my familia and are rendered through my own Mexican/American/Pākehā vision. Furthermore it is a limitation of the study that the representation of mātauranga Māori is within a fixed (static) linguistic form that belies its lived worldedness. The lived and breathed nature of this philosophy is difficult to contain within the words on a page.

Another limitation is of a philosophical nature; while I have explored Murdoch's extensive discussion on overcoming the ego I have offered no clear ideas on how the development of the moral imagination would support individuals to discern morally questionable works or deeds through a just and loving gaze. The primary focus of the investigation has been upon how to resist the inner pull of the ego, and not to identify when others are acting upon selfish desires (potentially under the guise of 'goodness'). The closest understanding which is rendered within this study is the articulation that lesser forms of love, due to their possessive and self-absorbed nature, are eclipsed when we are in the presence of real instances of love; through these real instances, we can immediately distinguish false from real, understand how goodness is present within the world through love. The connections

between fantasy and delusion, and goodness and love may support an appreciation of looking at others with ‘justice’ in order to determine whether their actions are guided by love and goodness or fantasy and the ego.

Other Possible Areas for Investigation

An important connection explored in this thesis is the relationship between aroha and attention. This connection warrants further exploration, particularly in relation to teachers’ ‘ground-up’ conceptualisations of love in education. This would be particularly interesting to explore with both English-medium and Māori-medium teachers to find commonalities in ‘ground-up’ conceptualisations and encourage deeper and broader notions of aroha and love. Attention would support this conversation as a means through which love can be developed and enhanced with children. Attention supports the concept of love as a necessary means through which to ‘see’ the other. An understanding of the role of love can be developed with teachers to progress the notion of an early childhood understanding of love in pedagogy.

There is ample space to consider the correlations between Weilian attention, and Murdochian attention, specifically where the ‘self’ is present or removed in the act of deference. Firstly, there is a line of thought that was not pursued in this study, and that is the relationship of happiness and the good. A quote by Ariana Huffington, ‘giving is a shortcut to happiness’ is extended by the world business forum to “There is a lot of neuroscience that shows that giving is a shortcut to happiness” (WOBI, 2017). There is some importance in considering the wave of ‘feeling good’ through philanthropy which is arguably about enacting the good, but the motivating desires are to be reconsidered in light of Murdoch’s division of selfishness and the good. Where there is a ‘feel good’ aspect to the new philanthropy, questions need to be asked about whether this ‘feeling good’ is tied to the ego and the desire to feel good through ‘good’ acts is a new form of selfishness or a way in which to ignite the genesis of attention, in the act of looking at others and trying to do ‘good’.

There are practical applications of the concept of attention that would be fascinating to explore with teachers following the completion of this thesis. It would be very interesting to investigate how the concept of attention can enhance teachers’ moral vision of early childhood education as an ethical and moral undertaking and the motivation to consider ‘ground-up’ theories of education as valid and necessary to enhancing broader understandings of pedagogical practice.

Another possible area of investigation would include the notion of the pilgrimage and personal history of the individual. There is something in the concept of attention, particularly in the notion of the pilgrimage and personal history that could inform another way of looking at pedagogy. Teaching and learning experiences can be reviewed in light of the moral pilgrimage as another way of looking at 'learning'. Of course, these are not limited to pedagogy and would have implications for a broader interpretation of education (political, policy, governance).

I also appreciate the image Murdoch gives of the virtuous peasant, who may have left the cave without even noticing the fire. It would be interesting to investigate this area further and construct a philosophical argument which would seek to conceptualise children as individuals who are not in 'need' of moral instruction, but can be situated as individuals who can offer philosophical ideas to others.

Finally, the notion of the moral pilgrimage itself could be explored in more depth in relation to the journey that the teacher can undertake over the course of their career. It would be interesting to collaborate with 'end of career' teachers who may see some correlations between their pedagogical journey and the notion of the moral pilgrimage. This journey would be interesting to explore and it would be interesting to see if teachers can identify with the idea that moral concepts can be deepened over time and experience within education.

Final Thoughts

Murdoch (1998) was concerned with the image of the 'ideal' moral agent and argued that the search for an ideal needs to be guided by the central question, "How can we make ourselves better?" (p. 364). Murdoch's response was to develop the concept of attention, supporting individuals to enhance the moral imagination and gain clarity of vision when viewing others in the world. This study has drawn from the concept of attention to enhance an understanding of teaching as a critical responsibility, shaped by moral concepts and guided by the central Murdochian drive to make ourselves better.

Although Murdoch was responding to different issues in different times, this thesis has argued that the concept of attention complements the contemporary vision of early childhood education as an endeavour to see and respond to children. Attention explores teaching as an inner movement supported by the moral imagination. Our understanding of education can be refined through the practice of attention. Each teacher builds pedagogical understandings from his or her unique consciousness and personal experiences, attention supports the

individual to reflect upon these experiences and hone his or her appreciation of reality beyond the self. Through the concept of attention there are possibilities to resist externalised demands that lessen the educational relationship; to contest neoliberal, technical, standardised, and economically-driven forms of practice and remain attentive to the particulars. Although attention is concerned with inner movements it is important to pay attention to small and incremental moments between individuals in the everyday life of teaching. Through Murdochian attention, the small and sometimes ‘messy and chaotic’ (Murdoch 1992) aspects of education can be understood to inform rationality in new, unexpected and invigorating ways. Attention supports an understanding of education as a complex and uniquely human endeavour that is difficult to quantify, resistant to standardisation and built from lived experiences.

Early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand is unique and supports teachers to see children from a strengths-based perspective that upholds their individuality. These philosophical ideas align closely with Murdochian ideals. As argued over this study, the concept of attention has much to offer early childhood education to support a deeper philosophical understanding of the role of the moral imagination in pedagogy. Education can be enriched when this critical aspect is appreciated for its potent potentiality. This is where a point of resistance against limited forms of measurement can be established, for each teacher holds the power to enhance their moral imagination through his or her attention to the world, through the just and loving gaze. This is something entirely inner and, when further developed, can support teachers to discern when pedagogy is being turned away from seeing children in the light of the sun; when external directives are imposing a particular image of the child, rather than enhancing a vision of the child as he or she ‘really is’.

A deep investigation of the concept of attention can enhance our appreciation of the unique nature of pedagogical relationships between teachers and children. The critical importance of approaching pedagogy as an ethical and moral undertaking becomes more apparent, and we are better able to defend the intricate and inimitable nature of pedagogy as something beyond simple quantification. The careful study of attention opens up myriad possibilities for further educational work in the future.

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