Remembering to ask “Who are we?”

An analysis and theological critique of the ontological and teleological assumptions embedded in Ofsted’s documentation and school practice

by

Richard Noble

Thesis presented to the University of East Anglia
For the Degree of Doctorate in Education

September 2020

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with the author and that use of any information derived therefrom must be in accordance with current UK Copyright Law. In addition, any quotation or extract must include full attribution.

Abstract

Narratives of self, although often hidden, are embedded in Ofsted's documentation, in day-to-day teaching practice and in all educational dialogue and policy. Furthermore, these (hidden) ontological hegemonies – that can never be neutral - affect the wellbeing of those on the frontline of education. It will be argued however that it is possible for staff, policy makers and academics to uncover these hegemonies, explore counter-narratives and transform school curriculum in the light of these reformed narratives of self.

This thesis will also seek to demonstrate the extent to which the faculty of theology can read and respond to contemporary educational ontological axioms with conviction and honesty as a rational and relevant body. This will be exercised via the genealogical analysis of Radical Orthodoxy (RO) - an academic, persuasive and polemical sensibility - and through the prayerful and relational aspiration of the contemplative tradition. It will be argued that both theological bodies offer something unique and profound to educational awareness and reform. Both also assume a particular narrative of self (labelled here as the *complex relational* self) that will challenge the contemporary hidden ontological hegemony that was uncovered in the research (referred to here as the *atomistic economic* self).

The test is therefore whether a non-violent, reasoned and fertile theology can successfully challenge normative ontological suppositions in education, encourage action research in school and improve the wellbeing of those on the frontline.

Access Condition and Agreement

Each deposit in UEA Digital Repository is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of the Data Collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission from the copyright holder, usually the author, for any other use. Exceptions only apply where a deposit may be explicitly provided under a stated licence, such as a Creative Commons licence or Open Government licence.

Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone, unless explicitly stated under a Creative Commons or Open Government license. Unauthorised reproduction, editing or reformatting for resale purposes is explicitly prohibited (except where approved by the copyright holder themselves) and UEA reserves the right to take immediate 'take down' action on behalf of the copyright and/or rights holder if this Access condition of the UEA Digital Repository is breached. Any material in this database has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the material may be published without proper acknowledgement.

Contents

Title page………………………………………………………………... 1

Abstract……………………………………………………………… 2

Contents…………………………………………………………….… 3

Acknowledgements…………………………………………….……….. 8

Glossary of Terms and abbreviations……………………………………… 9

Introduction

0.1. An initial premise: narratives of self and educational purpose……. 11
0.2. An initial teaching experience: or lack thereof……………………. 14
0.3. The hypotheses, research questions and intended audiences…… 15
0.3.1. The hypotheses…………………………………………………….. 15
0.3.2. The research questions…………………………………………… 17
0.3.3. The intended audiences……………………………………………. 17
0.4. Acknowledging the decline of the status of theology………………19
0.5. The broader academic context: hidden hegemonies in education… 22
0.6. An outline of chapters…………………………………………… 24
0.7. Concluding remarks……………………………………………… 29

Chapter One - The culture of performativity and Ofsted's vernacular

1.0. Introduction………………………………………………………30
1.1. Situating this thesis in academic research: cultures of performativity………………………………………………. 32
1.2. A review of Ofsted's ontological vernacular: uncovering neutrality and the *atomistic economic* self…………………………………. 37
1.2.1. Tolerance: and why Ofsted's assumption of neutrality is misplaced……………………………………………………. 39
1.2.2. Uncovering the paradox of Ofsted's language of self: spirituality and morality………………………………………….. 43
1.2.3. Uncovering the ontological roots of 'achievement' in the Framework…………………………………………………… 47
1.2.4. The School Inspection Handbook and achievement……………… 50
1.3. The Education Inspection Framework 2019………………………. 53
1.4. Concluding remarks………………………………………………. 56

Chapter Two - The complex relational self: the relegation of theological ontological wisdom in education

2.0. Introduction………………………………………………………… 58
2.1. The *complex relational* self of the contemplative tradition: A counter-ontological imagining to Ofsted's *atomistic economic* self……………………………………………….. 59
2.2. Radical Orthodoxy: the Eucharist and the complex relational self…………………………………………….……. 63
2.3. The genealogical thesis of Radical Orthodoxy: examining the advent of *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self in modern education and the decline of the Christian ontological imagination in the secular age………………………… 66
2.3.1. Univocity of being……………………………………………… 68
2.3.2. Political enlightenment ontology: the dawn of an *atomistic economic* narrative of self?... 72
2.3.3. The wars of religion…………………………………………… 79
2.3.4. The heresy of modern theology…………………………………… 84
2.4. Concluding remarks………………………………………………. 87

Chapter Three - Locating the place and spirit of theology as interlocutor in the public domain

3.0. Introduction………………………………………………………. 89
3.1. Philosophical critiques of Radical Orthodoxy…………………… 90
3.1.1. Habermas: theology, dialogue and reason………………………… 91
3.1.2. Foucault: a challenge to the genealogical thesis and a critique of reason………………………………………………………… 94
3.1.3. MacIntyre and Taylor: the necessity and vulnerability of metanarratives and genealogies…………………………………… 97
3.2. Theological challenges to Radical Orthodoxy: On RO's genealogy history and interpretation………………………………………. 101
3.3. An evaluation of Radical Orthodoxy……………………………… 105
3.4. The contemplatives and modern theology: towards a peaceful theological spirit of public engagement………..………… 108
3.4.1. The contemplatives………………………………………………... 108
3.4.2. Modern relational theology……………………………………….. 111
3.5. Concluding remarks………………………………………………. 119

Chapter Four - A case study instance of universal significance

4.0. Introduction……………………………………………………... 120
4.1. Justifying the case study approach………………………………… 121

4.2. A justification for the academic (theological) analysis of educational instances…………………………………………… 128
4.3. The interview process…………………………………………….. 132
4.4. The extraction of three key themes…………………………….. 136
4.4.1. Challenges to this interview technique…………………………… 137
4.5. How the data (and also Ofsted's ontological vernacular) will be analysed……………………………………………………………. 140
4.6. Concluding remarks……………………………………………. 143

Chapter Five - The (hidden) *economic* self and economic life

5.0 Introduction…………………………………………………….. 144
5.1. The participants: a desire to explore the *complex* self (theme 1) … 145
5.1.1. The participants: towards an economic telos and the *economic* self…………………………………………………… 150
5.2. RO and the basic matters of economic life: deepening the notion of the *economic* self and the effects upon wellbeing (themes 2 and 3)………………………………………….. 155
5.2.1. Disconnection……………………………………………………. 156
5.2.2. Dissatisfaction……………………………………………………162
5.2.3. Unfulfillment……………………………………………………. 165
5.3. Concluding remarks……………………………………………. 170

Chapter Six - A culture of acute accountability: a contemplative analysis of the participant's anxieties

6.0. Introduction……………………………………………………171
6.1. Identifying the culture of accountability (themes 2 and 3)…………172
6.2. Applying the counter-narrative of the contemplatives…………….. 177
6.2.1. A contemplative analysis of performance related pay…………….. 180
6.2.2. Reclaiming contemplative desire in the classroom: beyond economic desire………………………………………………… 187
6.3. Have we been here before in educational thought?......................... 195
6.4. Accountability is not the default position………………………… 197
6.5. Concluding remarks…………………………………………….. 198

Chapter Seven - Transparency, reform and bravery: a theological analysis of Ofsted's vernacular

7.0. Introduction…………………………………………………… 200
7.1. The myth of neutrality: towards ontological transparency………… 202
7.1.1. The possibility of nihilism: towards ontological transparency……. 204
7.1.2. Neutrality and nihilism: towards ontological transparency……….. 206

7.2. Imagining school reform via a theological counter-narrative …….. 207
7.2.1. School language: and how we might develop community by reforming how we speak to and of the other……………………… 208
7.2.2. Achievement: and how this notion might be transfigured to improve wellbeing………………………………………………… 215
7.2.3. Students who do not want to achieve……………………………… 216
7.2.4. Students who suffer stress due to perceived achievement or lack of Achievement……………………………………………………..219
7.2.5. Moving away from *atomistic* student achievement……………….. 220
7.2.6. Staff achievement………………………………………………….. 221
7.2.7. A 'community of virtue' as a behavioural expression of complex relational selves……………………………………………………. 222
7.3. Planning for radical change: towards the efficacious risk of vulnerability…………………………………………………….. 227
7.4. Concluding remarks……………………………………………….. 230

Chapter Eight - "The Study of Self and Purpose": an outline of a proposal for action research in the school of the participants

8.0. Introduction……………………………………………………….. 232
8.1. SSP in brief……………………………………………………….. 233
8.1.1. Stenhouse's methodology of applied research in education………. 235
8.1.2. The relevance of Lesson Study as a form of applied research in education………………………………………………………….. 238
8.2. Phase 1: Developing the ontological awareness and justifying SSP as a means to transform policy, practice and dialogue…............. 241
8.2.1. Developing ontological awareness through variation theory……… 242
8.2.2. Developing ontological awareness through the introduction of the hypotheses and research…………………………………………… 244
8.2.3. Developing ontological awareness by challenging the myth of neutrality……………………………………………………….. 247
8.2.4. Justifying local proof and communities of re-thought as a necessary aspect of SSP……………………………………… 249
8.3. Phase 2: Planning and researching the normative narratives of self that currently underpin policy, practice and dialogue……… 252
8.3.1. Modelling the plan for research…………………………………… 253
8.3.2. Teacher research…………………………………………………… 257
8.4. Phase 3: Re-imagining an ontological preference and applying this counter-narrative of self to policy, practice and dialogue…………. 259
8.5. The application and comparison of SSP methodology in different types of school…………………………………………………… 263
8.6. Concluding remarks……………………………………………….. 266

Chapter Nine – Conclusions, limits and contributions

9.0. Conclusions……………………………………………………………269
9.1. Limits…………………………………………………………………274
9.2. Contributions…………………………………………………………. 274

References…………………………………………………………………278

The Case Record………………………………………………………….. 289
i) The desire to explore the complex self (Theme 1)………………… 289
ii) Evidence of the atomistic economic self (Theme 2)………………. 293
iii) Effects of the atomistic economic self (Theme 3)…………………. 296
iv) Responses to the question "To what degree do you think that policy makers, school leaders and teachers should consider and explore the concept of self'?"……………………………………………………………. 301

Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter to the Head teacher of the school of the participants.. 304
Appendix 2: Opt In Participation Teacher Statement and Consent Form.. 307
Appendix 3: Opt In Participation Parent Statement and Consent Form… 318
Appendix 4: Opt In Participation Student Statement and Consent Form.. 329
Appendix 5: Prompts to the question: what is meant by the self?............ 339
Appendix 6: Prompts to the question: what is the purpose of education?. 341
Appendix 7: Questions for Interview 2…………………………………. 343

Acknowledgements

I would like first to thank my supervisors. Alain Wolf and John Elliott have been the source of sincere reflection, academic vigour and much structural guidance. Their support has always been very much appreciated and certainly necessary.

I would also like to say thank you to my parents. There are numerous untold ways in which the opportunity to think and write would simply not have been possible without them. They are an inspiration to us all.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my wife Sally and to my two sons Joseph and Arthur. I could not be more happy or lucky to have been gifted such a family.

Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Atomistic economic self – The self is said to be *atomistic* because the person is a self-created, self-regulated, individualised agent who possesses independent will and volition. The self is *economic* because the person's telos is bound to finance, competition, data, employability, measurable results and production.

Complex relational self - The self is said to be *complex* because ultimately the person is not fully knowable; the self is formed through a myriad of different convoluted causes including the social, psychological and experiential. The self is *relational* because for the people of the Christian contemplative tradition, persons are bound by relationship, held within relationship and born for relationship; with God, self and other.

Contemplative tradition - The Christian contemplative tradition that has its heart in silence, prayer and the peaceful transfiguration of person and community.

CPD – Continual Development Programme.

Framework (2014/15) – Ofsted's Framework of School Inspection.

IR – Ofsted's Inspection Report. In this instance the Inspection Report of the participant's school in 2013.

Narratives of Self - Refers to how we identify ourselves to others and/or how others identify themselves to us. Put differently, the phrase 'narrative of self' will be used to explain how being is represented in policy and practice by different bodies.

Neutrality – Within this thesis, the word neutrality refers mainly to any mistaken notion that a narrative of self requires no explanation, is self-evident or is universally agreed upon.

Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education.

Ontos - Within this thesis, the words Ontos, Ontological or Ontology refer here to our substantive beliefs about who we are; the deep or primordial account of being - the level of being.

RO – Radical Orthodoxy: A Christian theological school of thought who posit a genealogical thesis of modernity. RO write an innovative, broad and controversial genealogy as a means for understanding contemporary thought and practice including current narratives of self and theologies decline in public secular society.

SIH – Ofsted's School Inspection Handbook.

SSP – The Study of Self and Purpose. This is a proposal for action research in the school of the participants.

Telos - Within this thesis, the words telos, teleological or teleology mainly refer to the ends or purpose of state education.

Wellbeing – Wellbeing is broadly defined as comfortable, healthy and happy. Within this thesis, the lack of wellbeing refers to the 'disconnection', 'dissatisfaction', and 'unfulfillment', felt by staff, students and parents in the school environment. These three classifications have been lifted from Cavanaugh's thesis on the economic life (2008, pp. vii – x) and will be explained more fully in chapter five as a means of developing the notion of the *atomistic economic* self.

Introduction

0.1. An initial premise: narratives of self and educational purpose

Whenever we ask the question, "what is the purpose of education?" we are asking, "what is the purpose of educating human beings?" and any sincere answer to this question can only be advanced following our reflections upon the interrelated question, "what do we mean by being human?"

Contrary to an apparent assumption, our narratives of self (the level of representing being) cannot be divorced from the purpose of education. The notion of curriculum telos[1] is intrinsically and unavoidably assimilated with our ontological imagination (the primordial level of being). Our telos rests upon our ontological mind and the suppositions of *who we are* underpin everything else within education. Put another way, the answer to the question 'who are we?' will be evident in every policy, practice and dialogue because each particular thought, decision, desire or idea and every relationship forged is essentially wed to a supposition of self. There is as such an inextricable marriage between our visions of self and the purpose of pedagogy.

To be clear: the words Ontos, Ontological or Ontology refer here to our substantive beliefs about who we are; the deep or primordial account of being. A narrative of self will refer to how we identify ourselves to others and/or how others identify themselves to us. Put differently, the phrase 'narrative of self' will be used to explain how being is represented in policy and practice by different bodies. In short, we both recognise ourselves to be something (a level of being: ontos) and express this something to others (the level of representation: the narrative of self). The identification and the representation of self can occur both implicitly and explicitly. A more developed meaning for both these interconnected concepts will become clearer as this thesis unfolds.

[1] Within this thesis the words telos, teleological or teleology mainly refer to the ends or purpose of state education. A more comprehensive account will be developed through the chapters.

To illustrate the link between and the importance of (hidden) narratives of self and educational purpose consider the following examples. If we think of pupils as created beings, gifts one to another whose existence is enriched and sustained only in relationship with one another and the world they inhabit, then any final vision of educational purpose and thus what it might mean, say, to ‘achieve’ will be very different from thinking of pupils as individuals whose final aim is directed towards economic advantage. Alternatively, if we adopted an Ultra-Darwinian perspective in which the self is imagined as a selfish self-perpetuating gene machine then the concept of ‘achievement’ will change again. Or should we see ourselves through the ideals of a Neo-Marxist or through Durkheim’s sociologically informed perspective or the lens of a psychological behaviourist then the meaning of ‘achievement’ (school vision and telos) will be distinctly different in each case. Who we are is clearly allied to what our purpose is.

These simple examples illustrate not only this link and why the question of self matters but also for the need for transparency of ontological language and conceptual clarity; a need, in other words to be precise when we answer the question “who are we”? For if there is no default position or neutral[1] standpoint from which to postulate or interpret the meaning of language of self in education - a claim that is fundamental to this thesis - then words such as *pupil, progress, achievement, respect and vision* (all taken from Ofsted’s Framework for School Inspection, 2015[2]) will remain vacuous and open therefore to spurious construal. It will be shown in chapter one that this is the unfortunate situation as it stands. Consequently, the fundamentals of educational purpose and of teaching practice are grounded quite ominously upon the (hidden) ontological hegemonies[3] that are rarely addressed but that determine quite radically the wellbeing of those on the frontline. Wellbeing is broadly defined as comfortable, healthy and happy.

---

[1] By ‘neutral’ I mean any mistaken notion that a narrative of self requires no explanation, is self-evident or is universally agreed upon.

[2] Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. Ofsted inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

[3] Broadly speaking ‘hegemony’ refers to a power that lies behind a particular instance. That they are often considered ‘hidden’ in this thesis is the suggestion that the power is not explicit or obvious. A ‘hidden ontological hegemony’ therefore indicates a narrative of self that can be discovered in school often only through the uncovering of what is normally only implicit, assumed or falsely deemed neutral.

Within this thesis, the lack of wellbeing refers to the 'disconnection', 'dissatisfaction', and 'unfulfillment', felt by staff, students and parents in the school environment. These three classifications have been lifted from Cavanaugh's thesis on the economic life (2008, pp. vii – x) and will be explained more fully in chapter five as a means of developing the notion of the *atomistic economic* self; a narrative of self to be introduced shortly.

The unbreakable marriage between self and purpose and the need therefore for ontological transparency is a premise that is central to this thesis. If this premise can be substantiated then it should be of both surprise and deep concern that whilst policy makers, pedagogical experts and staff ask questions about the purpose of education (at least sometimes) that they/we also appear to have become a body incapable of examining or questioning 'who we are' with any measure of candour or urgency.

This correlation between ontos and telos is succinctly implied in different academic writings – brilliantly captured for instance in Taylor's seminal work, Sources of the Self in which the link between theoretical frameworks (such as the *ontological* naturalist reduction) and the place of these frameworks in our lives (particularly the moral space of our lives: *wellbeing*) is introduced (1989, pp. 25-27). It is these 'frameworks' for Taylor that 'provide the background, explicit or implicit, for our moral judgements, intuitions, or reactions' (1989, p. 26). However, such connections are seemingly copious by their absence in education if my experience of teaching is representative and my investigation into policy document in chapter one reliable. This study seeks to address this absence by calling for a collective shift in what Taylor calls our horizons of significance; the way in which we see and value certain things (1989, pp. 27-28). This suggests a need to be aware of and question our perceptions of identity and to be potentially changed because of such deepening awareness and questioning. Taylor suggests that such study will involve historical investigation (p. 28) – thus in chapter two of this thesis a genealogical account of the modern self will be introduced – and an exploration 'of fundamental orientation … a society of interlocutors' (p. 29) – thus in chapter eight, a programme designed to encourage teachers to explore the question of self in education is presented.

To be clear – because upon this premise rests the entire thesis – there is an indissoluble link between ontos and telos. This claim is made upon an obvious and self-evident truth; that where we find the aims of a human institution, there also we will find the human. There simply cannot be human purpose without also a human narrative. Yet often a narrative of self (the representation of being in policy and practice) is hidden or inferred and frequently the interrelated ontological assumption (the primordial belief of who we are) is not considered or questioned at all by policy makers and practitioners. It is here that lies the problem, or at very least the potential for a very different object of focus. This thesis seeks to situate this different object of focus in three ways.

Firstly, by uncovering certain (hidden) ontological hegemonies in education, introducing a theological counter-ontological account and hypothetically applying this different narrative to policy, practice and dialogue.

Secondly, by encouraging staff to research and reflect upon narratives of self and explore how the application of counter-narratives might improve the wellbeing of the students and staff at school.

Thirdly, by stirring policy makers and researchers to seek the possibilities of reform by beginning with the question of who we are.

0.2. An initial teaching experience: or lack thereof

I have been a Head of Department in the state sector since 2003. Throughout these years, I cannot recall any strategic conversation, CPD session (continual professional development), meeting or directed time in which the question of self has been at the forefront. Albeit only an anecdotal observation it has also been my experience that this question is not one that is discussed much within the teaching profession in less formal settings either. This can partly be explained by a complete lack of clarification, definition or instruction to explore the

question of self in Ofsted's directives, by a general lack of desire or time to explore the notion in school and also perhaps by the false assumption of ontological neutrality. This silence and reticence is peculiar and concerning however because the goal and purpose of education will always be underscored by a narrative that with closer inspection will betray certain ontological prejudices; an assumed and often unchallenged predilection about what it means to be human (quite possibly without any awareness of this oversight). Whilst in education generally there is quite clearly a continual drive to 'improve' and 'achieve', and presumably this entails a conceived purpose, at the same time we have become completely mute on the ontological question and that should strike us as alarming (Radcliffe, 2005, p. 140).

0.3. The hypotheses, research questions and intended audiences

This thesis can best be understood as the testing of hypotheses. These hypotheses are motivated by a combination of experience and academic persuasion; my teaching experience and engagement with theology. Through testing these hypotheses, a critical response is invited to both a broad conviction – that we need to ask "who are we?" – and to a narrow instance – a theological analysis of the experiences of participants at a particular school and Ofsted documentation. The reason and method for this testing will be explained more fully in chapter four. It is necessary now however to clarify these hypotheses, the proceeding research questions and the intended audiences.

0.3.1. The hypotheses

The question of 'who we are' should not and cannot be ignored in education. Narratives of self unavoidably permeate school culture whether they are hidden or transparent. These ontological hegemonies are embedded in policy making documents such as Ofsted's Framework for School Inspection 2014 and 2015 (Framework) and the School Inspection Handbook (SIH), are lived out daily in

the curriculum and subsequently affect the wellbeing of those in the frontline (staff, students and parents). These notions of self are not neutral or default but are always contingent[1].

It is possible however for staff, policy makers and academics to engage in ontological research; that is to say an exploration into and recognition of the substantive primordial level of being that is assumed in education (often only implicitly). Through discussion and re-imagination, radically different educational hinterlands could be developed as predicated upon the centrality of the question of self. Such a venture would depend upon a shared commitment to explore narratives of self, to uncover current (hidden) narratives and to apply opposing counter-narratives to pedagogy.

The Christian theologies of the contemplative tradition and Radical Orthodoxy have the potential to enrich this conversation if presented in a rational, peaceful and dialogical spirit. The contemplative tradition has its heart in silence, prayer and the peaceful transfiguration of person and community, RO is a rigorous and intellectually stimulating school of thought whose genealogical thesis of modernity is innovative, broad and controversial. A fuller account of both is provided in chapter two but in short they provide an explanation for current normative ontological values discovered through research and offer a distinctive counter-narrative of self. Such theological wisdom has the potential to offer unique transformative ideas germane to policy, practice and dialogue and thus to improve the wellbeing of those in the frontline[2]. That RO and the contemplative tradition are distinct, should not be read to mean that they are incompatible. On the contrary, for both RO and the contemplatives, theology proper begins and ends in prayerful silence and transforms praxis.

---

[1] Having a beginning and an end and dependent/conditional upon a myriad of historical factors.

[2] Such a re-evaluation of culture as grounded upon reformed narratives of self are considered to be relevant not only to education, but to many areas of public life including perhaps health care, the prison system and business.

0.3.2. The research questions

The four research questions below were written as means to test these hypotheses in a more precise and methodical practice; a way of realising the aims and values of this thesis.

1. Is there any evidence of a (hidden) narrative of self within Ofsted documentation and within a particular school and what are the effects of this narrative upon the wellbeing of those in the frontline?

2. Can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy help to explain any (hidden) narratives of self in Ofsted documentation and within a particular school?

3. Can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy justify its public relevance as interlocutor in educational dialogue and in what spirit should it participate in any such educational dialogue?

4. What might action research look like in the school of the participants and can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy offer any insights stemming from a counter-narrative of self that might enrich this study?

The testing of the hypotheses through the research questions founded the basis of the research.

0.3.3. The intended audiences

In its completion, this thesis is submitted so that it might be tested/judged by different interested and relevant parties. This includes three intended audiences

who will be referred to explicitly in my writing due to their obvious contributions to this thesis. A fourth group of miscellaneous audiences will also be named here as an example of those who might also potentially find something of worth to evaluate.

The first intended audience is the school of the participants. I am very grateful to the school for allowing me to interview a selection of participants and hope that their words will be the inspiration for further reflection and analysis. Chapter eight is an outline for action research that might be adopted as a means to positively transforms policy, classroom practice and dialogue should the school wish to pursue this line of thinking.

The second intended audience is Ofsted as policy maker. The language of selective terminology taken from Ofsted documentation has been carefully interpreted and narratives of self extracted from this reading. This interpretative account has been analysed together with the words of the participants. An intention of this thesis is to situate this specific case study as a part of a more universal concern and it is imagined therefore that Ofsted would deem this wholly relevant to their own reflections. The reader should note that the term 'case' refers here to the obtaining and analysis of participant data at a specific time and place to test a phenomenon/hypothesis; namely, that ontological hegemonies are embedded in policy making documents, are lived out daily in the curriculum and subsequently affect the wellbeing of those in the frontline (staff, students and parents).

The third intended audience is the pedagogical expert. If the expert is convinced by the hypotheses then the ramifications for research, policy and practice are marked. If the expert is not convinced that narratives of self are unavoidable or that my writing allows them too much prominence, then this too would make for a welcome critique. The pedagogical expert, as inclined towards evaluation and transformation within education, might thereby measure this thesis within their own academic endeavours. That this research is placed in the context of Performativity, Lesson Study, the thinking of Lawrence Stenhouse and the wisdom of selective theology should substantiate its academic rationale and

interest. It is also situated in the company of those studies that have designed to uncover (hidden) hegemonies of one kind or another in education (see below) and this too might be of interest to the pedagogical expert.

That three audiences have been identified should not negate the fundamental claim that narratives of self are essentially impossible to bypass in public service more widely. These may include for example health care providers, prison services, political institutions and businesses. The broad stroke of this thesis therefore widens the scope of appeal to any expert, policy maker or researcher interested in the deep and profound marriage between our notions of ontos and telos and the effect of these narratives upon people's wellbeing. Other potentially interested readers might also include the religious, non-academics, parents, other school leaders and perhaps most especially the participants who took the time to be interviewed.

0.4. Acknowledging the decline of the status of theology

Three of the research questions listed above encompass theological reasoning. They include an attempt to explain current narratives of self in education, the offering of a counter-narrative and an investigation into a favourable spirit for theological analysis. Significantly, theology is also charged in this thesis with justifying its public relevance as interlocutor. There is a sound reason for taking the time to include this justification because evidently there has been a huge change over the past few hundred years in regards to the credibility and perceived relevance of theology in the public and academic domain. David Bentley-Hart writing with idiosyncratic verve expresses the matter in this necessarily extended quote taken from an article written for the online site 'FirstThings' in 2006:

'The long, inglorious, forced retreat of religious reasoning from the commanding heights of civic and legal culture has certainly been hastened by the displacement of theology from the centre of the modern university's curriculum. Once, in an

age now rapidly receding into legend, theology enjoyed the status not merely of a science but of the "queen of the sciences,"… Now, though, her estate is much diminished. In most private institutions of higher learning, she may be tolerated, but she is rarely invited to dine at the high table, and is not encouraged to show herself when company comes to call'.

Bentley-Hart goes on to describe in ironic voice the common contemporary perception of religion as 'personal conviction, irrational, saccharine sentiment, childish, vague, vacuous, zealous, private, tribal and arbitrary' (2006). None of this will come as any surprise to those who have encountered the popular literature of the 'New Atheists' (Dennett, Hitchens, Dawkins et al). Dawkins for instance stated bluntly that faith is, 'evil precisely because it requires no justification, and brooks no argument' (2006, p. 308) and Dennett seemingly relegates religion to a basic belief comparable to belief in fairies in his book 'Breaking the Spell' (2006).

Writing for a different reason, Rowan Williams, who was then Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote about the inescapable failure of any archbishop who might commentate on public matters. If the work were too biblical, he wrote, then the comment would be seen as irrelevant. If it were too secular then the complaint would be that he lack expertise. Should the work be too academic and the language deemed esoteric then it would be incomprehensible and if it were considered too exclusive (sex, family) then the writing would be thought of as lacking moral depth. Should the topic be thought too broad (education?) then an exploration might be thought of as extraneous. Either way, warns Williams cautiously, the commentary would be doomed to failure in the eyes of most (2012, p. 1).

There are two very clear examples relevant to my own experience as a student and as a teacher that illustrate the ever-declining weight of theological thought. Firstly, the University that kindly accepted and supported this study nevertheless does not have a theology department. Secondly, Religious Education or Religious Philosophy and Ethics is not considered by the contemporary government to be a relevant enough faculty to be included in the GCSE English

Baccalaureate (EBacc) – the government wishing 90% of pupils to be completing this EBacc by 2025. It is not a surprise therefore that numbers taking the GCSE are falling.

Perhaps therefore a word of caution is afforded the writer whose research into contemporary education involves a theological analysis. This is exactly why the inclusion of theology must first be vindicated and in testing the hypotheses to proffer theology as a highly demanding and rational discipline. It is also with Williams to hope that the writing here is interesting enough for someone to evidence the faults and work out a better response (2012, p. 1).

My intention is not to enter the debate about to what degree the University should accommodate theology or theology the University. Nor is it to evaluate the claims of Hart or Williams. Nor is it now to explore the legitimacy of a 'rational' theological voice in the public square - although this analysis will be advanced in chapters two and three. It is really only to state what appears to be obvious. There has been a consistent waning in the influence of theology in Universities and a rebuttal of theology as rational academic faculty. Furthermore, there has also been a change in influence of theology in the public square so much so that an Archbishop of Canterbury felt it necessary to write a book on justifying theological integrity (Williams, 2012).

The salient point to be made here in the simplest way possible is that theology, for good or for ill, is not considered as vital or relevant as it once was in public matters or academia. I accept fully here the extremely vague nature of this comment, deliberately recoil from assessing the often subtle relationship between religion and state and recognise the historical complexity behind these fundamental changes that are not even mentioned here in passing. The scope of this thesis is necessarily less ambitious. However to conclude that theological reasoning 'is rarely invited to dine at the high table' is not one that is overly controversial but it is a premise central to this thesis. The aim is that this thesis might map a fecund path for potential educational reform founded upon a theologically inspired ontological reading having simultaneously made the case for the relevance of theology as rational interlocutor in the public square.

0.5. The broader academic context: hidden hegemonies in education[1]

It will be clear from the hypotheses that this thesis is interested in narratives of self and in part the uncovering of (hidden) ontological hegemonies in documentation and experience. As such, it is contextualised within a far wider academic desire to unearth what is not always obvious in education. The intention now is to introduce a number of academic studies that have sought to uncover a variety of (hidden) hegemonies in education. These studies span different decades, are deliberately introduced in a fleeting manner and are not always subject to the UK. The point is not to detail them, engage with them directly or to critique them but to bring to the fore these historical investigations as examples of educational research that seek to expose hidden prejudice. In so doing, it is to justify this thesis. In other words, the case for investigating a (hidden) ontological hegemony in education is one that is inspired by other academics who have aimed to uncover the unobvious or veiled realities of educational policy, practice and dialogue. These studies have the further advantage of demonstrating the myth of linguistic neutrality - a theme that is extremely relevant to this thesis.

There have been a number of papers on the hidden curriculum in education. For instance Jackson (1968) wrote on the particulars of virtue and character buried within the curriculum, Dreeben (1967) on the disaffirmation of personal identity and acceptance of ruling principles, Vallance (1973) on the more social and cultural consequences of school life and Martin (1976) exposed amongst other findings the teacher's embedded and prejudiced vernacular.

More specifically the ethnocentric curriculum has also been investigated. Tryona and Williams (1986) wished to expose a priority to white culture in UK schools. This claim was buoyed by papers such as that written by David (1993)

[1] By hidden hegemony, I am suggesting a particular power or dominating philosophy that is not made explicit.

on the national curriculum's negation of non-European language and literature, Ball's (1994) study of History text books that appeared to situate England as a powerful empire and Coard's (2005) thesis on how the curriculum might explain the underachievement of minorities.

The hidden issue of ethnicity was highlighted in American schools by Bereiter and Engelmann (1968) who argued that the language used by low-income black students hindered their academic performance and by Lawrence (1982) who argued that black pupils fail because of racism. Eighteen years later Gillborn and Youdell (2000) contended that teachers were quicker to discipline black pupils than white pupils that led to a spiral of poor performance and Wright (1992) stressed that the ethno-centric views of teachers who upheld British culture also isolated Asian students and particularly Asian girls.

Further evidence of hidden attitude was unearthed in the field of gender. Francis (2001) posited the thesis that teachers have lower expectations of boys than girls that built upon the findings of Swann and Graddol (1994) who expressed concern that teachers interact with girls more positively than with boys. It was not only teachers' attitudes towards gender that eventuated in differentiated performance however but also on social class according to Cicourel and Kituse (1963), Hyman (1967) Feinstein (1998) and Reay (2017). Similarly, cultural deprivation accounted for lower performance in school for Douglas (1964) and material deprivation had the same result for Howard (2001) and Tanner (2003).

The research into hidden hegemonies and attitudes in education is evidently vast and the importance of these historical investigations is obvious. These particular papers have been identified because the question of self lies often implicitly and sometimes explicitly in these studies regardless of whether they are concerned with gender, ethnicity, class or economic advantage. Such (hidden) ontological hegemonies of course are not always obvious and thus require a directed process to uncover them.

My own concern is with Ofsted's (hidden) ontological parlance and narrative of self and the school experiences of the participants included in this research (four

students, five teachers and one parent). This research is therefore vindicated in the shadow and breadth of historic academic theses that have sought to explore hidden hegemonies in education. This thesis differs in its specific venture: ontological reasoning and the narrative of self. This is because whether acknowledged or not, whether by design or neglect, a story of self will always be active within educational reform and our reluctance to discuss the question of self will transpire in confusion, indifference or apathy. Arguably, it is this indifference or confusion that has allowed the strongest principalities[1] of contemporary thought to imbed questionable ontological values in educational pedagogy – narratives of self that necessarily affect the wellbeing of staff and students - and this is exactly why a study such as this is necessary.

0.6. An outline of chapters

Within chapter one, a selection of papers that challenge the culture of 'performativity'[2] in education is introduced. The purpose is to situate this thesis in the context of the action research already published in regards to performativity and to indicate how a study centred upon narratives of self might develop the valuable insights that these authors make. During the second part, a small selection of key terminology used by Ofsted is extracted and interpreted. The purpose is to identify a (hidden) narrative of self.

In the final analysis, what was unearthed was both a perceived *neutrality* of self and what was termed the *atomistic economic* self. Broadly speaking, *atomistic* suggests a self-created, self-regulated, individualised agent who possesses independent will and volition. The word *economic* suggests a self whose telos is bound to employability, competition, data, measurable results and production. The notion of the *atomistic economic* self is clearly complex however and its

---

[1] Or (hidden) hegemonies.

[2] The culture of performativity was coined by Stephen Ball to describe the obsession in schools with data, measures of performance, testing, grades etc (see section 1.1. for a more comprehensive account).

meaning will be developed throughout this thesis through reference to educational and theological insights. Significantly, the reader should note that the identification of this narrative in Ofsted's vernacular occurred concurrently with an analysis of the words of the participants. Marking the *atomistic economic* self was thus the process of two distinct methods; interpreting documentation and analysing participant transcripts.

Within chapter two, a review of the ontological parlance of RO and the contemplative tradition is made. From this reading, a counter-ontological narrative labelled the *complex relational* self is advanced. The self is said to be *complex* because ultimately the person is not fully knowable; the self is formed through a myriad of different convoluted causes including the social, psychological and experiential. The self is *relational* because for the people of the Christian contemplative tradition, persons are bound by relationship, held within relationship and born for relationship; with God, self and other. In future chapters, this theological narrative of self is developed and positioned as a competing notion to the *atomistic economic* self. Secondly, a selected reading of RO's genealogical thesis[1] is introduced to account for the advent of Ofsted's perceived *neutrality* and *atomistic economic* self. Finally, the decline and privatisation[2] of theological ontological integrity in the public square is examined and challenged via the RO lens.

Chapter three is concerned with the public place and spirit of theological ontological reason and more exactly as interlocutor in educational reform. Selected philosophical and theological critiques of RO are first outlined. The purpose is to highlight both the depth and profundity of the RO thesis particularly and theology more broadly, whilst also pointing towards certain shortcomings. The spirit of theology is then re-considered through a reading of the contemplative tradition and four modern theologians. It is argued that these

---

[1] 'Genealogical thesis' refers to the arguments brokered by RO as founded upon their reading of historical events. Put differently, RO are concerned with reading modern axioms and values as determined by the past.

[2] 'Privatisation' in this context means that religious thought and theology is considered to be a private lifestyle choice. As such, it should hold no influence and should be granted no time within public dialogue.

thinkers successfully endorse theology as rational, non-violent[1], dialogical and worthy in this spirit of a public voice.

The aim of chapter four is two-fold. Firstly, it is to justify the use of case study research in action research and to vindicate the case study as a method that strategically addresses several hypotheses introduced in section 0.3.1.[2]. Secondly, it is to outline the specific processes of the research and to explain briefly how the case study instance led to three primary themes being extracted from the participant data[3].

Chapters five and six are based upon the participant interviews.

Within chapter five, the participants will be shown to share the narrative of the *complex* self and the conviction that further ontological investigations are worth pursuing in school. These interviews also pertain to further evidence of Ofsted's (hidden) narrative of self – the *economic* self. Key themes drawn from the participant interviews are then analysed via RO's critique of economic life. The aim of this analysis is to substantiate and develop a more nuanced notion of the *economic* self and to allow the participants to speak their concerns and anxieties in the light of an academic theological analysis.

Within chapter six, the marriage between narratives of self and wellbeing is made clear. Here the connection between Ofsted's ontological assumptions and the negative effects upon teacher and student wellbeing is disclosed. Next, the *complex relational* self of the contemplatives challenges the contemporary

---

[1] By 'non-violent' I mean to suggest that theology is not written in an attempt to win the argument at all costs but is written in a spirit of friendship in difference and dialogical offering.
[2] More specifically 'Narratives of self unavoidably permeate school culture whether they are hidden or transparent. These ontological hegemonies are embedded in policy making documents (Ofsted's Frameworks and School Inspection Handbook), are lived out daily in the curriculum and subsequently affect the wellbeing of those in the frontline (staff, students and parents). It is possible however for staff, policy makers and academics to engage in ontological research. The Christian theologies of the contemplative tradition and Radical Orthodoxy have the potential to enrich this conversation if presented in a rational, peaceful and dialogical spirit'.
[3] i) There was a common participant desire to explore the complex self.
ii) There was a common participant awareness of a dominant atomistic economic narrative.
iii) There was a shared participant concern that the atomistic economic narrative was detrimental to wellbeing.

adoption of the *atomistic economic* self. This is cemented through a speculative application of this narrative to pedagogy and suggests that theologically inspired designs can deepen the possibility for long-term educational reform.

Moving from the participants to Ofsted, chapter seven begins by drawing upon RO's genealogical thesis with the principle purpose of examining the lack of ontological transparency in Ofsted's documents. The second goal is to imagine further possible transformations to elements of school culture by applying the theological *complex relational* counter-narrative of self over and against Ofsted's *atomistic economic* preference. During the final part of this chapter, a contemplative insight is identified as a means to encourage the risks of radical pedagogical changes so far proposed. It is to entertain the idea that a particular wisdom unique to the contemplatives might embolden the leadership team to consider and partake in action school research.

Chapter eight outlines this suggestion for action research. It is a proposition for a programme called "The Study of Self and Purpose" (SSP). It is a proposal through which the school of the participants might choose to explore and transform the ontological dynamics that infuse its culture. It is recommended that these transformations can best be achieved by reflecting first upon the language of Ofsted and the words of the participants before exploring and applying counter-narratives of self to policy, practice and dialogue. The conviction that a theological vision might help to deepen this conversation is also addressed. That SSP is supported by referring to certain values held by Lawrence Stenhouse and developed by utilising various methods adopted by Lesson Study[1] will also be explained.

It should be noted that the purpose and methods of chapters one to seven mirror the programme of SSP; the awareness and uncovering of Ofsted's ontological language, the explorations of participant reason and the subsequent theological

[1] In particular, the notion of teacher led research in local schools. A fuller explanation is offered during chapters four and eight.

analysis. Put differently, SSP is concerned with staff attentiveness to ontological narratives (our elemental beliefs about who we are), the unearthing of current hegemonies (the ontological assumptions and narratives of self that are adopted in pedagogy), an investigation into counter-ontologies and counter-narratives and the application of these to policy, practice and dialogue as a means to transform wellbeing in the school of the participants.

Chapter nine will broach some brief conclusions in response to the original hypotheses and its subsequent testing. The claim that the investigation into our fundamental ontological imaginings and the narratives of self that we express is an unavoidable pursuit in educational awareness will be restated. That this pursuit is an enriching way by which to reform the curriculum and improve wellbeing will also be upheld. The limits of this thesis will also be acknowledged.

It will be obvious by now that the research questions and the hypotheses do not and cannot be separated into specific chapters – this is unavoidable. However, it will be clear in the introduction of each chapter how these will be met with reference to a particular object of study.

0.7. Concluding remarks

This thesis begins with the premise of an unbreakable marriage between ontos and telos. It is founded upon the claim that our narratives of self – that can never be neutral - will always saturate policy, practice and dialogue but that discussion and transparency is worryingly missing in education. It is inspired by a plethora of historical studies that have investigated the reality of hidden hegemonies within education, for if there are hidden curriculums and agendas then there must surely be hidden ontological suppositions. It is motivated by the deep well of Christian theological reflection that is thought wholly rational, relevant, and potentially enlightening for the re-thinking of educational policy – especially when written in a particular non-violent spirit. It is driven by a desire to design an initiative for action research in the school of the participants as grounded upon our counter-narratives of self.

The hope finally is that Ofsted as policy maker, the pedagogical expert, the school of the participants and other readers will find enough within this thesis to be persuaded to ask once more the question that cannot and will not relinquish its ubiquitous grip whether we acknowledge its presence or not… “Who are we?”

Chapter One

The culture of performativity and Ofsted's vernacular

1.0. Introduction

There are many papers in educational literature that challenges the contemporary culture of 'performativity' in education. This chapter does not have as an aim an exact comprehensive diagnostic of performativity but will only skim the surface of several papers that do challenge this culture. Indeed, a (perhaps overly) simplistic definition of performativity is considered sufficient: an education system that is obsessed by grades, targets, measurements and accountability (paraphrased from Ball, 2003). The purpose of the review is firstly to suggest where some of the conclusions of those who have critiqued the culture of performativity are shared. It is also more vitally to develop several of the author's conclusions by clarifying where the employment of a more specific, explicit and necessary ontological reference is paramount to school reform, i.e. addressing some of the issues related to the future of action research. This addresses research question 4: What might action research look like in the school of the participants and can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy offer any insights stemming from a counter-narrative of self that might enrich this study?

In the previous chapter, a brief selection of historical studies that sought to uncover various (hidden) hegemonies in education was introduced. With these hegemony studies firmly in mind, the second aim of this chapter is to uncover/interpret the (hidden) ontological and teleological narratives of Ofsted's Frameworks for School Improvement[1] (Framework 2014 or 2015) and the

[1] *The Framework* sets out the statutory basis for school inspection conducted under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

School Inspection Handbook of 2014 (SIH)[1]. This addresses research question 1: Is there any evidence of a (hidden) narrative of self within Ofsted documentation and within a particular school and what are the effects of this narrative upon the wellbeing of those in the frontline? These documents will be very familiar to school leaders and are arguably the determining force behind the school's own ontological prejudice.

To be clear, this is a selective review of Ofsted's key terminology and that such a review necessitates an investigation into and clarification of the meaning of particular words. This is a crucial step in highlighting the unavoidability of teleological and ontological prejudice in documentation (a prejudice that will affect the wellbeing of those on the front line – see the participant responses in chapters five and six). That no other academic interpretations of this language with respect to notions of self and purpose was obviously available, meant that is was not possible to cite from any similar linguistic investigations. As such, this examination of language should be read as necessary but tentative and provisional.

In short, the aim of this chapter is to indicate where the ontological question has only been inferred or is missing in Ofsted documentation and where action research could be developed by centring the ontological concern. This exploration is warranted as a means to identify both a root of the problem of performativity articulated by the authors and to signal why a reflection upon narratives of self might mark a suitable method for long-term educational transformation going forward.

[1] Although these documents are taken from 2014/15, the reader should be reassured that more recent documents do not differ significantly and that any following reviews and/or analyses are therefore wholly relevant to the testing of hypotheses within this thesis.

1.1. Situating this thesis in academic research: cultures of performativity

The culture of performativity in contemporary educational philosophy and practice has met with much criticism (Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2009; Jeffrey 2002). The criticisms include the damage to teacher identity following the harmful adoption of excessive measurements and market ideology in school. The purpose here is both to provisionally agree with these conclusions but also to explain what I think is often missing in this academic analysis - as it is from educational policy, practice and dialogue more broadly – the absolute unavoidable centrality and profundity of our ontological reflections and why, therefore, our narratives of self might helpfully develop future research and reform.

Making a case for his claim that the educational institution has been colonised by market ideology, Ball (2003) quotes Polanyi suggesting, 'instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system' (Polanyi, 2001, p. 60). This, suggests Ball, results in a culture of 'opacity' rather than 'transparency' (2003, p. 226). Ball continues that within these cultures of performativity, practitioners - what he calls the 'enterprising self' - have necessarily had to respond to particular goals whilst setting aside personal beliefs (2003, p. 215). Ball continues later in the paper by drawing attention to the ramifications of teachers setting aside personal beliefs by demonstrating the loss of identity amongst the teaching profession who suffer within this economic framework. He recognises too the anxiety caused where 'social relations are embedded in the economic system'; an anxiety fed by always having to improve and do as much as others (2003, p. 220).

Significantly, Ball highlights here the unbreakable link between the ontological question (the enterprising self) and the teleological concern (responding to targets) that was first made in the introduction (section 0.1.). What is germane is not only Ball's implicit identification of the inexorable connection between self and purpose in cultures of performativity but also the profound ramifications to

wellbeing including the identity crisis and anxiety felt within the teaching profession.

One of the aims of this thesis is to examine and open the opacity that Ball identifies. The wish therefore is to develop Ball's thesis by reviewing Ofsted's Frameworks and SIH because it is arguably here, in the language of these documents, that the narratives of self that feed school direction causes the anxiety and loss of identity felt by staff. Put differently, the damage to staff wellbeing as identified by Ball might be partially explained by uncovering what is hidden in the ontological language used by Ofsted. In this way, Ball's resolve to move from opacity to transparency will be supported by positing the central problem as the (hidden) narrative of self – the (hidden) hegemony - that underscores Ofsted's language, determines cultures of performativity and manifests in teacher disquiet.

Moreover, in chapter eight, it will be proposed that teacher-led ontological reflections (explorations into what it means to be human) might act as the transformative means to change school policy, practice and dialogue. This is to suggest that an answer to Ball's concerns – the identity crisis of teachers, ontological insecurity and the economic hegemony - can be met through the empowering of teachers to reflect upon their own concepts of self and then to apply these reflections to day-to-day pedagogy.

For other scholars (Biesta, 2009; Jeffrey, 2002), it is the devised purpose of education that engenders most concern and is deserving of greatest consideration when fostering measures for reforming performativity. Biesta for instance points towards a drastic increase in the interest of the measurable within education making reference to international comparisons studies, league tables, performance related systems and a generally competitive ethos. He submits that such findings are used by governments to reform educational policy, relativise school performance and create cultures of blame and shame (2009). Biesta suggests a move away from asking questions about instrumental values (effectiveness) towards ultimate values lest 'we end up valuing what is measured, rather than that we engage in measurement of what we value' (2009, p. 43).

Biesta warns that if we do not ask the questions about ultimate purpose, if we do not explicitly determine what it is that constitutes ultimate values and good education then we can expect data, league tables and statistics to make that decision for us in a culture of performativity. He therefore demands of educationists that the teleological concern remains central (2009, p. 44). In her 2009 paper, Chua agrees with Biesta's assessment arguing that non-performative goals could and should be aspired to in education rather than stifling these ends under performance indicators (2009, p. 166).

Whilst there is much to agree with here, it is also reasonable to argue that the teleological cannot ever be divorced from the ontological (section 0.1.). On the contrary, the sense of our ultimate purpose and value cannot be told without stories of who we are. Thus, when we do engage in measurements of what we value as Biesta advances, we do so only through an ontological lens that is already saturated in supposition and belief. This is another reason for my insistence on dealing explicitly and regularly with our very narratives of self in education not only in a broadly academic approach, but also on ground level, with the staff who will best shape and reform policy, practice and dialogue.

Jeffrey (2002) is another scholar who has challenged the performativity culture. Jeffrey's position is distinct as he analyses the effects of Ofsted's inspections on Primary School teachers. The experiences are notably negative and Jeffrey argues that this has usurped more personal and familiar relationships with the inspectors (2002, p. 4). He also notes the gulf that has been created between pupils and teachers as a result of a dependency culture underpinned by such performativity. As a way of coping with these strained relationships, Jeffrey notes that teachers have developed a variety of strategies. These include the deliberate distancing or lack of engagement with Ofsted and/or the reinvention of professional identity (2002, p. 23). For Jeffrey, a place to begin a more positive process of reform is by researching how teachers might best deal with the performativity culture endorsed by Ofsted. Jeffrey makes no mention of the language used by Ofsted to determine school vision and so does not explain how such language might lead to these raptures in relationship. His prerogative is one

of explaining the outcomes of Ofsted inspections and discovering how teachers might successfully cope with the culture that Ofsted determine.

Jeffery thus directs his attention towards Ofsted, the culture of performativity and the effects upon the lives of teachers. Where this study wishes to develop his research is by positing a different cure to the problem than the one he identifies; that of staff reflection and staff empowerment in which the question of self drives the initiative. This signals a move away from a culture of strained response, towards a culture of ontological imagination and enablement.

Thompson (2010) is an academic whose work on performativity has chartered ontological suppositions and hegemonies. Thompson's investigation considered how pupils understand the term 'good pupil'. For Thompson, the current education system finally portends towards a restrictive idea of the good pupil (2010, pp. 413-414). This is a system that encourages pupils to accept only limiting notions of what it means to be good. Thompson's research unearthed six normative understandings of what it means for a pupil to be good: docile and disciplined, pastoral, bureaucratic, gendered, conflictual and the pupil affiliated to their school (2010, pp. 428-429). Thompson remarks too that this language determines how pupils evaluate and locate themselves. He therefore illustrates again the unbreakable marriage between ontos and telos suggested in the introduction and substantiates the importance of language in our perceptions of self and purpose. Thompson's recommendation for challenging this limited and hierarchal notional absorption is by assisting pupils in discovering new goals (telos) and new subjectivities (ontos).

Whilst the motivation for this research and the potential to change policy because of such study is commendable, this thesis will differ in a subtle but significant way from Thompson's own aims with the focus not on the teleological 'role' of pupil/self but on the question of who we are (the sui generis of self). This position thus builds upon his conclusions in two significant ways. The first is that the starting point will not be what it means to be a 'good pupil' but what it means to be 'human'. This starting point is influenced by the theological writings of Williams who observes that if we are to become more humane (good)

then we first need to be clear what it means to be more human – the question of self (2018, p. vii). It is not therefore the only priority to examine role and purpose but more foundationally to examine our ontological beliefs and narratives of self. At any rate, if the argument stands that ontos and telos cannot be finally separated, then by implication the more exacting 'good pupil' will be bound up within, and stimulated because of, our concepts of self in the final analysis anyway. The significant point is that we might begin and sustain this exploration with what underpins all our thinking and conceiving of meaning – our deliberations of who we are.

The second point of departure or development has to do with the scope of Thompson's challenge. As well as challenging our pupils to re-imagine new goals of subjectivities, it is necessary too for staff to uncover the root of current hegemonies located in The Frameworks and their own local policy, practice and dialogue. This type of investigation is inspired by the work of Taylor whose Opus Magnus 'Sources of the Self' is an exercise of just this sort; uncovering historical narratives of self and their effects upon and within society (1989, pp. 25-27) and shifting the horizons of significance (1989, p. 27).

The same idea of empowering teachers to govern more in schools of performativity is supported by Burnard and White who seek to address the lack of power felt by teachers (2008, p. 677). For Burnard and White the answer lies in allowing teachers to re-shape education and as such to re-invigorate them (2008, p. 677). For these authors it is essential that the teachers work at the centre of educational reform rather than coping with the demands that another body may demand of them. By allowing teachers the potential to drive transformations, Burnard and White argue that that the teaching body will become re-energised and schools will become more dynamic.

In this spirit, and as a summary of where this thesis fits into educational research, three ways in which teachers (and academics) may be enabled to work at the centre of re-shaping education will be suggested. The first is to uncover the present ontological reality that determines practice. The second is to examine the ramifications of this reality to wellbeing. Finally, it is to engage staff in the

reconstitution of school policy, practice and dialogue via their own reflections on the ontological question – the primordial identification of what it means to be human.

There is clearly much in these research papers to build upon. Indeed, much of what is written in this study seeks to unearth, explain and challenge contemporary educational realities in cultures of performativity. Where this study differs markedly from the scholars is that reform might begin, and be sustained by, the narratives of self articulated by teachers, theologians and academics. In effect, this means offering counter ontological analyses (chapters five, six and seven), listening to the voices of staff and pupil (chapters five and six) and in the encouragement of iterative cycles of staff reflection and subsequent changes to praxis (chapter eight).

This also entails the uncovering of what ontological prejudice currently underlies Ofsted's documents and consequently to what initiates the narratives of self represented in practice and ethos in cultures of performativity. With this in mind, it is to Ofsted that we now turn.

1.2. A review of Ofsted's ontological vernacular: uncovering neutrality and the *atomistic economic* self

Ofsted are the body charged with assessing school performance. The directives that they issue therefore warrant particular attention from school leadership and often consequently define the direction of school culture and teaching and learning. It is Ofsted's Frameworks (2014 and 2015) and the SIH (2014) [1] that predominately provide this means for judgement and therefore the documents that often drive pedagogy and vision within school.

[1] It is worth noting that Ofsted have issued a revised Framework (2019). This does not make this particular review irrelevant. Not only have I chosen examples of language in this chapter that are equally applicable to this subsequent edition, but this review also operates as an example of the type of ontological examination that I think is necessary for any future analysis. Section 1.3. at the end of this chapter provides a more detailed summary with examples taken from The Framework (2019) to support this claim.

It is essential to note first that although these official documents refer to 'pupil' and 'the other', there is no comprehensive account or explanation as to what is actually meant by these loaded words (see for instance The Framework 2014, pp. 19-20). Seemingly, Ofsted are reticent to commit to an ontological foundation or state explicitly their suppositions of who we are. The aim of this section is to identify any falsely perceived neutrality of language and the reticence to commit to ontological transparency. It is also to identify the language of purpose discovered in Ofsted's provocative and informing language, for it is this language that will betray Ofsted's narrative of self. The reader is reminded that this conclusion is drawn from the supposition that telos and ontos cannot be rendered apart; that where we find a particular purpose so we will also find the same particularity in our narratives of self. Where we find human purpose, so we will also find what it means to be human.

As it transpires, the language of Ofsted is paradoxical: whilst at times assuming ontological and teleological *neutrality*, closer inspection to the reports demonstrates hidden *atomistic* and *economic* suppositions.

To re-cap, '*atomistic'* refers to a fragmented and individualised agent; an agent that is thought autonomous, independent and self-seeking. The theologian Lossky helpfully compared this atomised self (what he called the individual) with what he called the person. Simply put, a person is dependent upon and within a community of social and historical interactions and relationships. Lossky rejected absolutely the idealised concept of the isolated 'individual' or what has been coined here the '*atomistic'* self as illusory suggesting instead that the notion of 'person' described what it meant to be human (1974, p. 120). A similar notion of self can also be identified intermittently throughout Taylor's historical examinations in 'Sources of the Self' (1989) which articulate succinctly this misplaced sense of individualised autonomy and sovereignty (the *atomistic* self) (see for instance pp. 195-197).

The term 'economic' refers to a narrative that is bound up with measurable standards, data, accountability, targets, success/failure, achievement, league

tables, performance, performance related pay, employability etc. It is, in other words, predicated upon the work of the scholars above who critiqued the cultures of performativity (Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2009). The meaning of the *economic* self will be developed and enriched in chapter five through a reading of Radical Orthodoxy (RO) and the basics of economic life.

The '*atomistic economic'* is therefore a label devised through the coming together of insights from both theology and educational critique. It will be referred to many times during this thesis by accounting for its advent, developing its meaning, highlighting its relevance to educational pedagogy and comparing the ontological narrative to the theologically inspired *complex relational* self'[1]. The reader is also reminded that the unearthing of this narrative occurred concurrently with the analysis of participant data. The reading and discerning of Ofsted's documentation and the participant's transcripts that both alluded to the *atomistic economic* self occurred concomitantly.

There are many examples that could have been used to show the paradox of neutrality and (hidden) supposition but three examples will suffice here. Firstly, *tolerance* will be cited to illustrate Ofsted's false assumption of neutrality (section 1.2.1.). Secondly, *spirituality* and *morality* will be introduced as words that offer further insights into Ofsted's ontological and teleological neutrality whilst pointing perhaps too towards an *atomistic economic* narrative (section 1.2.2.). Finally, Ofsted's understanding of *achievement* will be unpacked to provide further evidence of the hidden *atomistic economic* hegemony (section 1.2.3.).

1.2.1. Tolerance: and why Ofsted's assumption of neutrality is misplaced

At the time of writing 'Tolerance' is one of the more recent additions to Ofsted's directives. It is considered to be one of the core British Values that Ofsted now

[1] The complex relational self will be explained in chapter … pp - .

look for during inspection (Framework, 2015, p. 40). Put simply, pupils and staff are encouraged to be tolerant of others within school. For Ofsted, it is one of the four cornerstones of what binds together a community[1] and its promotion is to help build this strong community. An outstanding pupil (self) will practice tolerance of the other for the good of the community (telos). The belief is that if pupils and staff tolerate one another then accordingly the school will be more resilient to undesirable behaviours and a stronger community developed. Leadership therefore have a responsibility – indeed a legal obligation now - to inspire tolerance (Framework, 2015, p. 47).

This is seldom thought of as controversial. However, a closer review of this term will demonstrate how tolerance assumes neutrality, whilst paradoxically being necessarily steeped in (hidden) hegemonies. Although The Framework (2015) does cite 'social development' and the 'cultural development of pupils' as the reason and outcome of tolerance (pp. 40-41) there is a failure still to explain the suppositions that must – as will be shown shortly - underpin tolerance. Tolerance, it seems, is a word that is falsely believed to be neutral or universally understood. As a consequence, any underpinning suppositions or hegemonies go unchallenged.

Tolerance of others is premised upon the reality that the other is knowable - for it is evidently impossible to be tolerant of what we do not know. Therefore, knowledge of the other must, by necessity, be assumed prior to tolerance[2]. Furthermore, this perceived knowledge of the other seemingly begets a right and an authority to discern and judge the other. In other words, the other must first be known, secondly understood and only then tolerated (or not). However, the prescient point is that the succession from knowledge to tolerance is expressed and determined here by those with power; the power to identify what behaviours, beliefs and values are to be tolerated and which are not; the power to discern what tolerance actually means in thought and praxis.

[1] The other three British Values are 'the rule of law', Individual Liberty' and 'democracy' (2015, p. 40).

[2] It will be shown in chapter six that for the contemplatives, sure knowledge of the complex self is impossible and if the complex self cannot be known with any specific clarity then subsequently the initial premise of knowability is highly spurious.

That power is embroiled in tolerance can be illustrated by considering the following hypothetical examples. A teacher tolerates and chooses to ignore the low-level disruption of a child because in her role she is granted the power to respond to the situation as she sees fit. The Head Teacher tolerates and chooses to overlook the annual underperformance of the RE department because she is assigned the power to make this judgment by the governors. Other times the power that lies behind tolerance is more subtle and founded upon the assumption of privileged knowledge. If we tolerate another's beliefs and values for instance then this might imply that we think that they are wrong but nonetheless we will tolerate their mistaken view. In short, it would be mistaken to think that tolerance can be severed from an assumption of privileged knowledge and that such knowledge is often bound with power. The philosophy of tolerance is founded, in other words, upon the perception of privileged knowledge affording the power to tolerate the other.

It is reasonable to conclude therefore that there is an untold narrative of self or hidden ontological hegemony that underscores tolerance. A small series of rhetorical questions will help to make this point. What should pupils and teachers be tolerant of? Should leadership ever tolerate the underperformance of a member of staff? Should we be teaching our pupils with religious convictions to tolerate atheism? Should pupils tolerate all different faiths and beliefs? Quite clearly, any answer to these questions cannot but betray a particular ontological/teleological prejudice by the person (perhaps the Ofsted inspector) who answers yes or no. Tolerance is simply not a neutral term. As such, we can concede that behind the veneer of this weighty word, Ofsted's own understanding must also be suffused in a particular (political) ontological/teleological agenda. In others words there is a less than obvious schema that determines not only the legal requirement for tolerance in schools but also signifies what it is that staff and pupils should and should not tolerate.

Three interim observations can thus be made in regards to Ofsted's legal requirement for tolerance in school; knowledge of the self/other is supposed but not made clear, the direction to practice tolerance is determined by a (hidden)

hegemony, and finally this same power also determines what is tolerated and what is not.

Consequently, it might be wise to attempt to uncover the hidden hegemony in this instance, to investigate what stands at the root of this word and to question its justification. Indeed, if a community cannot identify the prevalent power(s) that demands a philosophy of tolerance then it is vulnerable and confused; a confusion that might lead in the end to the practicing of vapid indifference rather than tolerance. If this is correct, then tolerance might in the final analysis become a laden concept that paradoxically empties itself of any meaningful substance being unable to promote any definitive praxis other than the unquestioned suppositions or axiomatic prejudices of the day. Ultimately, tolerance may then become little more than a soundbite in school leading not to the building and strengthening of community but to supercilious mimic and/or superficial doctrine.

Other than a bland and all-encompassing reference to 'tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and those without faith' (p. 42) – which is really to say everyone - there is nowhere else in The Framework (2014 or 2015) that points towards any more developed explanation. In the light of this we might be encouraged to ask sardonically whether these different beliefs also include tolerance towards belief in fascism, political extremism and misogyny or whether tolerance of those with different faiths include those who consider female mutilation a blessing. Similarly, it would be germane to ask whether we should tolerate those without faith who continue to violently discard all religious thought as infantile and meaningless. A person (the inspectorate) might answer 'no', but of course this only betrays again the lack of neutrality and a (hidden) hegemony bound into their intent.

There are no other examples of the proper use of tolerance other than by a moot link between tolerance and 'British Values' (pp. 40-42). Here Ofsted posit an unchallenged circular proposition in which tolerance is deemed necessary because it is a British Value because British Values seemingly and absolutely include the (neutral) notion of tolerance. So apart from the fact that an

outstanding pupil/staff will accept British Values including this vague concept of tolerance – perhaps the docile and disciplined pupil of Thompson's research? (2010, p. 429) - it is impossible to know more fully what Ofsted might finally be assessing during the inspection of tolerance. In consequence, an educationist might be left second-guessing the overarching ambiguous ontological perspective that will always be bound to this inspection. At the same time, any challenge to the philosophy of tolerance would seemingly be deemed un-British betraying again the weight of this less than neutral term.

Evidently and paradoxically, tolerance is not a neutral idea but is founded upon (often hidden) narratives. The point of this review is to show that despite the supposed neutrality of language an inference must always be assumed before any notion of tolerance is written into school policy or judged by the inspectorate. It is fair to conclude that a (hidden) hegemony is prevalent even where the language of tolerance is taken as neutral or thought to be obvious. This opacity demands that educationists be more aware of the meaning of language. Close attention to the words of the interviewees certainly indicate why language finally matters to wellbeing (see chapters five and six). For now, this thesis will turn to the concepts of spirituality and morality to provide further evidence of Ofsted's paradoxical and ambiguous vernacular.

1.2.2. Uncovering the paradox of Ofsted's language of self: spirituality and morality

It is clear that the language used of Ofsted is paradoxical. Even where the definition of key terms such as tolerance appears at first neutral, equally when the language is explored more fully there is evidence of supposition, unquestioned belief, and/or (hidden) hegemony. This suggests too that an ontological inference is also manifest yet confused. Spirituality and morality are two further examples of where this oversight is evidenced in the Framework (2014/15) although the words cultural and social could have equally been employed here. These words have been chosen in particular because quite

clearly there can be no spirituality or morality without first a person to be spiritual or moral – a story, in other words, of who we are.

Reference to The Framework (2014) does provide some provisional clarity as to how the word 'spiritual' is understood. Accordingly, it adds something to the picture of Ofsted's implicit and unwritten narrative of self. The directives for instance tellingly judge the spiritual as 'an ability' (p. 40). The verb 'ability' in this context refers to the doing of reflection but the unchallenged assumption that spirituality is bound to ability begs further questions especially in the light of an *atomistic economic* prejudice to be identified shortly through an analysis of the word 'achievement'. For instance, one might question whether the ability to 'do' spirituality is similar to any other ability in school that is learnt, targeted, measured, or compared with others. It might be wise to ask whether inspectors assess a pupil doing spirituality in a similar way to a pupil doing the subtraction of fractions for both judgements suggest an ability that can be measured.

The Framework further suggests that Ofsted's judgement will be made upon the 'willingness to reflect' (p. 40). Spiritual development is thus bracketed in with the need for an individual to be complicit. Arguably, willingness is perhaps a necessary aspect of spiritual development but controversially and rather strangely, the report also ties in such willingness with 'the promotion of fundamental British Values' (p. 41) suggesting that to develop spiritually an individual must be willing to reflect in a manner akin with (unquestioned) national values and agendas. Spirituality is rather confusingly confined to our British shores, which again raises sharply the question of who we really are for Ofsted.

The broader concern here is the epistemic root of this reduction of the spiritual to what could be deemed *atomistic economic*. This claim is made on the premise that spirituality for Ofsted is about ability and willingness, something that can be measured, something that an individual student can either do or not do. Spirituality is an individual achievement that can be compared with the efforts

and performance of others. It is also rather worryingly reduced to fundamental British Values, which again betrays a particular supposition. This is a concern that will be taken up in chapter two via RO's genealogical thesis of the modern. During this chapter, a theological reading of historical events will be made as an attempt to explain in part the advent of the *atomistic economic*.

The depiction of the spiritually developed self is developed further with the introduction of terms such as 'sense of', 'use of', 'interest in' and 'respect for' (p. 40) but there is no further clue as to whether Ofsted assume a deeper narrative of self that lurks beneath the shallow appearance of this tacitly outlined concept. Notably there is no reference at all to the transcendent or divine in the directives, betraying again a pre-conceived narrative of self that should be made explicit.

There are those who would argue perhaps that it is not possible or necessary for Ofsted to develop a more thorough exposition of spirituality than the one given. However, this argument is predicated upon the false assumption that the notional language that Ofsted employ is either self-evident, universally accepted and/or neutral, yet this is simply untrue as this review reveals. Moreover, the narratives of self that unavoidably determine any understanding (and measurement) of spirituality demand transparency through more careful exposition so that these public inspectorate judgements can be publically supported or challenged. To their credit, Ofsted do define the spiritual in a provisional way as evidenced above. However they simultaneously neglect to submit (perhaps entirely without awareness) the ontological foundation upon which their own meaning of spirituality is written. This is a concern especially when an *atomistic economic* nationalist narrative is inferred by reducing spirituality to an individual comparable ability and British Value.

The question of morality raises similar issues because there appears to be a supposition that the pupils and staff understand the moral and ergo know something foundational about the inferred narrative of self and the moral purpose

of self. Yet this supposition is spurious for as MacIntyre also demanded of his reader, which morality are we speaking of here (1990)? Closer reference to the Framework is clearly necessary again in order to ascertain a sharper definition of morality and implied ontological reality.

For instance, Ofsted demand the teachers' commitment to 'democratic values' which the Framework claims underpin 'moral development' (p. 40). Democratic values are once again thought synonymous with British Values (p. 41) and the circular unchallenged proposition is fixed; morality means democracy because democracy is a British Value and British Values should be adhered to. It should be noted that this moral proposition is written as a given and does not consider, say, a Neo-Platonist critique or any other political, theological or philosophical analysis or more nuanced challenge to democratic values.

There is also opacity regarding what is really meant in inspection by the judgement, 'the ability to recognise right from wrong' (p. 40), for it appears that right and wrong are deemed wholly self-evident neutral terms, needing no further explanation other than to 'respect the civil and criminal law of England' (p. 40). Yet if morality is simply the unchallenged law of the land then this clearly betrays a profound political depth of ontological and teleological leaning; a leaning that surely demands clarity and reason to support its inclusion especially, paradoxically, if democratic values are also to be adhered to. The challenge with Ball is to move from opacity to transparency. Educationists are entirely right to question the link between British Values, British Law and morality and how this has been developed over time. It is also to explore what moral frameworks have been negated in this assumption (Kantian, Utilitarian, Theological etc). Concurrently it is right to explore what has been supposed ontologically in the language of Ofsted and to gauge the power that lies behind such reasoning.

The following section takes up this challenge through the investigation into Ofsted's notion of achievement. Within the following section, references to the Framework (2014) will be made first before turning subsequently to the SIH. The SIH is the document providing instructions and guidance for inspectors conducting inspections. It sets out what inspectors must do and what schools can

expect. The SIH is often read in conjunction with the Framework by school leaders to determine school direction and is therefore equally as useful in a review of Ofsted's ontological inferences.

The claim will be made that an *atomistic economic* narrative grounds the language relating to the purpose of inspecting achievement and the language used of pupil/school achievement. The reader is reminded that the notion of the *atomistic economic* narrative will be justified further in chapters five and six through the participant interviews and the meaning of the *economic* self deepened via a theological analysis of economic life in chapter five. The following is therefore the beginning of this important identification.

1.2.3. Uncovering the ontological roots of 'achievement' in the Framework

The Framework (2014) is very clear about the most important aspect of teaching: 'the most important purpose of teaching is to raise pupil's achievement' (p. 18). This entails that teachers expect much achievement from their pupils (p. 18). The 'achievement of pupils at the school' is included as one of four key judgements to be made during inspection. Significantly, the argument advanced here is that to define 'achievement' (telos) requires a supposition of what it means to be a pupil (ontos) for without this supposition there could be no 'achievement of pupils'. This premise is absolutely central to the following review and the reader is pointed again to the argument broached in the introduction to this thesis that there will always be an unbreakable marriage between a narrative of self and educational purpose (section 0.1.). Wherever there is teleology, there also is an ontological adoption. The task is therefore to locate the purpose of achievement for Ofsted and simultaneously to uncover the narrative of self that lies beneath the surface.

The Framework outlines the purpose of inspecting a school's achievement in the following economic vernacular: to raise expectations by setting the standards of

performance (p. 4); to monitor performance (p. 5); to raise achievement/performance (p. 5); to establish a clear standard (p. 13); to make clear and transparent judgements based on sound evidence (p. 14), robust evidence (p. 24) and by using existing data (p. 14). Ofsted also stipulate that:

‘When judging achievement, inspectors have regard both for pupils’ progress and for their attainment. They take into account their starting points and age. Particular consideration is given to the progress that the lowest attaining pupils are making. When evaluating the achievement of pupils, inspectors consider how well: pupils make progress relative to their starting points… and the progress they have made since joining the school’ (p. 17).

The Framework similarly judges whether ‘gaps are narrowing between the performance of different groups of pupils, both in the school and in comparison to those of all pupils nationally’ (p. 18). Schools are advised that inspectors will ‘evaluate objectively… in line with frameworks, national standards or regulatory requirements’ (p. 24). All of which leads to a final judgement and grade: grade 1: outstanding, grade 2: good, grade 3: requires improvement, grade 4: inadequate’ (p. 15).

Within the inspectorate system described above, the advent of success and failure is measured by comparison with baseline average data. To be awarded ‘outstanding achievement’ is thus to exhibit a relatively high level of academic progress throughout the school in the majority of different faculties evidenced through transparent comparable measurable means. To be an ‘outstanding pupil’ is therefore to achieve a positive value added score based upon a monitored measurable standard. Better put, for a pupil’s achievement to be outstanding they must make progress (an *economic* measurement of comparable data*)* faster than other pupils of similar ability (an *atomistic* achievement). Similarly, for a school’s achievement to be outstanding, the school data must indicate progress that is favourable to a pupil’s starting point and in comparison with other schools. To achieve, for Ofsted, can therefore be interpreted as an individual’s (pupil/school) accomplishment of academic progress measured via a comparison with the grades achieved of other pupils or schools with similar ability or with a

particular starting point. To reach the level a pupil or school should be at thus entails the meeting of a measurable equation. The reason that a school achieves institutional success when Ofsted assess is because many individual pupils achieve this personal accomplishment compared with pupils from other schools where the final analysis is less favourable. Similarly, it means that many individual subjects or faculties achieve at a better rate than the national level. All of which is to support the thesis of Biesta and his allusion to instrumental values (2009, p. 35).

Of course, to define achievement via this gauge of relativity is consequently to necessitate the inevitability of another's failure to achieve. If progress is measured relative to the average then, by insinuation, the failure of others in other situations or schools is certain. Any system of achievement that measures data to demarcate between the failures and successes of schools and persons is a system of competition. It is this competitive nature of education that lies at the heart of performativity and economics as Ball suggests (2003). It is arguably one of the most important and controversial aspects of school inspection for Ofsted.

In summary, within the Framework an *atomistic economic* narrative grounds the language used of the purpose of inspecting achievement and the language used of pupil/school achievement. This claim is validated because the inspectorate set particular measurable standards, measure individual performance, monitor school accountability, compare the data with other schools and baseline data and encourage a competitive edge before making a numeric judgement. To judge the relative performance of one pupil/school against the performance of other pupils/schools and their baseline starting points is therefore economically driven and achieved through a monitored comparison of data and standard. It is significant to note too that the final purpose of achievement for pupils is also seemingly economic as will be demonstrated shortly in the review of the SIH because it is in this document that Ofsted point towards training and employability as the ultimate goal of achievement.

1.2.4. The School Inspection Handbook and achievement

Reference to economic data and data collection are copious in the SIH. For example, 'inspectors should use a range of data to judge a school's performance, including that found in RAISEonline, the school data dashboard and examination or key stage results' (p. 14). Further evidence of an economic bent include; the proportions of pupils making or exceeding expected progress comparative to national data, value added measures within the school and in comparison with national figures, measurable success rates, average points scores, evidence of gaps in attainment, aggregates performance for consecutive cohorts and progress that is measured from any given starting point (pp. 32-35).

A line has been drawn and a target set for every pupil/school relative to a perceived standard of performance upon which the pupil and the school is judged. Whether the judgement of achievement is made on an individual pupil basis, upon a year cohort or an entire school, the underpinning measurement is still one of comparable data and economic performativity. If, in other words, the comparison is between an expected grade and current performance or between one pupil with another, either way the *atomistic economic* bias is still prevalent because the judgement is made upon an individual's data, comparison of data and target completion or failure. Pupils, departments and schools are thus set up to out-compete other agents underlining the performativity thesis of Ball, Biesta and Chua.

It is possible to argue that for Ofsted 'achievement' refers simply to where a pupil stands in relation to standards of excellence that are intrinsic to the subject-matter rather than to where a pupil stands in relation to others in the economic market place. Such an argument might be supported by referring to Ofsted's means of assessment in which they refer to a pupil's '*starting point'*. Yet the argument would be misleading because this starting point too is finally only a relative measure of achievement equated to an individual's previous assessment performance and/or a comparison with the performance of others of similar

ability at a different particular point in time. Moreover, it is the very collation of every pupil's progress overall that establishes the national standard by which achievement is finally measured and judged regardless of any starting point.

Of significance to this thesis, the following conclusion can therefore be reasonably made. If an outstanding pupil/self is one whom achieves at a relatively greater degree of success than other pupils of similar ability then ontologically the self is first identified as a competing individual (*economic atomistic*) and then judged through measurement and comparison (*economic)*. The relationship between purpose and self has been made previously and the narrative of self and purpose in this instance pertain towards atomistic accountability, competitive comparison and economically driven measurement and judgement.

The review of SIH confirmed other instances of an *atomistic* and *economic* bent including locating the final purpose of achievement as training and employability, 'pupils, and particular groups of pupils, have excellent educational experiences at school and these ensure that they are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment' (p. 29). Note that there is no mention of any another telos of achievement here other than to training or employment[1] with the exception of further education which presumably manifests in more training or employment opportunities. Indeed a few pages later Ofsted repeat the message that achievement is tied to an economic ideal, 'they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment' (p. 35).

Teachers are also positioned within an *atomistic economic* narrative. In the following citation, individual (*atomistic*) accountability is written alongside (*economic*) monetary reward as Ofsted encourage 'a strong link between performance management and appraisal and salary progression' (p. 47). Governors too are charged with sustaining a culture of acute individual

[1] Alternatively, educational achievement could be described as the ability to entertain an idea without accepting it or in the understanding of learning as the shared exploration of the universe.

accountability for achievement through utilising measurable data, 'hold the headteacher and other senior leaders to account for improving the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement… including by using the data dashboard, other progress data, examination outcomes and test results' (p. 49).

That the Frameworks and SIH adopt an *atomistic economic* narrative with respect to the purpose of achievement should now be clear. Indicators such as performance measurement, comparable data, employability and competition are copious in these most important documents and betray therefore the *atomistic economic* self that is implied in Ofsted's vernacular.

In summary, this small review of Ofsted's documents has revealed that language such as tolerance and spiritual appears at first sight to assume neutrality. The purpose of everyday teaching and learning is thus written upon an invisible, barren and nebulous concept of self. If the documents do lack any deep story of 'who we are' – the assumption of neutrality - then this can only result in the teaching profession lacking transparency and clarity of Ofsted's suppositions. If no ultimate, indispensable or critical ontological account is visible, then the pupil, the very value upon which modern education (and tolerance/spiritual/moral) is founded, will become a term devoid of obvious weight; and if we consider that a supposedly weightless concept underpins any public judgement and interpretation then we might expect confusion and apathy in schools. If this is the case, then leaders and teachers must imagine an ontological meaning whether they are aware of this interpretative endeavour or not.

Moreover, it is reasonable to suggest that it is only as a result of this tacit weightlessness that the silent adoption of the *atomistic economic* narrative has ensued, for if leaders and teachers do not raise the ontological notions (hidden) in the Framework and SIH then only silent visions will feed our pedagogy. Yet it appears that this lack of conceptual lucidity mostly continues without any apparent call for clarity, re-thought or debate. This is bewildering if we assume that ontological neutrality is finally impossible and is especially disturbing where

the apparent silence and weightlessness actually points towards a pernicious understanding of 'pupil' – *atomistic economic* - as the reviews of achievement indicate and the participant interviews also allude to with respect to declining wellbeing.

If these underpinning *atomistic economic* values are damaging to mental and physical health as this research will suggest, then the need and risk to challenge this underlying notion of self is clearly necessary and urgent. This line of enquiry will be taken up more fully during this thesis when the participants are given their voice and this particular ontological hegemony is critiqued by RO and the contemplative tradition. If the essential study of self does continue to be negated in academia and in schools, then this should be the cause of some concern. Evidently, its exploration is not ostensibly encouraged which has resulted in this provisional attempt to interpret Ofsted's language. This thesis calls for a reversal of this stance and to inspire ontological reflections that could potentially lead to changes to pedagogy and consequently improve wellbeing.

Building upon the research into performativity of Ball, Biesta, Chua and Thompson, an *atomistic economic* narrative is clearly evident within the language of the Framework and SIH. As such, it is reasonable to conclude that an *atomistic economic* self is imagined too for it is assumed here that the language of ontos and telos cannot be divorced. This is highly significant for this conclusion builds upon the teleological concerns of the aforementioned scholars by stating explicitly that Ofsted adopt – whether they are aware of it or not - an *atomistic economic* narrative of self.

1.3. The Education Inspection Framework 2019

In 2019, Ofsted produced a new Framework that usurped the 2015 Framework. This brief section is written in anticipation of a criticism that this new

Framework might make the review of the 2015 addition redundant. On the contrary, having read the Framework (2019), and to be very clear: nothing in principle has changed. The original hypotheses, research questions and thesis are equally germane. For instance, the curriculum[1] will still be inspected without any explicit ontological transparency. This means once again that an inquiry into the vernacular is certainly warranted and any supposed ontological neutrality should be challenged. Furthermore, as the following examples demonstrate one can still uncover *atomistic economic* inferences that shimmer close to the surface of this new Framework.

In regards to 'intent', Ofsted write, 'leaders take on or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners… the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life… the provider's curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment' (2019, p. 9). In regards to 'impact', Ofsted's inspectorate has changed little and will be judging whether, 'learners develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well. Where relevant, this is reflected in results from national tests and examinations that meet government expectations, or in the qualifications obtained… [whether] learners are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training' (2019, p. 10).

The failure again of Ofsted to deliberate or address the question of self in any meaningful way, seemingly unaware of the need to do so or to contemplate any contemporary (hidden) ontological hegemonies that might determine their inspectorate necessarily leads to opacity. The need of research, linguistic explication and historical analysis remains an imperative (Cavanaugh, 2008, p. 22) so if, for example, the final purpose of modern education for Ofsted '*is'* in order that pupils can enter the competitive work place (telos) as individual skilled subjects (ontos) then let that be said explicitly. In this way, those who see the world as far more than an extensive place of work, and education as more

[1] For Ofsted the curriculum is used in a narrow sense to describe the subjects "Learners study the full curriculum. Providers ensure this by teaching a full range of subjects for as long as possible" (2019, p. 9).

than the training of individuals for this work, can critique this modern sensibility in open dialogue.

In short, if there are no explicit narratives of self within the most recent Ofsted Framework – the neutrality thesis - then what does lie at the very root of inspection, interpretation and judgement? If, on the other hand, the inspectorate favour an *atomistic economic* self and purpose as the review of 'achievement' (2015) and 'intent and impact' (2019) seemed to suggest, then let that be openly disclosed. Regardless of my own limited investigation, there is an unavoidable responsibility to search, grope for and name our definitive ontological basics, for if we become reticent, then we fail to address a most pressing and profound question – a question that simply cannot be ignored because in one way or another it is always played out: "*who are we?"*

1.4. Concluding remarks

Within this chapter, several academic educational papers that challenge the culture of performativity in schools have been introduced to illustrate how this research might be developed. This thesis suggests that ontological reasoning should be at the centre of future action research. The story of who we are ought to be a most pressing concern and has the potential drive educational reform.

In short, Ball's challenge for opacity will be upheld in this thesis whilst also meeting the identity and anxiety crisis of teachers he identifies. This was/will be actualised through the study and awareness of Ofsted's ontological vernacular (above) and by empowering staff to position their notions of self at the forefront of reform. Following Biesta and Chua, their call for the teleological question to act as a means to reform will be met, but only within an ontological framework that simply cannot be divorced from this kind of research. This study also seeks to move away from Jeffrey's preference for challenging the effects of Ofsted inspections towards, in the spirit of Burnard and White, a creative empowerment of teachers' ontological reflections. In this way, the desire is for teachers' ontological meditations to be voiced prior to any reactive thinking. This will also be accomplished through the listening and analysis of participant data. Finally and fundamentally, the intention is not, as it is with Thompson, to research what it means to be a 'good pupil', but to explore what it means to be a 'human'. All of this entails the process of theological, academic and staff research; naming the self, challenging current hegemonies and allowing revised narratives of self to act as the resource for change in school.

The review into the language of Ofsted justifies the claim that ontological reasoning and ontological research cannot be ignored. What the documents divulge is paradoxical. Whilst at times assuming *neutrality*, they also point towards an *atomistic economic* narrative. An exploration of terms such as tolerance and morality clearly demonstrated that any notion of the reality of *neutrality* was fallacious and the investigation into achievement suggested that what undergirds the current narrative of education could be usefully labelled

atomistic economic. Given that ontos and telos cannot be divorced, it has been claimed therefore that Ofsted adopt an *atomistic economic* narrative of self.

Chapter Two

The complex relational self: the relegation of theological ontological wisdom in education

2.0. Introduction

To re-cap, the idea that the ontological question, unavoidably engendered as it is with the teleological concern, cannot be ignored within education. On the contrary, any avoidance to make clear the narratives of self in education allow for the (hidden) hegemonies of contemporary normative values to silently determine educational policy, practice and dialogue [1]. More precisely, as outlined in the previous chapter, Ofsted's documentation whilst assuming a *neutral* ontological stance also betrayed an *atomistic economic* foundation that underpins the current performativity telos in education.

There are four aims of this chapter. Firstly, it is to provide an overview of the theologically inspired *complex relational* self. This narrative of self will be extracted from a review of the meditations and prayers of the contemplative tradition. The *complex relational* self is written as a possible alternative and counter-ontological approach to Ofsted's *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self. This addresses research question 4: What might action research look like in the school of the participants and can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy offer any insights stemming from a counter-narrative of self that might enrich this study? Secondly, it is to develop a more comprehensive account of this *complex relational* self as extracted from the Eucharistic event posited by Radical Orthodoxy (RO). Thirdly, it is to provide an historical and philosophical account for the dawn of *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self via the genealogical perspective offered by RO. This addresses research question 2: Can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or

[1] It would appear too that these modern hegemonies often lack any explicit theological reference in matters public.

Radical Orthodoxy help to explain any (hidden) narratives of self in Ofsted documentation and within a particular school? Finally, it is to examine how RO explain and challenge the public reticence to engage with Christian reasoning in a secular age - in this instance, a possible public caginess to participate with Christian ontological reasoning in educational reform. This addresses research question 3: Can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy justify its public relevance as interlocutor in educational dialogue and in what spirit should it participate in any such educational dialogue?

In short, following an outline of the theologically inspired *complex relational* self, four selected historical events as told by RO will be introduced - the univocity of being, enlightenment political ontology, the wars of religion and the heresy of modern theology. The reasons for selecting these particular historical events will be explained more fully during the introduction of each episode but broadly speaking, there inclusion provides an explanation for Ofsted's ontological prejudice and the decline of theology as interlocutor in academic and public enquiry.

2.1. The *complex relational* self of the contemplative tradition: A counter-ontological imagining to Ofsted's *atomistic economic* self

The act of contemplation is an act of love and self-giving through the 'blanking of human desire for mastery and control' (Coakley, 2013, p. 331). It is a time in which all the complexities of being human, all theologies, words, concepts, images, thoughts and desires are provisionally denied and purged. It is a surrender to God of all notion, ability, emotion and knowledge. For the anonymous author of 'The Cloud of Unknowing', contemplation is to put aside imagination (1961, p. 73) and to ignore what is remembered (1961, p. 94) for as Merton reminds us, God is always beyond our imagination, knowledge, light, systems, explanations, discourse, dialogue, philosophy, theology and learning (1961, p. 13).

Paradoxically, 'nothing occupies your mind or will but only God' (The Cloud of Unknowing, 1961, p. 61) or put differently, in Christian contemplation the purpose is the realisation – not the acquisition - of God who has always been the centre of life because God *is* life. It should be noted, that God for the contemplative is not a being or form, God is not a thing in and of the universe, God is not in time and space as we might imagine any other contingent being but is the wholly transcendent ineffable source and reason of all existence.

Contemplation is therefore a giving of the self to God, but not to a God who is another object of the world, an object of study and acquisition. This is why the contemplatives will speak of self-denial or self-dispossession. This '*complex'* self is displaced in a bodily and mental process of self-giving in an act of love and freedom that results in a growing awareness of being known eternally. Thus, all the labels of our *complex* selves, labels such as our profession, our state of mind, our emotional disposition or our beliefs are denied in periods of silent prayer through a transformative attentiveness.

Contemplative practice is thus to seek God in the act of handing over all initiative to God, a consequence of which is the reimagining of all fundamental meaning, expression and praxis (Davies and Turner, 2002, p. 201). Far less is contemplation about an individual's discovery of God (God by essence is hidden, transcendent, ineffable) but much more about a journey or adventure into the silence and awareness of being known by the God who is the source of all there is (Coakley, 2013, p. 331), the God 'in whom we live and move and have our very being' (Acts, 17:28).

For the contemplatives, such silence is our homeland and our true telos leading as it does to an awareness of God as 'the Being of our being, the Life of our life' and is 'the unum necessarium, the "one thing necessary" (Laird, 2006, p. 1). This silence is the necessary precursor to the transforming knowledge that we are and have always been known and loved, transforming not only the lives of the practicing contemplative but the others that live in relationship with her. Yet this silence should not be thought of something to be acquired. On the contrary, this silence already persists within us all grounding all our mental processes whether

these be precise, disciplined, chaotic or obsessional (Laird, 2006, p. 24). Such awareness, attentiveness or silence is thus identified as a deeper ontological aspect of our reality than the labels that we often attribute to the *complex* self. This is the reality coined here 'the *relational* self'.

This silence is a crucial aspect of contemplative prayer. It is the shifting of attention from the objects of awareness – thoughts, ideas, images etc – towards the attention of awareness itself and to the depth of our being, which is beyond what is often perceived as reality. It is in this silence that God is finally realised in union as the source of all ontos, the ground of all being. It is in this silence that the human sense of separation or absence from God is experienced as illusory. It is through this gradual, often slow or 'dark' realisation that the self is known as something quite different from what is readily observed; a self that is one with God (Laird, 2006, p. 139).

The commonly perceived separation from God is consequentially experienced by us as separation from each other too – the *atomistic* self. What fundamentally connects us all at the very depth of our being, in other words, is God the very cause of all of our lives. Our ontological imagination is therefore impoverished by our fleeing from this silent vastness of the heart (Laird, 2006, p. 28). But again, contemplation is not thought to be about new or acquired knowledge but the realisation of what has always been; a knowledge of God who is existence itself, a God who has known us always (Lossky, 1957, pp. 8-10). Epistemologically this is ontologically *relational* because the knowledge is from the experience and deepening trust of being known, a deepening trust that results hereafter in the healing of human relationships too. This foundational relationship is not an individual's achievement but is recognised instead as a total shared reality of all people.

The contemplative thus performs an antinomy in which she enters into a prayer of silence from which then she lives and speaks into the world; from silence to word, from negation to concept, from stillness to action in a continuous pattern of negative and positive prayer and praxis. This is not understood as dualistic or as two distinct ways - of stillness and action - but as one way of being in and for

the world, for theology proper, or worldly action can never be divorced from the life of this deep prayer (Lossky, 1957, pp. 8-9). So essentially for the contemplatives, our very being and agency refer always, ontologically, to relationship with God the source of all that is, and subsequently relationship to the other, our neighbour and world.

The sheer complexity of the self is written about in many different ways by the contemplatives. Martin Laird, for instance, tells the story of a monk who counsels and reassures a novice that the noise and chaos that swirls around them is common to us all (2006, p. 139), or Merton who references the vulnerable shell of a person (1960, p. 15). Similarly, the author of the 'Cloud of Unknowing' surmises a whole host of orthodox teachings when explaining how notion, ability, emotion and knowledge form the complexity of the individual (1961, p. 73). The complexity of the self is well known to the contemplatives as a contingent reality that is silenced in prayer. For Teresa of Avila a need to explain this complex self from the relational is documented in the words of Williams, 'she needs a word for whatever is united with God at the root of the self, and a word for what it is that remains vulnerable in feelings and thoughts' (1991, p. 137).

Furthermore, for the contemplatives this relationship is necessarily the centre because as Herbert McCabe reminds us of being and life it can only be thought of as sheer gift (2003, p. 54). God is existence itself thereby rendering relationship and dependence as unavoidable in a universe that is in the eyes of St John of the Cross drenched in the overflowing love and action of God (Matthew, 1995, p. 24). The relational aspects of being are clearly evident too in the notions of St Benedict who speaks of Christ as the fundamental chain that binds us together in community (Byrne, 1998, p. 29), or Merton whose prayer leads him to the knowledge of his inescapable affiliation with the world (1960, p. 10). It is visible too in the writings of the anonymous monk who writes in 'The Hermitage Within' of how the centrality of God is known in our own human inter-dependence: 'Even so, you do not exist in isolation, since you share in what is most dear and precious contributed by each: that is to say, that charity which is

love of God and love of your neighbour. You receive from all, and you give to all' (1977, p. 126).

Hence, what the contemplatives offer here is a different narrative of self, a different understanding of the very word 'ontology', a definition that has been lost in the ever widening breadth of this term. Yet this difference in meaning illustrates unequivocally a unique understanding of self that arguably has the potential to deepen the vistas of ontological exploration in school, the '*complex relational* self'. This refers both to the *complexity* of our contingent selves and at the same time to the ontological reality of *relationship*, immutable aspects of our very being that are contrary to Ofsted's *atomistic economic* self currently embedded in cultures of performativity.

In summary, the *complexity* of self is described as the notional, emotional, performative, noisy, wordy, experiential and conceptual form of the human that is ultimately provisional and unknowable. The *relational* is necessarily bound up in the gift of creation thereby revealing the absolute and unbreakable bonds that exist between the human and God and the human with the other and the world. Relationship is thus not only part of our identity but significantly too, our absolute telos.

2.2. Radical Orthodoxy: the Eucharist[1] and the complex relational self

Radical Orthodoxy (RO) is said to originate in Theology and Social Theory, Beyond Secular Reason (1990) the seminal work of John Milbank and is championed by Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward and Phillip Blond amongst others (see Milbank, Pickstock, Ward, 1999, xi for a list of contributors). RO is understood by those who write under its rubric as a sensibility rather than a

---

[1] The Eucharist is the Church liturgy in which the congregation participate in the body (bread) and blood (wine) of Christ. A description of the numerous meditations on meaning is not needed here but the relevance of this celebration in regards to ontology will be including in the description above.

movement. Milbank writes that RO is both a challenge to pure reason and to pure faith (Hemming, 2000, pp. 33-34) seeking out dialogue with other disciplines in order to critique and resituate theology as the queen of the sciences[1]. It is not anti-modern but is certainly confessional (writing within a Christian tradition) and seeks to reclaim and re-think the secular. It is in this sense therefore, that RO pursues a comprehensive religious critique of every aspect of modern life including by inference modern state education. As such, RO is a particularly challenging, relevant and controversial theological discipline.

The extensive work of RO has been chosen not because it is all together new or because all the claims that they make are entirely justifiable – there remain some reservations about their project as will be discussed later. However, theirs is a controversial and captivating voice, which is critically respected within a variety of denominations and by those of no faith at all[2]. A second reason for its relevance is to what Ward, cited in Hemming, calls 'reading the signs of the time' (2000, p. 104). Having read these contemporary signs, RO's intention is then one of response and practical challenge. Simply put, RO offer theological appraisals to all things secular including, by implication, ontological reasoning in modern education and this, of course, is mirrored in this study.

Much of what RO write on ontology is underpinned and sustained by the Christian Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharistic event is hugely significant in Christianity. Although its deep meaning is inexhaustible, nevertheless many, including RO, understand it as central to Christian theology and therefore to Christian ontology. In this brief outline, a sample of key aspects of the Eucharist will be extracted and tied to the concept of the *complex relational* self. Any unnecessary esoteric language or theological differences have been avoided, the wish being only to present a transparent ontological vision and a narrative of self

[1] By queen of the sciences RO infer that theological knowledge is superior and not subject to non-theological critique.
[2] Such public dialogue is obvious between, say, Milbank (a pioneer of RO) and Zizec in matters of philosophy (2009, p. 10).

that clearly provides an alternative to the *atomistic economic* self and performativity telos.

From the start, Christianity has been for RO the announcement of bliss. It is a bliss experienced in the Eucharist by a body of people who have been transfigured from a mere collection of fallen individuals, to a corporal reality in which the harmful divisions between one person and another are healed (the *relational* self*)*. This experience is known in a gradual encounter with God, self and other. In this manner, it is understood as a foretaste of a Kingdom in which persons welcome God and are welcomed by God as a living co-dependent community (Cavanaugh, 2002, pp. 46-48).

During the Eucharist, the totality of life and all being is offered to God. This entails the Christian bringing forth all the aspects of their lives – their joys and disappointments, their failures and gifts, their satisfactions and frustrations (Smith, 2004, p. 194). All that a person is, is brought to the alter and presented. In the consummation of the bread and wine, all these aspects of life are then passed back to the recipients as one body in the divine gift of transformed life and a new community, a community of presence, union and love is born (Cavanaugh, 2002, p. 50).

In this sense, the private and public are transcended, because everything is now known or participated in God. This gift of new community is a taste of the final purpose of life; an unbroken bond with God, friendship with other, reconciliation with self. The fullness of life is thus understood as the gift of relationship and peace in which a co-dependent body of people share their sufferings and joys as one. Significantly, this encounter occurs through engagement with others who are different - culturally, socially, biologically etc (Cavanaugh, 2008, pp. 54-56).

The Eucharist therefore proffers an identity that is founded in gift and realised by a body who discover themselves as gifts one to another. This body is *complex*: being made up of persons of difference, of individuals who bare the marks of unknowable experiences, beliefs, joys, sufferings, dispositions and abilities. Yet this body is *relational*: being held in friendship and love, being transformed as a

community, an unbreakable co-dependent body. Many *complex* members gradually becoming one *relational* body is represented in the words of the liturgy, ‘we are all one body because we all share in one bread’. This, in brief, is the Eucharistic inspiration for what is labelled here the *complex relational* self, mirrored in the ontological wisdom of the contemplative tradition and seating itself as an alternative to *neutrality* or the *atomistic economic* self, identified in the texts of Ofsted.

RO thus provide a counter-ontological narrative, a position that will be applied to Ofsted directives, participant responses and school vision in chapters five, six and seven. Furthermore, they also write a genealogy that will be used to review the contemporary *atomistic economic* ontological prejudice and why this prejudice might also exclude the theologically inspired story of self. It is this double explanation that will be the subject matter of the following section.

2.3. The genealogical thesis of Radical Orthodoxy: examining the advent of *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self in modern education and the decline of the Christian ontological imagination in the secular age

The objective here is to sketch a pithy and selective picture of RO’s genealogical thesis. The aim is to demonstrate how this thesis offers up possible reasons for Ofsted’s perceived *neutrality* and the advent of the *atomistic economic* self. Concurrently, it is to provide a possible explanation for the declining public theological voice. It will become obvious shortly that it is impossible to neatly separate these aims. Instead, they will be met intermittently as the four selective and provocative historical events are presented.

Without wishing to jump too far ahead it might be prudent to anticipate a potential criticism of this endeavour: that these selective historical accounts are not suitably developed and thus do not serve as a satisfactory or comprehensive argument from genealogy. Were my hypotheses to depend upon a

comprehensive and indubitably convincing historical story then such a criticism would be quite germane. However, the limited and necessarily scant presentation of just four events should be read here as an exercise of application; applying key historical events to modern education in an attempt to cautiously and provisionally examine Ofsted's *neutrality*, the *atomistic economic* self and the decline of theological thought in public discourse. Neither is the purpose of this review to convince of a final reading of history - this is simply not possible as will be argued in chapter three - but to suggest that any narratives of self that currently permeate modern education will unavoidably be tied to historical contingencies that can never be thought of as neutral.

This thesis will substantiate the views of Taylor in chapter three that RO do present a crucial and insightful reading, deserving of careful consideration and that historical analyses such as these are absolutely necessary for understanding current norms in education. An argument will also be made that any subsequent challenges, polemics or counter-genealogies are equally as important in our attempts to understand the present. The overall hope is to encourage Ofsted, the pedagogical expert and the school not only to become aware of the ontological partiality now axiomatic in secular education, but equally to be aware that this modern reasoning is fashioned from historical event however unclear the trajectory. Put simply, to make the claim that the current normative narratives of self, uncovered in the Ofsted vernacular, can be neither neutral or default and are open therefore to challenge.

In Theology and Social Theory, Milbank opens his account with a now well cited verse, 'Once, there was no secular' (1990, p. 9). The secular, so Milbank argues, is designed, it is imagined and it is created. In reality, the secular, as historical event, is only possible and only tangible in the light of the past on which it is built. This past is a religious past and the secular only exists therefore as a result of faulty theological reason. The secular for RO has a central mythos, that as the sacred is dis-placed, as the sacramental forgotten, the burdensome overcoat of dogma and creedal allegiance lifted and the superfluous flung away that what is

left will be autonomous, neutral, rational and self-sufficient. It is this, that RO label the secular (Milbank, Pickstock and Ward, 1999, pp. 2-3).

For RO, the secular is a competing mythos that turns out essentially to be a theologically heretical invention. What we identify as the secular is an event in which a new self, a new politics and a new state is imagined and unveiled. The state school, as one particular secular institution, and the ‘pupil’, as ontological reality, are by implication also sanctioned and shaped by this historical narrative, which is exactly why this genealogy is significant here. It will clearly not be possible here to even skate the surface of RO’s impressive genealogical endeavour that eventually lead to these conclusions, but the exercise will at least signify the importance that history bares upon the modern. The beginning of this heretical theology can be traced to the late medieval period in many of the writings of RO, which is where we will now begin.

2.3.1. Univocity of being

John Don Scotus was a 13th Century theologian (1266 – 1308). The univocity of being refers to the attempt by Scotus to attribute the same type of ‘being’ (existence) to God as to contingent creation (the universe). This historical controversy highlighted so definitively and regularly by RO may appear at first as rather an abstract theological debate that lacks any relevance to modern state education. For RO however, this event signalled the advent of the secular and secular ontology and by implication to the potential of Ofsted’s *atomistic economic* self. The univocity of being also potentially explains the possibility and rise of nihilistic thinking[1], subsequent ontological *neutrality* and with it the relegation of theological ontology to the private realm[2].

[1] Within this thesis, nihilism will mainly be used to refer to the lack of objective or absolute narratives of self.

[2] By this I mean to say that religious conviction is considered a private affair or set of beliefs that have little or no place in public policy.

Before these historical accounts are introduced more fully it is important first to indicate what was philosophically/theologically prior to the event known as the univocity of being. This is because for RO[1] it is only through awareness of what was prior to Scotus that an explanation of secularism, nihilism and heretical ontology can be made. The genealogy they trace often begins with Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and there is often a weighted reference towards his work in their writings.

For Aquinas and traditional Christianity, God is existence/being itself; existence is the very essence of God (Aquinas, 2008, pp. 202-204). The world is thus understood as an expression of God. Every created thing speaks something about its divine source. Things in the world point away from themselves towards the creator of which they are ultimately dependant for existence; a theophanic manifestation of the Oneness of God. In pointing away from themselves towards the source of all being, things are truly themselves (Smith, 2004, p. 88).

This way of understanding reality is said to be 'analogical' – all things saying something about God but never exhausting the transcendent nature of God, and 'participatory' – all things being ultimately dependent on God and bound up in a participation with God's effects and actions (Aquinas, 1993, p. 28). The universe is witnessed here as gifted creation. It is a creation that is suspended from the divine. Immanent being (the contingent universe) is hooked – analogically related - to the transcendent (a different being). Epistemologically, this is of significance because knowledge by necessity is theological which is why, for RO, theology is the queen of the sciences. Theology, in other words, bears the overarching standard for all other subjects and informs all the other sciences[2] (Milbank, Pickstock and Ward, 1999, p. 1).

---

[1] I will be referring to the works of Taylor and MacIntyre during this thesis. Both of these scholars are clear too that the historical study is vital to our understanding of contemporary thought and practice (section 3.1.3.).

[2] Theology as queen of the sciences is one part of the RO thesis that I will argue against. In fact, I will argue that the complex relational self is itself an ontological vision that engenders a different conversational relationship with other faculties from the one posited by RO.

Because everything participates in the divine Oneness, a rich *relational* ontological picture is imagined. There is harmony even in difference because ultimately ‘everything’ is suspended from the divine One. There is no private or public realm because everything is doxological[1] and everything known in God. Life is witnessed as pure gift and so the ultimate telos for created humanity is divine friendship, charity and communion with God, self and other (Milbank, 1990, p. 279 and p. 289). This is re-enacted in the Eucharistic event. For the proponents of RO, it was only in negating and transforming this picture of reality (and with it the *relational* ontology) that the competing mythos of secular thinking and nihilistic reasoning was born. Of consequence here, it was only due to the displacement of this peaceful narrative of self that *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self became a manifest possibility in the secular world and in cultures of performativity.

From Aquinas’ analogy of being, RO move then to the theology of John Duns Scotus and in particular to the univocity of being as an important factor that determined in time the event of secularism. Scotus argues that in order to account for the relationship that exists between God and creature, *being* must be predicated univocally. In other words, God and creation had to share the same category of being (Williams, T., 2002, pp. 196-197). God is thought therefore ‘to exist’ in a way akin to creation, rather than a transcendent being who is ‘existence itself’, the source of all being. The same type of existence was considered as something common to both God and the universe for Scotus.

In theological terms this un-hooked the transcendent from the immanent and a much flattened ontological reality was conceived. If things in the world were thought no longer to participate and point beyond themselves to divine transcendence (*relational*) then concurrently these things were denied a depth of being. It is a depth that became progressively forgotten in the common imagination for RO as will be shown shortly through the example of enlightenment narratives of self (section 2.3.2.). Pointedly, if persons were no longer thought to participate in the divine One (Aquinas’s analogical paradigm:

[1] Giving praise to God.

relational) then they might be thought to exist autonomously and independently (perhaps *neutrally* and/or the *atomistic* self of Ofsted*)*. Moreover, as Pickstock observes, when the transcendent was un-hooked from the immanent then a space was opened up between the creator and creation. And when God was no longer claimed to be 'in' whom we exist (participatory) but a reality who shared our own category of existence then through this faulty dualism it became increasingly possible to deny his existence altogether, eventually evacuating much theology from reasoned debate (1997, pp. 48-60).

Post Scotus, with declining or no reference to the transcendent, the advent of nihilism became for RO inevitable. This is because ultimately, when things are divorced from the transcendent One, they are drawn only from a void. This nihilistic thinking was the precursor to secular ontology. For the proponents of RO, the subsequent nihilistic philosophy that eventually followed Scotus' wrongful turn have also opened the gates to '*neutrality'*. They reasoned that because things are given true meaning as gifts of the divine (*relational)* then without such gifting, things remain just no-things or *neutral* (Milbank, Pickstock and Ward, 1999, p. 23). It is these no-things that are then granted, ironically for RO, independent reality and these independent realities then assume the value that one subject attributes to them (Milbank, 1990, pp. 282-289).

If we apply this to education and current narratives of self for instance then the following tentative conclusion can be made. The task of the secular (Ofsted) has been to state these no-things, the *neutral* self, as somethings, the *atomistic economic* self having first negated the theological analogical participatory account – the *relational* self. The point for RO furthermore, is that this something – the *atomistic economic* self - is essentially fashioned from a void (nihilism) for they argue that when the transcendent is cleared away we will find with Nietzsche that beyond the subjective, the arbitrary and the *neutral*, that our very ontologies and stories of who we are must finally be reduced to nothing (see Taha, 2013, p. 53).

The story that RO weave suggests that modern secular narratives of self are the elongated consequence of a historical past and heretical theology. Similarly,

they trace how religious epistemology and meaning have been evacuated from public discourse so that today theological reason might be considered irrelevant, incoherent or private. In summary, by assimilating God's being with contingent being, Scotus, for RO, inadvertently opened up the gates of modernity and the secular. God, in historical thought, had become relegated to something of and in the universe and therefore a being that could be denied; especially when analysed through a particular scientific reason that was often disingenuously thought to be neutral. Ontologically, the relational, participatory, analogical paradigm was usurped and in time, a flattened nihilistic narrative of self became manifest. The notion of the world as gift was lost and creation was now thought of as something neutral. Such neutrality however was suffocating for the simple reason that things of and in themselves are nothing and without the transcendent are drawn only from a void. As a consequence of this long historical transformation, theological integrity would begin its slow decline and secular values would displace these notions and privatise religious narratives of self. It is this perhaps that provides a partial explanation or clue at least for why the theological voice is now often missing in academic educational discourse and why secular narratives of self appear to trump the more theological in Ofsted's documentation.

The impressive genealogy that RO write often begins with the univocity of being but their work has been keen to identify significant theological, philosophical and political ontological changes post this event. The following is but one example of a much more comprehensive genealogical picture.

2.3.2. Political enlightenment ontology: the dawn of an *atomistic economic* narrative of self?

The dense works of particularly Milbank and Pickstock provide a fascinating and of course at times questionable historical analysis of the story of the secular which is in part initiated by the decisive aberration of Scotus' univocity of being. The genealogical picture is complex and controversial. Many thinkers including

Weber, Nietzsche, Descartes and Kant are examined in the light of RO's genealogical thesis in order to illustrate the ever-changing heretical ontological landscape that led to modern thought. They conclude that secular ontology should be considered heretical theology. The point that RO and Milbank wish to make is not that any one thinker or philosophical movement is wholly responsible for secular ontological vision, but that the univocity of being opened up the gates towards these heresies and faulty ontological convictions.

The following section outlines three narratives of self evident within RO's genealogy; those of Marx (very briefly), Locke and Rousseau. As indicated above, narratives like these were possible and ultimately followed only in the shadow of the faulty theological reasoning of Scotus and the rejection of Aquinas's more orthodox understanding of self and purpose. Of significance here, these narratives arguably account in part for modern ontological reasoning and potentially therefore for the advent of *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self. Take, for instance, the following example of Marx who, for RO, founded his own heretical ontological assessment over and against the relational Christian story of who we are.

Milbank cites Marx as a thinker who implicitly and unconsciously founded his narrative of self upon a religious metanarrative and imagination. He did so by pre-supposing an ontological picture of the human as a projection of ego (the *atomistic* self?). Yet, Milbank argues, this pre-supposition is not even possible without first Marx's awareness, development and revision of the Christian ontological conviction of shared interdependence upon God and other. It therefore marked a distortion of the *relational* self that was consistent with Aquinas's analogical and participatory analysis. In other words, the ontological concept of human as projection of ego is but a theological rejection and modification of a traditional orthodox theological idiom. Marx's proposal of a new natural law of humanity, a law that he thinks overrides the religious, is only thereby possible as an ironic heretical aberration *of* the religious (1990, 178-189). If Marx is granted the influence in contemporary thought attributed to him by RO, then this is also to suggest that modern ontological suppositions such as the *atomistic* self are not the discovery of neutral reason following the necessary

divorce with religious conviction. On the contrary, they are founded upon historically imagined 'heretical theologies'; and theologies that lack the depth of a Christian relational narrative of self but nevertheless taint the secular (Cavanaugh, 1999, p. 9).

RO also turn their attention to the political thinkers Locke and Rousseau to illustrate how this change in ontological assumption was sanctioned in political thought and action (Cavanaugh, 1999, pp. 12-19). If Scotus thus highlights a fundamental change in ontological reasoning and possibility, then enlightenment politics draws our attention to a change in ontological identity and praxis in history that were made possible following Scotus' theological deviation. The following is an account of RO's understanding of these two giants of political thought.

In Cavanaugh's perspective, Locke considered that all men are naturally in a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons as they see fit within the bounds of the law of nature (2002, p. 47). Perhaps this is indicative of the advent of the *economic* self. This is accomplished without asking leave or depending upon the will of any other man; perhaps indicative of the *atomistic* self. Locke posits this notion in Two Treatises of Government in which our deepest ontological identity (the *atomistic economic* self?) is one of individuality and individual rights (1924, pp. 118-19). For RO, this concept of individualism is made possible following the illusion of autonomy bound up with Scotus' defective theology; an aberration of analogical relational ontological reality (Milbank, 1997, pp. 8-16).

In regards to property, Locke decreed that a person has a right to work in order to own property of their own (Cavanaugh, 2002, p. 47). However, individualism (*atomism*) and property (*economy*) can cause conflict within society and the nation state is needed to create and maintain peace (salvation/soteriology). The individual struggle requires, in other words, a nation state to mediate and make peace between different individuals (Cavanaugh, 2002, pp. 15-18). Smith places this necessary soteriological engagement as a move from religious participation and community (*relational)* to secular self-will and individualism (*atomism)*

(2004, pp. 74-77). What RO wish to highlight here is Locke's competing theology in which orthodox reasoning is commandeered. They wish to show how Christian narratives of self have been unfavourably transformed and traditional visions of soteriology subjected to demotion (Pickstock, 1997, chaps. 1-3).

Locke also argued that regardless of whether we use reason or the Bible as an epistemological tool, the earth is a common property of mankind (1924, p. 129). For RO, God here was displaced to the supernatural and creation to the natural and a false dualism was invented (Milbank, Pickstock & Ward, 1999, pp 182-188). The supposed autonomous or *neutral* reason of man born of this dualism and displacement of God thus became key for Locke's political policy as religious wisdom was subsequently pushed further to the private. Moreover, this illusory separation between creation and God allowed not only for an autonomous/*neutral* ownership of material but of autonomous ownership of the body too. In suggesting that each human own their own body (1924, pp. 130-31), Locke for Cavanaugh judged that far from gift (participation and *relational*) the body and material was a matter of ownership and self-rule - an *atomistic* preference perhaps? (2002, p. 47). For Cavanaugh, a consequence of this ontological disposition and the end of participation has been a lack of ultimate telos. When the divine dies in our imagination he suggests, so too does any idea of ultimate or final telos and our ontological imagination is ultimately found weightless, neutral and without foundation (2002, p. 18).

The secular still expresses remnants of Locke's legacy for RO (Ward, 2001, pp. 27-51). This means of course that if their genealogy can be validated, then we should experience a lack of definitive ontology in modern social policy, an individualistic manifesto, a soteriological pretence of the state and a lack thereof of theological wisdom as interlocutor in public matters. It is in this spirit of inquiry and speculation that this review is written. The question is whether the discovery of *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self over and against the *relational* self, uncovered in Ofsted's directives and cultures of performativity, are attributable to any degree to the influential 'heretical' works of giants such as

Locke. Perhaps what is less controversial is the suggestion at least, that modern ontological values have a questionable contingent history.

The point can be made in a similar way through reference to Rousseau. Rousseau famously claimed that 'man is born free' (1954, p. 2). According to RO's analysis, his assumption was that humans are free 'from'[1] one another (Cavanaugh, 2002, p. 45). Like Locke, Rousseau thought we are naturally individual (*atomistic),* assume quite natural desires, wants, and needs that at times caused conflict between peoples. In order for a civilisation to remain peaceful, a 'social contract' was therefore required. For RO's Rousseau, the state acts as the mediator of this social contract and people are thereby 'saved' from one another through affiliation to this state induced principle (Cavanaugh, 2002, pp. 15-20). Because people are naturally competing with one another for property and personal gain (the *atomistic economic* self), a social contract and the subsequent submission of the people to it was an absolute necessity in delivering fairness and justice (Rousseau, 1954, pp. 1-9).

For RO, an impoverished ontological individualism is necessarily supposed by this social contract, as what is 'mine' and what is 'yours' is clearly stipulated by a 'soteriological' state. (Cavanaugh, 2002, p. 17). Cavanaugh posits that in a similar fashion Hobbes, over one hundred years before Rousseau had advanced the same thesis that men are naturally drawn to desire the same (*economic*) thing, and given that all men are equal, the state (Leviathan) is needed to enact the peace making (2002, pp. 15-18). That salvation is enacted by the state, is also to say that religious soteriology is necessarily usurped and theological ontological wisdom more easily overlooked in social policy and political action (Pickstock, 1997, pp. 48-60). Concurrently, secular counter-narratives would consequently become more readily accepted. In short, Rousseau's ontological imagining provides one more possibility for the modern preference for the *atomistic economic* self that undermines the theologically informed *complex relational* self in modern education.

[1] The reason for highlighting freedom 'from' will become clearer soon in contrast with Aquinas who alludes to being free 'for'.

In applying RO's historical analysis to education, several tentative interim remarks can be made. The first is that these enlightenment thinkers acted as a forbearer to the demise of the public theological voice. In imagining a *neutral* and/or *atomistic* self, they exacerbated the gap between the natural and supernatural already opened by Scotus' univocity of being. This gap widened further over time until the supernatural was considered a private metaphysic or belief and consequently a private and often irrelevant discourse in all matters public. In short, a heretical theological ontology eventually helped lead to the demise of the traditional theological voice and religious wisdom in political reform.

It might also be possible to argue that the individualism envisioned by Locke and Rousseau (Cavanaugh, 2008, p. 5) may also be significant parts of the path that led eventually the notion of the *atomistic economic* self and performativity (Milbank, 1990, pp1-3). For example, we might surmise that Locke's theory of the centrality of ownership (Cavanaugh, 2002, p. 47) is evidenced and enacted whenever student grades are manifest as a commodity, something to be sought and owned through hard work in order to open up economic potentialities. Or, we might glimpse Rousseau's presentation of freedom and social contract (Cavanaugh, 2002, p. 17) in the notion of personal targets and individualised futures, a system in which individuals compete and struggle against one another in the hope of improving their own fiscal situation – a particularly economic ideal. More detailed ontological applications will be developed later in the thesis in response to the participant interviews, Ofsted's language and a re-imagination of school pedagogy (see chapters five, six, seven and eight).

Whether or not it is possible to trace modern ontological narratives back to the 'heretical' ontologies of enlightenment thinkers as Milbank claims (1990, p. 12-15) is not beside the point and not averse to criticism as will be discussed in the critiques of RO during the next chapter. Nevertheless, for RO, the heretical soteriological nature of the state, paramount in the thinking of scholars such as Locke and Rousseau, did undermine traditional theological conviction and ontological wisdom. That the current axioms in educational ontology can be

partially explained by historical event is something that Ofsted, the school and the pedagogical expert might wish to entertain further. One does not have to prove unequivocally that RO's analysis is without fault to recognise that modern narratives of self have a history. Put more precisely, the *atomistic economic* preference unearthed in Ofsted's documentation does not entail *neutrality* but contingency as even this brief foray into genealogy conveys.

For Milbank and RO, a radically different theological narrative of self has been lost as a consequence to the influence of writers such as Marx, Locke and Rousseau (1999, pp. 1-12). It is a narrative that would, of course, have deep-seated implications were it to be realised and applied to educational policy, practice and dialogue. This will be the subject matter of chapters five, six, seven and eight. However, a brief foray into this comparison between competing narratives of self will now be tentatively made simply to hint at what will follow later in the thesis.

The competing theological soteriological account for RO has Christ (God) as the healer (salvation) rather than the state. Humans are fallen and broken. Relationships between God, self and other are ruptured and an ontological distinction is created between the individual and the group. Salvation is realised however, in and as the body of Christ – we are all one member of one body. For Cavanaugh therefore it is The Eucharist that acts as a political praxis (2002, p. 47). In the Eucharist, the bodies of a fallen people come together as one, and the distinction between mine and thine is suspended at the altar. Life and knowledge is given not as individual property (the *atomistic economic* self) but as and for relationship. For the Christian, humans are naturally a community of people but in need of the transcendent in order that we may receive fullness of life – to live in peace. Contrary to property and knowledge as a right and possession, this religious Eucharistic narrative holds that property and knowledge is a gift to be utilised for the good of society. The idea that knowledge is a gift for the community certainly suggests a radically different idiom from the idea of knowledge as a personally owned achievement required to open the doors of individual economic opportunity and this is a theme that will be re-visited (section 7.3.5.).

The Thomist account of freedom (a hugely important influence on RO) also hints at a different educational hinterland. Whilst Rousseau suggests that freedom is about being free ‘from’ others, Aquinas suggests that we are also free ‘for’ the other: in worship, love and relationship. Ontologically, we are created ‘for’ the other, knowledge is once again to be utilised for the community and salvation is known through one body rather than through the individual (1993, pp. 109-120). The ontological comparison between this *relational* ideal and the *atomistic economic* thesis of Locke and Rousseau is obviously distinct and just as obviously competing. The question for future chapters is to what degree educational values would be transformed as a result of applying this *relational* self to pedagogy in schools.

2.3.3. The wars of religion

In the following two sections, RO’s analysis of the wars of religion and modern heretical theology will be outlined. These sections are concerned less with ontology per se, but more with the relegation of theological ontological reasoning due to the decline of theology as a relevant faculty in the public domain. RO’s historical analysis is therefore relevant for these two inter-related reasons: as a partial explanation for the decline of public theological influence and thus a possible reticence to engage with theologically inspired ontological reasoning in education.

The story prevalent within the modern, as advanced by Rawls amongst others, is that from the 16th Century the secular nation state, as an autonomous and *neutral* principle, stepped in to separate the religious conflicts that inflicted suffering and divided people and states (1985, p. 225). The story, which is captured and challenged by Bentley-Hart is one in which the religious powers, inherently violent, lived out their power struggles, mainly centred upon dogma and creed, which resulted in war, poverty, lack of progress and irrational behaviour (2009, p. 75). The secular (and neutral) state, broke its allegiance with the religious,

and because it did not have any vested interest in the superstitious vexations of creedal accuracy were able to step in and create peace where once the irrational religious powers fought tooth and nail in the wars of religion (2009, p. 89). Consequently, another major blow to Christian integrity resulted and ergo the demise of religious critique in public matters. The legacy of this historical story remains for RO, despite Bentley-Hart and other equally sophisticated historical and philosophical accounts that have argued vehemently against this anti-religious polemic[1].

Before moving onto two examples of these wars of religion two important qualifications are first merited. The first involves understanding the very notion and definition of the word 'religion' the second the changing relationship between state and Church which according to Cavanaugh shifted significantly during the late mediaeval period. These two caveats provide the necessary backdrop for understanding the wars of religion. Transparency of definition and the state/religion relationship matter here not only to challenge particular interpretations of the wars of religion, but also more widely to the decline of the religious voice in the public domain.

Before the end of the 15th Century, the word 'religion' was a largely unemployed term. There is very little documented evidence of the term religion. Cavanaugh notes for instance that in the work of Thomas Aquinas he devotes only one question of the Summa Theologica to religion (2002, p. 32) and as Cantwell Smith points out, during the Middle Ages there is no evidence of one single book being written specifically on the subject of religion (1962, p. 32). The reason for this is significant. It would be much more common to speak of virtue and sacramental living. Religion was a way of living that gave glory to God. Religion was about practice and dedication, about discipline and liturgy (praise). The context for such sacramental living was family, monasticism and Church. A fundamental peaceful community (the body of Christ) lay at the foundation of ontological epistemology and therefore politics was not and could not be deemed separate from religion - sacramental life *was* of its own accord political.

[1] see for instance Toulmin, 1990, p. 49

Religion, in other words, was understood as virtue and virtue was understood as political.

Cavanaugh, through his genealogy, submits that from the end of the 15th and beginnings of the 16th Century this definition altered pointedly. The term 'religious' became used in public documents far more and the different connotations of the word were obvious. Religion became a word that now meant private conviction and individual belief - evidence again of the heretical *atomistic* self. Religion developed into something that existed separately from the rest of life. It had to do with universal agreement on doctrine, systems of belief, interiority, a domesticated faith that centred upon the realm of the soul and personal salvation (2002, pp. 33-35). The major significance of the change in definition lies in two connected areas: the relegating of religion to the domain of the private and the changing nature and role of the state that occurred simultaneously. What is clear is that 'religious' wars were only linguistically coherent if one recognised the later understanding of the word 'religion'. Wars, in other words, were never for RO actually brokered under the more traditional 'religious' syntax of liturgy, virtue or participation in sacramental life but upon the modern domestication of faith.

The relationship between nation state and religious practice had also changed perceptibly and the story of this change is significant. Simply put, at the beginning of the 14th Century, the Church was the supreme common power that ordered national decision making. One body that encompassed both the civil and ecclesiastical powers was recognised, with the ecclesiastical as the head. By the 16th Century, according to Cavanaugh, the relationship had been inverted (2002, pp. 19-31). It became the sovereign nation state that now ordered the Church's scriptural exegesis. Hobbes even names the Church a 'civil state' (1962, p. 340) and it is the changing definition of religion and the changing relationship and nature of state of Church which is the context, argues Cavanaugh, for the so-called 'wars of religion'.

In his book Theopolitical Imagination, Cavanaugh's aim was partly to counter the modern myth that the wars of religion were a religious affair, opposed and

countered by the intervention of the modern peaceful state. Cavanaugh depicts a history that differs greatly from other 'fables' told by 'liberal political theorists' (2002, p. 21). As emblematic of this fashion he cites Judith Shklar's work as she tells the story of liberalisms soteriological intervention to save the citizens from the cruelties of religion (1984, p. 5). The following two brief examples highlight his counter-argument.

The first recognised war of religion occurred in 1547, a war that pitted Charles V against the Protestants. However, for Cavanaugh, the claim that this war was about doctrine and creed is spurious at best for he notes that in 1527 it was the very same soldiers, the very same sovereignty that attacked Rome. In other words, this war of religion had nothing to do with denominational persuasion, biblical disagreement or liturgical discontinuity but about power and political authority. This, argues Cavanaugh, is a necessary retelling of history without the hubris of liberalism's anti-religious instrumentalisation (2002, p. 25).

Cavanaugh continues to re-evaluate the liberalist historical analysis. He argues that by the 16th Century religious choice was determined by the Prince (secular ruler). It is significant, thinks Cavanaugh, that Protestantism only held sway as and when the sovereignty desired it to meet his/her own ends. Where, for instance, the papacy had already lost its power there was no need for a reformation. On the other hand, where the papacy still held power then there might be need of a reformation if power was at stake. The historical story of Catherine de Medici shows this relationship perfectly. Whilst Catholicity held sway, Catherine de Medici was happy in the knowledge that her monarchy was strong and un-threatened. When Calvinism became a threat, what it threatened was her monarchy, this royal power. This particular movement of Calvinism was driven by the nobility, by the bourgeoisie who had a stake in power and taking it from the royals. Catherine, in an attempt to hold power, first attempted to bring Protestant and Catholics together. Having failed in this attempt, Catherine then sided with the Catholics due to her fear of the nobility – the Protestants. This resulted in the dreadful St Bartholomew's Massacre. Contrary to the popular account of 'religious violence', records suggest on the contrary

that she was not driven by theological persuasion, liturgical preference or doctrinal contest but by power, influence and fear (2002, p. 28).

The two examples above illustrate a small part of Cavanaugh's argument of the changing nature of state power in the 15th and 16th Century. They indicate that the state was already central and in control, that religious doctrine was not the central issue and the wars of religions were often about power and authority. The perpetrators of the wars were often royals and the nobility, and not people for whom religious disagreement and creedal conviction necessitated war. The same story is told by Bentley-Hart who similarly states that the civil secular powers were dominant during this period and it is thus specious to suggest that the secular was the peace maker (2009, pp. 88-98).

Cavanaugh contends - as indicated by the movement from Aquinas through Scotus and into the politics of the enlightenment - that the very concept of God and religion changed and continues to change (2002, pp 31-46) (see also Smith, 2004, pp. 109-116). The move can be described as one in which a sovereign God is perceived whose love is participatory to the heretical picture of God whose power stood behind and supports human political power. As the state changed, so too did the concept of religion. The religious wars were thus only possible when religion was understood as a private set of individual beliefs leading to personal salvation and only when the secular powers found authority, not before. In short, religious wars occurred in a time of declining religious practice when the secular or sovereign powers already dominated and when God was reduced to a contingent political agitator. As Cavanaugh concludes, 'the dominance of the state over the Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries allowed temporal rulers to direct doctrinal conflicts to secular ends' (2002, p. 42).

However a faulty reading of the past has resulted in a particularly damaging effect to the integrity of religious conviction and feeds the idea that religion is inherently dangerous and violent and thus, as Williams contends, why many think it has no place in the public domain (2012, p. 38). For RO, it is important for the sake of Christian integrity to revisit this history and retell the normative

secular narratives as part of its mission to be taken seriously in public matters (see Milbank, 1999, pp. 1-3 or Pickstock 1999, pp. 46-60).

2.3.4. The heresy of modern theology

The aim of the following section is to outline very briefly two examples of the wrongful assumption of *neutrality* in modern theological thought and to reiterate a common theme running through RO's genealogy; that the demise of the public theological voice in policy making can be attributed in part to heretical historical contingencies. Put differently, it is to ask whether modern theology has lost its public ontological relevance partially because its voice is now so indistinguishable from the cacophony of all the other 'neutral' and 'autonomous' voices of the secular.

An example of modern theological immersion in secular ideals can be identified in the work of the correlationist school of theology. This school is labelled correlationist due the attempt to correlate revelation with universal principles or universal reason, a project designed to make Christianity relevant for modern man. This, for RO, exacerbated the myth of *neutrality* and neutral secular reason by its very appeal to the universal.

The Liberal demythologising project of Bultmann is one such example. Bultmann's basic premise was one of ensuring that Christianity remained relevant to modern man by exposing all the New Testament's claims against modern scientific verification and by doing so to demarcate these 'myths' with the kerygma (central teaching/message of Jesus) that remained. This exegesis pre-supposed the modern positivist and/or verificationist idiom of the enlightenment period and in doing so attempted to demonstrate Christianity's consistency with modern accounts of rationality. Bultmann was at odds to demonstrate that Christian belief was still possible in an age *of* reason and science. He made no apology for this, *'it is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries,*

and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles' (1961, p. 5). He reasoned that the advances of the sciences in the 19th and 20th Centuries called for a re-evaluating of Orthodoxy. He concluded that it was simply not rational, reasonable or scientific for Christians in the 20th Century to believe in 1st Century mythological pictures of reality evident in the New Testament. Humanity had advanced, verification was the proper empirical measurement of truth, and modern Christians might rightly read parts of scripture as unintelligible and were correct to discard or reinterpret those parts that did not fit the modern sensibility.

It is argued by Ward that this project is a pattern of theological absorption into modernist ideology (2003, p. 115). This was because it was supposed by Bultmann (and others of the correlationist project) not only that neutral universal reason exists - and according to Smith a neutral reason that epistemologically is thought to trump everything else in the modern era (2004, pp. 157-158) - but also that rationality was intrinsically linked to the scientific method. Reason here had become the epistemological servant of the scientific endeavour and knowledge was consequently flattened. This example of 20th Century folly undercut the breadth of theological epistemology and its unique potential to offer difference.

A second example of theological diffidence born in the shadow of modernity is evidenced in the writings of the theologian Douglas Hedley. Hedley argues that universal reason is a necessary precursor to persuasive argument. He further concludes that to think that there can be a particular religious reason is not only responsible for exacerbating the epistemological gap between the Christian and Pagan but that, in fact, it results in a lack of learning and sharing from one school of thought to another. Jerusalem and Athens, in other words, can feed each other if located in universal reason (2000, p. 275). For RO this submission to the myth of universal reason or *neutrality* essentially undermines the difference that particular theological reasoning can make (Milbank, Pickstock & Ward, 1999, p. 21) including by inference the difference theological ontology can make in education – the 'unique' offering coined the *complex relational* self (section 6.3.).

These two contemporary theologies, included here as examples of many, pursue the idea that reason really is and/or can be autonomous and universal. These theologies often work as an apologetics, an attempt in other ways to stave off the tension between the religious and non-religious. Such theological projects have at their hearts the purpose of ensuring that the Christian story is still a relevant player in today's politics. As Hedley asks, 'might not the pursuit of natural theology, not withstanding the inflammatory rhetoric of Kierkegaard, Barth and Milbank, still constitute much the best way of defending the faith today?' (2000, p. 275)

The counter-arguments of Milbank articulate the irony of such apologetics in as much as the attempt to make Christian theology modern, only finally succeeds in undermining its true integrity and thereby rendering it flaccid, lukewarm and wanting in dialogue which might help to explain the demise of public and academic religious integrity (1990, pp. 225-255). The point that Milbank makes is that if theologians draw upon this contemporary prejudice of universal reason, then the theological voice can offer nothing new to public enquiry and debate. If this is the case, then why would an educationalist take seriously the works of theology - or indeed a thesis that draws upon the contemplative tradition, the Eucharistic event or theological ontology in regards to contemporary education? Why, in other words, would Ofsted, pedagogical expert or school engage in the ontological vision of the *complex relational* self and theological critique, if this theological offering was neither profound or unique? It is a question of some force.

2.4. Concluding remarks

Within this chapter, the *complex relational* self has been outlined as a counter-ontological theological vision. This notion has been predicated upon the wisdom of the contemplative tradition and the Eucharistic event. The contemplative tradition tendered that our selves are ultimately unknowable and multifaceted. What is brought before God in prayer is everything that we are, and this *complexity* of self is thereafter purged in and through the absolute and unbreakable *relationship* and union with God. It is this relationship that transcends our relationships with others. The Eucharistic act similarly signals the transfiguration of a new collective body of many distinct and complex members. In the Eucharistic event, the *complex* individual is received, welcomed and transformed in a movement of collective co-dependence and love.

Evidently, this counter-narrative of self - the *complex relational* self - leans towards a very different educational hinterland from that of the *atomistic economic* self unearthed in Ofsted directives. In subsequent chapters, an examination of the differences that our ontological imaginations really do make will be made with respect to the experiences and wellbeing of those on the frontline of education. If, as has been argued, the suppositions of school culture that found our policy, practice and dialogue are determined by our ontological imagination then the necessity for Ofsted, the school and pedagogical expert to be aware of this fundamental basic is self-evident.

The claim that RO's genealogical thesis might reasonably challenge the notion of *neutrality,* provide reason for the *atomistic economic* self and seek to question and contest the decline in religious wisdom and ontological influence in public life has also been examined. The univocity of being drew attention to the significance of a changing ontological understanding and the very meaning of what is meant by God; from 'God is existence' to 'God exists'. For RO it was this dramatic change that led towards ontological neutrality (nihilism), the privatisation of religious thought and the ontological heresies of enlightenment thinkers whose legacies are still prevalent in the modern day. Arguably, the

influence is evident in the *atomistic economic* self in public education and cultures of performativity. The writing on the wars of religion and modern theological faulty reasoning demonstrated a further need for conceptual clarity, negation of neutrality and provided additional reasons for the modern failure and loss of public influence of theology. Accordingly, this brief genealogical rendering suggests at least why a revisiting of these events is essential for the future of theological integrity going forward.

The genealogy that RO perform is vast and the selection in this chapter small. The reader is reminded that the intention however was not one of comprehensive persuasion but of highlighting the need of awareness; that our narratives of self undergird school culture and that these narratives should never be considered neutral or default but are historically determined. During the next chapter, it will be argued that RO do write a thesis worthy of deep consideration albeit with a need too for other scholars to critique their work as a means to enrich the conversation. It will also be claimed that the *complex relational* self extrapolated from the Eucharistic thesis of RO and the words of the contemplative tradition hold the potential to transform in a radically bountiful way, the policies, practices and dialogues that are enacted in education today. This analysis will be the subject of chapters five, six, seven and eight.

Chapter Three

Locating the place and spirit of theology as interlocutor in the public domain

3.0. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the theologically inspired *complex relational* self was presented as a counter-ontological imagining to Ofsted's *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self. A selection of key historical events were also outlined to illustrate key aspects of the genealogy[1] of Radical Orthodoxy (RO) that might explain why *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self is evident within Ofsted's directives and why, concurrently, the theological voice has been in decline in the public domain. Within this chapter, the place and the spirit of theological ontological reason as interlocutor (in educational reform) is the central concern.

In the first section, an outline of the philosophical reason of Habermas, Foucault, Taylor and MacIntyre will be introduced as a means to address RO's thesis. Although the authors do not always directly critique RO, nevertheless these giants of philosophy do provide a means for evaluating the work of this sensibility. The theological works of Hemming and Davies will then be introduced to develop this examination and challenge the RO thesis explicitly. The point of all the critiques is to test both the depth and profundity of the RO thesis (and theology more widely) whilst also pertaining to certain shortcomings. This is important as it indicates where theology as rational interlocutor might advance a reasonable narrative of self in education and why Ofsted, expert and school, might properly consider the perspectives of theology and a sensibility like RO. However, it is also to indicate why the spirit of theological analysis – such as intended in this thesis – might differ from the spirit prevalent in RO. This addresses research question 3: Can the Christian contemplative tradition

[1] A reminder that 'genealogical thesis' refers to the arguments brokered by RO as founded upon their reading of historical events.

and/or Radical Orthodoxy help to explain any (hidden) narratives of self in Ofsted documentation and within a particular school?

In the second section, a brief analysis of the contemplatives will be made to demonstrate how this tradition point towards the essence of non-violent theological dialogue in the public square. The 'relational theology'[1] of several modern thinkers, whose work reflects a position consistent with wisdom of the contemplative tradition will then be introduced. It is a position that this thesis will adopt. Put simply, the work of Williams, Graham, Ford and Lash will cement the place and spirit of theological analysis consistent with my own writing as non-violent and dialogical. Thus whilst chapters five, six and seven will lean upon some of the insights from the works of RO and the contemplative tradition – for they both think theology begins and ends in prayer and transformation - they will be written in a certain spirit of peaceful conversational offering that is arguably contrary to the RO thesis.

In short, the aim of this chapter is to review the thesis of RO, the contemplative tradition and other relational theology as a means to situate the spirit of theological analysis undertaken in later chapters. It will suggest that RO do provide a coherent argument for the rationality and fecund probing of the modern by theological discourse; that the contemplative tradition and other relational theology offer a spirit of ontological reasoning that lend themselves towards non-violent dialogue; and that both RO and the contemplative tradition provide rich vestures of ontological imagining that are relevant to educational policy, practice and dialogue.

3.1. Philosophical critiques of Radical Orthodoxy

It should be clear from the start, that although the writings of the contemplative tradition and RO both allude to the *complex relational* self, the two positions do

[1] Relational Theology is my term. It is used simply to indicate the connection between a particular theological conviction and the idea of the relational self.

differ quite significantly in regards to the spirit of theological reasoning in the public square. For RO, theology is the queen of the sciences and out-narrates all other faculties. Because all of creation is bound up in the divine act, as such all truth is theological. In effect, this means that theology is incommensurable and has no need to answer to non-theological reason. The critiques of RO are written in part to challenge this sectarian approach to academic dialogue.

The four philosophical critiques are taken from the well-recognised works of Habermas, Foucault, MacIntyre and Taylor. Habermas has been included due to his desire for dialogue between theology and philosophy and his understanding of reason. This will not only aid the evaluation of RO but also help to develop the necessary conversation in education about the place of theological reason. The works of Foucault, MacIntyre and Taylor have been used to enlarge the analysis of historical and genealogical critique more broadly and by implication the genealogical thesis of RO. Although not always appraising the thesis of RO directly, all these works act as a good litmus test in reviewing RO's genealogical analysis, their relevance as interlocutor in matters ontological, and by implication, the place and spirit of theology in education.

3.1.1. Habermas: theology, dialogue and reason

Habermas is a thinker who has been interested in the debate between faith and reason, the secular and the religious for a number of years. In his work 'An Awareness of What is Missing', Habermas calls for constructive dialogue between religious reason and secular reason proposing that we speak with one another rather than about one another (2010, p. 16). This is a challenge to the RO sensibility because, as the theologian James Hanvey argues, RO are guilty of a failure to grasp the possibilities of all human intellectual achievement and that this is a contradiction to their claim of the 'integral relation between nature and grace, faith and reason' (Hemming, 2000, p. 161). Hanvey argues that in setting theology apart from other areas of intellectual achievement as the queen of the sciences (a dualism that he rejects) that RO inadvertently widen the division

between the religious and the secular and that any attempt at inter-disciplinary endeavour and public dialogue is made more problematic.

For Habermas too this is a grave mistake. Habermas recommends that two conditions are met in order to stimulate a more productive conversation between the religious and the secular. For the religious, Habermas encourages firstly an acceptance of natural reason as the fallible conclusion of science and secondly of equality as the guiding principle of law and morality. Modern science, he believes, has engendered philosophical reason to break from metaphysics and to think instead within the boundaries and totality of history and nature. However, secularist reason, Habermas insists, should not set itself up as the 'judge concerning truths of faith' (2010, pp. 16-17). For Habermas, people of faith, having outgrown metaphysics, continue to develop notions of reason and rationality within their own traditions, and should be encouraged to do so within inter-disciplinary conversation. In other words, he contemplates a move away from the enlightenment pretence that religion is irrational de facto to a dialectic and inclusive debate between secular reason and the inexhaustible force of religious belief (2010, p. 18).

In applying Habermas to educational policy reform and ontological inquiry we can assume ergo that all parties, theological and non-theological, be invited to dine at the high table in the spirit of openness and progress with equality the guiding principle. Where Habermas does agree therefore with RO, albeit for different reasons, is in the challenge to the contemporary axiom that religious thought is anti-rational and the secular wholly neutral (2010, p. 18). Drawing on history as his resource, Habermas suggests that secular reason, far from being neutral, is in fact the consequence of genealogy, a genealogy that is born of ancient philosophical thought and Judaeo-Christian theology. Both Athens and Jerusalem are deemed to be the very origin of secular reason (2010, p. 17), both philosophy and theology, in other words, are the bedrock of the *atomistic economic* self uncovered in the documentation of Ofsted. What is currently missing for Habermas is this shared common acceptance that reason, whether religious or secular, is necessarily bound to a particular story or genealogical reference.

Whilst RO and Habermas may disagree concerning the genealogical reality (and perhaps Foucault is well placed to examine this disagreement – see below), both approaches argue that the secular is born of a history rather than having been created ex nihilo or by default, and that secular (ontological) reason is therefore the object of historical determining factors. It is significant to note here just how far Habermas (with RO) concedes any notion of neutral secular reason or narratives of self and why, therefore a genealogical account like that of RO is thought necessary and expedient as one way of exploring the ontological reality of contemporary educational thought. For example, RO's review of Scotus's infamous turn, the consequences of this within Rousseau's political ontology and the adoption of this heretical narrative of self in modern education might well be considered by Habermas to be worthy of attention, even without perhaps his total agreement. It is also significant that the *neutrality* narrative offered by Ofsted is likely to be seen by both RO and Habermas as specious.

It is worth noting that the suggestions for dialogue made by Habermas here are not without criticism and his accounts are not always entirely convincing. The principles concerning dialogue that Habermas submits will prove to be a problem where the theologian does not accept natural reason as the 'fallible results of the sciences' (2010, p. 16). Habermas here appears to pre-suppose a dualism between faith and reason, yet this is just the distinction that RO and traditional Christian thinking reject. If, on the other hand, one commits to a view that faith and reason are not opposed but are both instruments to participate in the pursuit of truth then the dualism issued by Habermas is itself challenged. One might also argue that in wedding reason with science that Habermas does, ironically, what he wishes to avoid; for in positioning natural reason as a faculty of pure science, reason is assumed a certain modern autonomy or particular secular foundation and is thus neutralised. This is challenged not only by RO but by many other modern thinkers too (see for instance Terry Eagleton's 'Reason, Faith and Revolution' (2009) pp. 109-111).

There is perhaps another option that is situated between the incommensurability of RO and the thesis posited by Habermas: that it would be richer and more

fertile for secular reason to re-affirm itself as 'judge of the religious' but in the awareness that the very premises by which it works are also judged by some as ultimately nihilistic (willed and created ex nihilo), dualistic (inferring a false dualism between faith and reason), lacking in depth (participation) and thereby potentially partial or mistaken. In this manner, any aspiration to neutrality in any public dialogue concerning education would be challenged, a shared vulnerability of reason postulated and a hard edged but potentially fecund dialogue of honesty ensued. Debate would be contextualised in the knowledge that judgment between the secular and theological is unavoidable, difficult but necessary and potentially fruitful. Notwithstanding this much changed proposal for dialogue, the conclusions that Habermas draws do allow for the inclusion of theology in public reasoning, a rejection of *neutrality* and an acknowledgement of histories influence in the modern, and for that at least, his argument is germane to this thesis.

3.1.2. Foucault: a challenge to the genealogical thesis and a critique of reason

With Habermas and RO, Foucault is also in full agreement in his respective condescension of neutral modern reason (*neutrality*). Writing in the shadow of Nietzsche and Weber, Foucault traces reason as being shaped into scientific rationality. Rather than reasons engagement with means and ends, Foucault suggests that for modern bureaucratic agencies, an instrumental scientific rationality has taken precedence focusing solely on the means. Reason, as scientific, has thereby lost its grip on the ends (1990, p. 69). The chief point here is that far from being an autonomous faculty, (ontological) reason is again understood to be vulnerable to re-conception, re-shaping and subject to modern prejudice. Not only does Foucault posit the notion that reason lacks neutrality but also that it is vulnerable to the powers of the day. Subsequently the notion that ontological reasoning could ever be deemed neutral in educational directives is again uncovered as myth. By implication, the *complex relational* self of

theology should not perhaps so easily be relegated to the private by those who hold power simply because it does not hide behind a falsely assumed neutrality.

However, Foucault also calls into question the genealogical thesis in which even his own particular arguments are reached (1990, pp. 101). Madan Sarup, in writing his philosophy of history, summarises concisely the conclusions that Foucault drew; that any attempt at global theorising, total perspective or systematic analysis will always fall short (1993, p. 58). The claim to absolute historical accuracy is, for Foucault, a false claim and he is similarly dismissive of the notion of history as a line of inevitability. For Foucault, the past is foreign and consequentially difficult to read and interpret. There are discontinuities between the times, connections of meaning are made problematic and historical explications amount to genealogies of difference and a questioning of truth (1980, p. 144).

The prescient point here is power, for it is power which produces value and knowledge (Kelly and Foucault, 1994, p. 382). Foucault makes it clear that power is not a simple matter of sovereign or state coercion but is witnessed in law, institution, discourse and other knowledge-based establishments. Nor, he suggests, is it identifiable in any simple transparent manner, but that it is omnipresent, permanent, repetitive and inert. He defines power as 'the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society' (1990, p. 93). Power within history is about the said and the unsaid, the heard and the silent. Following Nietzsche, Foucault argues that power is the manipulation of knowledge to define and regulate others; power is 'exercised from innumerable points' (1978, p. 94) including both the reading and the recounting of history.

This is a challenge to RO, who trace historical genealogies to create arguments and explanations for contemporary reality. In seeking to expose modern ontological reasoning as heretical theological thinking, Foucault challenges the story that RO wish to tell by exposing this narrative as susceptible to power, incompleteness, false interpretation and discontinuity (1990, pp. 102). If Foucault is correct in his historical analysis then the rubric of RO is vulnerable. Several questions are therefore asked of RO. Firstly, is the story of the secular

more complex than RO wish to show? Secondly, what should be said of the voices of the un-heard in this history – how significant would their voices be in explaining the advent of secular thought? And thirdly, to what degree is the writing of RO open to the challenge that the past can never be interpreted accurately by the present? For Foucault, any naming of ontological truth as surmised through historical analysis will quite simply be partial and provisional. Foucault thereby raises the question of the accuracy and relevance of, say, Cavanaugh's diagnosis of the wars of religion or the influence of narratives of self born from thinkers such as Locke. Given that his thesis seeks to free religion from some of the violent strains that had damaged its relationships in public, Foucault's analysis carries some weight.

Yet this damning of historical accuracy should not necessarily sojourn the deliberation nor hinder the ontological explorations in education. Instead, as Taylor will argue below there remains the pregnant possibility of shared vulnerability, shared challenge and the continuation of shared conversation between opposing reflective claims to truth. Taylor's call is for the genealogical thesis to be read in the light of counter-genealogical accounts in the spirit of friendship and truth seeking. (2007, p. 428). That we venture further into dialogue in the very light of this insight could enrich rather than flatten the endeavour after all. This approach is one of continual discussion between differing historical ontological accounts and assumptions in the spirit of openness - but with an awareness too of Foucault's warnings of power.

If the question of self is impossible to negate in education as has been argued, if a divorce from historical influence is impossible as MacIntyre writes (1991, p. 267), and if Foucault is right to illuminate the vulnerability of historical ontological insight, then an appeal to this kind of vulnerable dialogue is well merited. This also challenges once again those who would assume ontological *neutrality*. This conclusion, of course, is contrary to the total perspective that RO appear to advance[1], a total perspective that will be critiqued again from a

[1] Perhaps at this point RO might offer that most pressing of option; theology or nihilism. In positing this option they question relativity as the only viable option. If Foucault is correct that reason and history are so open to manipulation and contemporary prejudice and truth is always

theological angle shortly. Nevertheless, this assessment does not exclude the genealogical analysis that RO do offer Ofsted, pedagogical expert or school as one that still might provide something profound, relevant and potentially transfiguring. In brief, theological genealogies like those of RO should be welcomed but with a warning of incompleteness and power; theology does have a place at the high table of thought and reform but should not consider its genealogical perspective to be total.

3.1.3. MacIntyre and Taylor: the necessity and vulnerability of metanarratives and genealogies

Both MacIntyre and Taylor have produced influential genealogical and historical writings and continue to be convinced that arguments can only be written rationally in the light of history and context. Whilst Taylor and MacIntyre both write impressive genealogical accounts, they are also aware of the challenges and problems imbued within such an explanation and it is for these reasons that they are most relevant in a critique of RO and more broadly to the place and spirit of theology in the public realm. For instance, MacIntyre is clear that to write genealogically is to write outside of orthodox academic boundaries in which autonomous disciplines, 'have the effect of compartmentalising thought in such a way that distorts or obscures key relationships' (1981, p. 264). However, he maintains that historical enquiry is required in order to put forward a rational point of view in the light of other competing historical rivals with the purpose of establishing its rational superiority (1981, p. 269).

---

relative then RO might respond by questioning whether the repudiation of the theological must finally lead to the omniscience of nihilism/subjectivism and an ultimately weightless pursuit of ontological truth. For RO, any non-theological appraisal of educational reform must admit finally then to a reductionism of thought, an arbitrary and relative ontological analysis because all such thinking is devoid of the transcendent and born therefore from nothing. If reason is divorced from faith they say, this needs to be named as a nihilistic because finally these explorations are founded on nothing, are weightless and subjective. Such a conclusion in provocative and questionable yet whether or not one is finally convinced by the nihilistic thesis the challenge is a pertinent one to us all for it forces a more serious reflection in education the very premises that sustain our beliefs and values.

In 'Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry', MacIntyre explained the difficulty in writing arguments supported by a genealogical endeavour yet maintained that the avoidance of history is just as impossible in philosophy as it is in the sciences. Using the analogy of Quantum Physics, he explained how theory evolves over time, being always dependent upon previous discovery and thought. The history of morality for MacIntyre is little different (1991, pp. 150-1). Yet MacIntyre insists that 'neutral' historical stories are impossible. MacIntyre thus posits the necessity of writing rational genealogical stories in philosophy (ontology) as attempts to explain the 'now' (the *atomistic economic* self), yet argues that these pictures remain incomplete, open for rational argument and re-thinking. For MacIntyre, the genealogists should put each other to the question, demand clarification and formulate counter rational arguments based upon counter genealogies. Through this method, he argues that academics come to towards ever more rational conclusions (1991, p. 45) warning that opinions cannot be seen as 'objects of investigation in abstraction from the social and historical contexts of activity and enquiry in which they are or were at home' (1991, p. 267).

Taylor agrees with MacIntyre that it is disingenuous to suggest that ontological reason somehow appears from nowhere, untouched, unscathed by relationship with world and other. Reason is far more fragile and contested than that. We all live by reason to one degree or another, but reason cannot and does not stretch all the way down, it cannot be definitively counted on (2007, p. 27). Ontological reason, it seems, can never be studied in isolation from history, yet both history and reason are fragile. Secular ontological reason should be approached in the same discerning manner and in the awareness of the myth of *neutrality*. There is a need however to re-evaluate through argument and genealogy the premises of the secular and modern and particularly the 'unthoughts'[1] of this period. RO have undertaken this charge; a charge that has inspired my examination into the

[1] 'Unthoughts' is a word coined by Foucault to describe the presuppositions of a particular age that are taken as truth without an awareness of certain prejudice. See Charles Taylor's 'A Secular Age' 2007, p.429 for how religious irrationalism is a common 'unthought' of contemporary academia.

advent of Ofsted's *neutrality*, the *atomistic economic* self and the decline of theological wisdom in education.

Paradoxically, it is also a challenge that the RO sensibility must also face internally. For instance, as the critiques of Davies and Hemming will make clear shortly, the historical interpretations of Aquinas by RO are arguably misleading. That RO aim to out-narrate all other disciplines through a definitive interpretation of Aquinas would appear to suggest that they are overconfident. They are perhaps guilty of having overlooked the significance of MacIntyre's assessment that all genealogies and historical readings remain vulnerable. This is not only questionable philosophically as MacIntyre maintains but also theologically as will be argued shortly. The heightened spirit of incommensurability that RO proffer is, as such, seriously challenged.

Yet neither, suggests Taylor, should we necessarily assume the purely sceptical approach whereas all areas of historical readings and reasoning are finally distrusted. Arguably, we have no choice but to hang our allegiance to the ways in which we surmise what is before us, but Taylor denies that this necessitates the post-modern thesis that we are imprisoned in our own outlooks. Instead he insists on the rational enterprise of discussion, persuasion, dialogue and the modification of beliefs in a continuing open exchange of never ending enquiry (2007, p. 428).

As such, RO's historical analysis is not necessarily invalid or insignificant. Indeed, the excellent work of Cavanaugh in resituating the wars of religion and seeking clarification of the very meaning of the word *religion* has been a fertile project. If religion is captured in the public eye as inherently violent or has lost its uniqueness through an adoption of universal reason as RO insist, then facing squarely these claims through a coherent historical analysis is an imperative if theology is to argue for the right to comment upon public matters. Similarly, Milbank's critique of Scotus and subsequent flattened ontology is still wholly relevant to our awareness and reforming of the narratives of self that currently underpin school culture.

That said, these genealogies will always be contested, and here the works of Taylor are illuminating again. In an early chapter of 'A Secular Age', Taylor sets out his aim of writing a story in which he explains how exclusive humanism was gradually imagined over a period of some considerable amount of time to be realised in a secular age (2007, p. 27). In postulating a genealogical vision of his own, in reading history as the explanation of the secular, he is perhaps an unlikely scholar to turn to in the very critique of such a venture. It might appear that he is damning the same genealogical enterprise that he is employing. However, one of the many strengths of this magisterial work – and also his renowned 'Sources of Self' (1989) - is his recognition that any tidy conclusion as founded upon a genealogical story is simply not possible.

In 'A Secular Age' for instance, Taylor asks his reader to consider a number of questions; questions that are particularly pertinent to the theologian: What is religion? What and how do we compare ourselves when we write these histories? Are the people who reluctantly went to church in the mediaeval times so different from the non-religious of today (who, incidentally might still believe in some supernatural reality)? What exactly happened to imagine the secular and when did the secular happen? What caused the changes and over what time period did they occur? In short, Taylor asks that we consider what exactly we mean by *the secular* - which given the nature and title of his book is a rather germane question. His answer is just as revealing: 'Determining just what has happened depends upon a host of imperative judgements, on issues such as the exact nature of religion, or the content of Christian faith, and these will be deeply coloured by our substantive beliefs' (2007, p. 428).

Taylor acknowledges that this is true of his work also but that the purpose of his genealogy is to contrast the implicit story told in much mainstream secularization theory. He does not therefore claim for himself a position of objectivity but does offer a rational but very convoluted, complex and far reaching argument and historical depiction explaining the decline of religion and the 'unthoughts' of much secular theory (2007, p. 436). It is written in other words in the spirit of conversation and challenge arguably lacking in the RO manifesto in which the conclusion is one of theological sovereignty. Perhaps in their quest to out-

narrate all other narratives, RO have thought it necessary to found their vision upon an indispensable historical certainty but in working this way they have founded arguments and conclusions upon questionable genealogies. Moreover, given that traditional Christianity is underpinned by a promise of relationship and an invitation transcending all human ability, RO's emphasis on historical accuracy as a measure of out-narrating all other disciplines is somewhat surprising.

However, it is also well worth noting the view of RO that Taylor himself holds of this sensibility. Whilst challenging the foundational certainty of every genealogy, Taylor remains very complementary in his assessment, gauging the two stories of RO and his own as, 'exploring different sides of the same mountain, or the same winding river of history'. Whilst RO, 'clarifies some of the crucial intellectual and theological connections' he views his own work as upsetting the, 'unliniear story, to show the play of destabilization and recomposition' (2007, p. 775). And it is perhaps exactly in this way, the way in which two intellectual visions can and do work with and sometimes against each other, that best explains why the incommensurability of the RO project is deserving of negative evaluation and the spirit of more conversational historical study advanced. Concurrently, it is also to argue that RO's account of the advent of *neutrality,* secular narratives of self and the decline of theological ontology in the public domain should not so easily be ignored either.

3.2. Theological Challenges to Radical Orthodoxy: On RO's genealogy, history and interpretation

Whilst the philosophical critiques offer pertinent and important challenges to the RO sensibility, it is from a theological perspective that the sharpest, and perhaps for RO the most relevant critiques are made. As is clear, Milbank et al unapologetically refuse to seat themselves under the scrutiny and judgement of the social sciences and secular philosophy, but theological assessments might prove more difficult to repudiate.

One of the most interesting and potentially fervent dialogues on this subject is written by Paul Hemming (2000). Its significance not only lies in the sophistication of his theological enterprise but in the fact that this theologian was also a key contributor to the foundational book 'Radical Orthodoxy' (Milbank, Pickstock and Ward, 1999). Hemming concedes a slight unease in writing under the RO rubric and although his position was abided, it never sat entirely squarely with the RO sensibility. It is this that makes his contribution to the debate and critique of RO a particularly fertile one.

In a Foucaultian spirit, the problem as identified by Hemming is really one of history and context. As Fergus Kerr argues in Hemming's book, all theology includes within its analysis a reading of previous theological enquiry that is, by necessity, selective and consequently disputable (Hemming, 2000, p. 52). The problem as Hemming sees it is RO's selective and disputable reading of Aquinas. According to Hemming, the elevation of theology from philosophy (as reasoning that is distinct from theology) and the consequent situating of theology as sovereign is not admissible through a return to Aquinas as RO maintain. Indeed Hemming makes this very clear, 'it is just in their articulation of Aquinas that what is most cavalier and hazardous about Radical Orthodoxy can be seen most clearly at work' (2000, p. 77).

Hemming frames his argument by noting RO's distorted appeal to the Catholic tradition's interpretation of Aquinas to justify their own conclusion of theological authority. As indicted above, a return to Aquinas for RO is a return to a theology that surpasses all philosophy. For Hemming however the Catholic tradition actually seeks a restoration of Aquinas' philosophy as complementary to his theology. The Catholic tradition thus read his philosophy not as something to be surpassed but embraced. Such a line of thought is based upon the premise that all truth is truth, whether philosophical or theological, if divinely orientated. According to Hemming (who cites Pope Leo XIII, Pope Paul VIII, the 1983 Catholic Code of Canon Law and successive papacy's in his argument) the Catholic tradition is right in thinking in terms of the restoration of philosophy rather than of the rejection of philosophy altogether. When restored to its proper

task of re-orientating ourselves with the transcendent rather than in its modern uses of rationalism, utilitarianism and domination, then philosophy for Hemming acts as an independent faculty and finds its proper place in the search for and discovery of truth (1999, pp. 83-85). It is not only theology but philosophy, in other words, which is capable at its best of distinguishing truth from falsity, or indeed rich ontological imaginings in school action research.

For RO, philosophic reason is only true if theological. For Hemming's Catholic tradition by contrast, philosophic reason is true if it points towards our rightful telos. Philosophy can thereby be used to sharpen the theological wit, deepen the self-understanding and thus prepare a person or persons for encounter with truth. This is not to suggest that God is determined by philosophy (or theology) – truth, theologically understood, is not located in the human mind but in the God 'in' whom we live - but that philosophy can lead to a greater discernment of truth. Indeed Hemming points to the fact that Aquinas is named the Angelic Doctor for a very good reason and maintains that he remains a quite sublime philosopher whose work continues to inspire. That he is recognised as a philosopher par excellence is here the pertinent point because it means that philosophy (and thus the social sciences), as distinct from theology, can point towards profound truths. These might include for instance ontological imaginings for the school to consider as it re-evaluates the narratives of self the affect the wellbeing of those on the frontline.

Davies is another theologian who has challenged the sectarian approach of RO (ac cited in Hemming, 2000). Davies writes positively on interdisciplinary dialogue – a premise that is clearly contrary to the RO thesis. In citing Milbank's claim in that, 'what triumphs is simply the persuasive power of a new narrative' (1990, p. 339) and his assertion of the incommensurability of the Christian narrative, Davies raises two fundamental problems with the RO (and particularly Milbank's) manifesto and spirit of engagement. The first is the ironic relativism of Milbank's edict that truth is about persuasion. This is deemed ironic because if truth is founded only via the Christian narrative out-narrating all others, then truth is finally relativised to a matter of persuasion. In

such a system, truth is relegated to a subjective opinion or cogent argument and Milbank's work is therefore tainted by postmodern relativist ideology.

The second and connected problem is that of reality. Reality, for Davies is not simply a metaphysical doctrine that manages to persuade or coerce others of its truth, but is more complex and intricate. Milbank is therefore answerable to the challenge that his efforts to reduce reality to theological metaphysics must result in an incomplete picture of reality. Davies contextualises his argument in the light of the sciences. Davies contends that theologians do not as a rule question the scientific discoveries such as the 'structure of DNA' or the 'speed of light' and that these social and shared sources, derived from different narratives, are inclined towards an unearthing of reality (as cited in Hemming, 2000, p. 116). Davies can therefore contend that in the same way that science is granted legitimacy in its apportion of truth then other social scientific or philosophical work can also potentially unveil aspects of truth.

For Davies this conclusion does not necessarily result in postmodern relativism. Rather than accepting the incommensurability of the Christian narrative to all others, an oppositional and polemical view of one narrative over and against another – and thereof the negation of interdisciplinary conversation – Davies proposes instead that the Christian narrative should be seen as a 'site in which other narratives find their true meaning' (as cited in Hemming, 2000, p. 116). In effect, Davies is arguing that the Christian narrative for theologians should be the lens through which other disciplines are viewed and explored, a foundation for all potential discussion and fertile interdisciplinary dialogue.

If, as has been argued, there is a need in education to re-visit the site of ontological identity and subsequent educational telos, then the model offered by Davies is one of inclusive and faithful participation. During chapter eight, a proposal for action research in school will be made that includes this notion of dialogue and listening in the spirit of inclusive participation. It is a research project that eventuates in changes to policy, practice and dialogue as founded upon the ontological reflections of staff and leans heavily upon the conclusions

drawn here by Davies. It will furthermore, include the proposition of the uniquely theological *complex relational* self as a part of these reflections.

Davies himself provides a brief theological grounding for such participation and inclusion. In writing on the Gospel accounts, Davies states a traditional idiom that Christ speaks through the marginalised in society, or that these marginalised become the site of revelation. Truth, in other words, is not only explicated or manifested in the dialogue between the Pharisees or the religious but between the outsiders and the unexpected. Davies thereby questions Milbank's sectarian and exclusive stance whilst also rejecting the relativism of postmodernity. This rejection of relativism yet inclusive dialogism is echoed by Hemming who understands tradition to be one discourse in many voices, a living discourse in which a community also negates the nihilistic tendencies of postmodernity (2000, p. 170).

This ethos of inclusion is grounded too in Davies' thinking on the Eucharist. Although the Eucharist is clearly a deeply significant event for RO, ironically it is the Eucharist that should signal the end of perceived theological incommensurability for Davies. He argues that the Eucharist shows fully the engagement and encounter with God in differing cultural and social realities. Truth here is not fully realised or exhaustive but given in and through the meeting with contingent and particular existence. If the Eucharistic event is taken as paradigmatic, if contingent existence is seen as the site of beneficial relationship, then Davies can cogently conclude that the relation of the theologian and the non-theologian should always be one of listening, that dialogism is an essential ingredient to formation and that reciprocal erudition is a necessity for healthy engagement (as cited Hemming, 2000, p. 125).

3.3. An evaluation of Radical Orthodoxy

RO is undoubtedly an intellectually stimulating and ardently searching theological discipline. It is a vision that is one of the most fervent and

controversial in the UK at present. Milbank in particular is recognised as a formidable academic whose work is as speculative as it is far reaching. That the RO vision is provocative and incendiary at times is evidently another reason for the recent clamour within theology (and occasionally within philosophy) to critique this sensibility. The fundamental questions that are raised by RO's sometimes inflammatory but erudite rhetoric continue to concern, inspire, challenge, engage and frustrate contemporary minds in equal measure. But it is in this dichotomy of brazen vision and confrontational conjecture that RO has managed to successfully probe the very identity and notion of the secular and secular ontology, challenge the contemporary prejudice against theological argumentation and stake a claim for a rethinking and reimagining of modernist ideology including by implication the narratives of self that permeate modern education. Whilst certain facets and readings of RO remain challengeable, the insights they make can and do offer means to revisit ontological identity through a theological lens and re-examine the notion and place of reason and history in all our thinking. It is for these reasons that RO is wholly relevant to the basic question of narratives of self in education.

In the spirit of Taylor there are many matters of interest raised by RO that demand further consideration irrespective of any challenges to genealogical certainty. The univocity of being is one such example. The Aquinas/Scotus divide regarding the question of God and being is an acute reminder of what is at stake for both the theologian and those who reject the idea of God through empirical or rational argument. At its very root, this is a question of what we mean when we utter the word 'God' and we are encouraged to remember how God can so easily be domesticated, anthropomorphised, or relegated to rational argumentation (idolatry) and how and why therefore theology can and is sometimes relegated to the private.

Whatever can be said of God must be done so reservedly because God is not something of the universe, an object of inquiry like any other contingency nor is God the conclusion of science, philosophy or even systematic theology. This is the paradox, the tension, the temptation, the frustration but also the liberation of the theological plight and the atheist polemic. God is 'in' whom we live and

move and Christianity, after all, is an invitation to relationship and not a competing theory. This in part was the reason in the previous chapter for visiting the contemplatives; to un-think, un-master, un-conquer and make vulnerable our ontological visions in the spirit of openness and discovery.

Moreover, those who do rejoice in the creation of a secular space free from the sacred should not pre-suppose ontological *neutrality* in public matters. On the contrary, several pertinent questions inspired by the thesis of RO may be asked of Ofsted, pedagogical expert and school: Does secular education finally negate the possibility of ultimate universal telos or meaning? By what measures are atheist (nihilistic?) ontologies founded and how and why will the 'pupil' or 'teacher' be understood in any such light? To what extent are our current values simply those of fashionable culture or political powers, is educational policy in other words a vacuum of the 'unthoughts' of modernism? How is one to stylise, imagine, create and sustain a system of teacher/pupil conduct and expectation from nothing? Does the project of nihilism provide an explanation for the explicit lack of ontological and teleological language in educational directives and what is there to fear in doing so? Finally, are cultures of performativity and the *atomistic economic* self born of a history that can be traced back through genealogy and does this explain the loss of theological integrity and the *complex relational* self in the public domain?

The incommensurability and unapologetic nature of Christian thought, as Milbank sees it, remains a controversial and unsettling conclusion despite the warning of Taylor that history shows clearly that our vulnerability will not be overcome by our thirst for the absolute (2007, p. 435). Milbank's implicit syntax of assimilating theology, narrative and doctrine with truth is a concern. In reducing theological truth to a narrative or dogma, Milbank does what he wishes to avoid which is to create a level playing field for competing truth claims. This has the effect of exacerbating the dialogical space between the secular and the religious and closing down conversation and change. This is not to suggest that theology should remain silent but that theology's integrity lies elsewhere.

Furthermore, of theological significance, the idea of theology as queen of the sciences also ignores the rich mystical and apophatic tradition (the contemplative tradition) that negates such epistemological certainty. What the apophatic tradition acknowledges is the absolute inexhaustible transcendence of God, a God who is utterly beyond any final comprehension and thus the tradition issues an implicit warning against theological hubris or irrevocable narrative. This line of enquiry will be developed shortly. The final part of this chapter is thus written in a different spirit to the incommensurability of RO. It will lean heavily on the contemplative tradition and the relational theology of contemporary thinkers including Williams, Ford, Lash, and Graham. It can be surmised as the finality of Christ (as absolute contingent *relational* event) coupled with a provisional Christology (a narrative of continual engagement, learning and transformation - *complexity*) and is therefore wholly consistent with the narrative of self coined the *complex relational* self.

3.4. The contemplatives and modern theology: towards a peaceful theological spirit of public engagement

The purpose here is not to suggest how those without faith should respond to the religiously inspired arguments – although the work of Habermas, Taylor and MacIntyre should inspire at least an encompassing approach - but simply to propose a non-violent theological spirit of proposition, listening and dialogue.

3.4.1. The contemplatives

The contemplative tradition was introduced in chapter two to demonstrate how a particular narrative of self – the *complex relational* self – could be extracted from theological wisdom. The purpose of their reintroduction here is to suggest how a certain reading of their work leads towards a place and spirit of theological reasoning to which this thesis is committed; that is to say as propositional, nonviolent and dialogical.

The hiddenness of God is not a modern awareness as Thomas Merton indicated in his hypothetical letter to an atheist: 'those familiar with Christian mysticism [contemplative prayer] are aware that the temporary or permanent inability to imagine God, to "experience" him as present, or even to find him credible, is not something discovered by modern man' (cited in David, Keller and Stanley, 2010, p. 3). On the contrary, the existential concern is a far older struggle as Howard-Snyder and Moser make clear in the introduction to a collection of essays on the hiddenness of God. In this introduction Howard-Snyder and Moser cite from the Hebrew Scriptures of the people of Israel whose experience of God is rarely clear. They write for instance of the Psalmist who cries out, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Psalm 88: 13) and refer to the mythical character of Job who finally loses patience with God's lack of transparency (Job 30: 20). They recall amongst other examples the theologian St Anselm's complaints to God for his lack of obviousness and conclude that, 'even devout theists can face an existential crisis from divine hiddenness'. (2002, pp. 2-3).

For the contemplatives, the experience of dryness and the inconspicuousness of God during certain periods and times of prayer is unambiguous. In the words of Julien of Norwich, 'you feel nothing, see nothing' (1980, p. 20). Indeed the name of two of the most significant mystical texts, 'The Cloud Of Unknowing' by an unknown author and, 'The Dark Night Of The Soul' by St John of the Cross, betray this 'negative' experience of the hiddenness of God succinctly. This is never to suggest that God is absent, only that God is wholly transcendent and beyond intermittent human feeling and beyond the human ability (the complex self) to ultimately discern or intellectualise. Nor should this absence be understood as final but as a part of prayer and the reality of God's life and purpose.

Yet this beyondness of God is significant in addition to academic and public engagement in as much as the contemplative reminds those who write theologically that knowledge of God is neither straightforward nor clear – for we are *complex* and thus limited beings. Whenever thereby theological works are approached sceptically, premised as they must be upon the assumption of God's

reality, the theologian is reminded that it is not only the atheist or sceptic who lacks divine clarity but the person of prayer too. Therefore, whilst there is a need for public theological speculation[1], it is also pertinent for the theologian to reflect upon the hiddenness of God experienced in this the deepest of prayer and to appreciate more readily the experience of those for whom the existence of God is not (always/ever) obvious. Furthermore, if God is not an object, something of and in the universe, a being to be discovered, controlled or something construable then those who write theologically should be advised not to use God to 'win' an argument (the temptation to avarice and idolatry). On the contrary, the contemplative's wisdom points towards an attentive and peaceful engagement with those who do not share a conviction of the divine.

In claiming this common ground for both the theist and the atheist, it is hoped at least to submit this shared 'negative' experience as a measure of commonality. Put differently, if the theologian enters public dialogue in the awareness that God's reality is finally transcendent, an awareness often realised perceptively in silent prayer, then the scepticism that the theologian may be met with can more easily be acknowledged, shared and understood. This is to invite, subsequently, a non-violent engagement with the sceptic.

Contemplative prayer is the experience that knowledge of God is not knowledge of something but instead the deepening of trust that we are known and loved. It presents the theologian with the stark reality, some would say paradox, of all theological language – that when we speak, we speak about an ineffable and transcendent being. Contemplation is thus a wisdom against the potential for theological hubris and a powerful prompt to listen peacefully to the other who rejects all evocations to transcendent existence. For contemplation is the blanking of human ambition to mastery and control and as such leads the theologian away from ideas of mastery and control in his/her engagement with the world/the school. In the academic environment theological reasoning, if born of contemplation, can thus be considered as peaceful yet distinct, unique and rich.

[1] The genealogical work of RO outlined in the next chapter being an example.

It is in this spirit that the theological analysis of Ofsted's *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self is intended. It is the same spirit that will be employed in regards to the analysis of the participant responses. Finally, it is the reason why, in the final chapter, a method for the school to conduct its own deliberation and reformation of current practice will be outlined. This will be predicated upon the shared ontological visions of the staff whilst at the same time situating the theological reflections of this thesis as relevant and profound offerings.

3.4.2. Modern relational theology

In the following section, four modern theologians will be introduced. The purpose is to present the type of theological reasoning that leans again upon this non-violent inter-disciplinary conversation. It is thus in line with my account of the contemplative tradition written above. It should be noted too that the choice to include these four theologians is because it is possible to derive the narrative of the *complex relational* self undergirding and supporting their work.

In an essay reflecting upon Gandhi's Satyagraha movement, Rowan Williams sought to outline a position by which absolute control is relinquished but not at the cost of personal sacrifice or passivity (2012, p. 303). The premise that lay behind this argument was that we did not own religious belief but rather that belief owned us; truth was not so much about control as about offering and sharing what has been revealed. The motivation for discourse is not then to coerce or conquer through clever argumentation than to offer something of profundity to those who wish to hear, not to claim a superiority of theory but to confess and witness to something transforming and liberating. By this, of course, the religious allay the claim to a standard place with other social theorists in the market place of ideas. But this does not necessitate for Gandhi or for Williams that the religious voice does not thereby become irrelevant de facto. What it does mean is that the religious voice only assumes any form of

authenticity and conviction when simultaneously it renounces its own need for security or worldly victory. As Williams writes:

'In a paradox… it is when we are free from the passion to be taken seriously, to be protected or indeed to be obeyed that we are most likely to be heard. The convincing witness to faith is one for whom safety and success are immaterial, and one for whom therefore the exercise of violent force against another of different conviction is ruled out' (2012, p. 305).

The centrality of the Cross of Christ is blazingly clear in this exercise of non-violence for it is here that we witness Christ's own lack of success and safety. It is also clear that historically the religious have not lived up to this demand. However, it remains the responsibility of those who profess faith and posit theological reason in the public square to continue to announce and point towards this event of non-violence. It is also, reflecting once again on the cross, to listen intently to the cries of the poor, those on the outside, those with a different conviction – perhaps therefore to the participants who were interviewed?

In, 'Christ is God's question to the world', Williams alludes to what is central for theological integrity (2000, p. 105). Christ is the question that transcends all attempts to explain comprehensively and finally and thus counteracts the temptation of control and hubris that can subsist in the theologian's work. It is an inexhaustible question that does not allow for simple final formulas to be drawn. Instead the life, death and resurrection of Christ exhibit God's difference but continual speech to a fragmented and polarised world, a speech that invokes not a private, individual summation (the *atomistic* self) but a communities embrace and conversation (the *relational* self).

Williams argues that in Christ a common language for humanity is proffered (2000, p. 93). The theological challenge is how to proclaim the finality of Christ, confront people with this question in a world that is already fragmented and suspicious of religious truth claims. The challenge is to make theological commitments like the *complex relational* self, intelligible and visible in

institutions like the school. The challenge is in partaking in vigorous academic work through the spirit of religious commitment. However it is also to remain mindful that whilst the finality of Christ is rigorously defended the eschatology that underpins this Christian truth, the inexhaustible question, does not allow for any finality of Christology or political/social certainty (2000, p. 94). In other words, the theologian's vision is neither infallible nor certain but remains always tentative and open to encounter.

The crucifixion suggests that certainty is not fostered in winning a conceptual argument but in reassessing what defeat and failure may mean if allowed to be a part of something new. The theologian is thus issued with this call to shared vulnerability in which failure is not isolated from truth but accepted in the spirit of a deepening dialogue and grasped as an important moment of growth in public discussion. Failure should not therefore be either denied or feared as the question of Christ is offered in public. To shed the enmity towards failure, suggests Williams, is to welcome the friendship between persons of difference (2000, p. 274). This of course necessitates an accepted awareness of common and shared vulnerability in which failure is also welcomed as gift. The acknowledgement of our fragility and creatureliness (*complex relational* self) and illusion of autonomous freedom (*atomistic* self) entails the tackling of conflict not with the assumption of mutual exclusion of difference but as persons formed in otherness and struggle – a people 'becoming', a people who are in the world and not above it (2000, p. 273).

Such involvement in conversation incurs asking difficult questions. The question of Christ as God's own question is one that tenders no simple or easy solution but demands careful contemplation and delicate discernment. But it is also sees the theologian, he/she who tables this question, as simultaneously challenged, questioned, shaken and transformed and hence the reason for the final chapter in which staff reflections of self become the determining factors in school reform. If God is known only through a 'dark glass dimly' then the question of Christ cannot be owned or possessed. The answer is not theocracy or imposition but gentleness, challenge and friendship. In short, the theologian has a responsibility to enter public dialogue, educational debate, through the lens of

Christ but in an acceptance that failure, challenge and friendship is what it means to stand with Christ. The theologically inspired analyses of chapters five, six and seven are intended in just this spirit.

In using marriage as an example and analogy for theological engagement, David Ford echoes this commitment to continual dialogue and learning. Marriage, he suggests, begins with a decision to commit - the *relational* self - is formalised with a promise 'I do', and is then lived out in reciprocal learning, education of desire, trials, questions and errors as the promises are experienced and breathed – the *complex* self - (2011, p. 68). The couple therefore make a commitment and this is formalised in dogma and solemn vow, but this is really only the beginning. It is not the articulation of dogma and vow that marriage is finalised but in the living of dogma and vow in the event of time in which marriage is best understood. Marriage is therefore realised in process, susceptible to re-evaluation and thought and becomes a place both to question and be questioned.

In the same way theology, as founded upon a sure commitment, encounters a world that it must charter not with a sewn up package of simple formula but with an awareness of its own possibility of self-deception and self-interest that similarly exist between a married couple. Theology must, insists Ford, have a continual desire for wisdom and justice sailing between the despair of possibility (a liberal mix and match in which there is no truth) and the despair of necessity (fundamentalism and dogmatism). This is a difficult task, a hard balance and theology therefore both requires and should invite critique and participation with other academic faculties.

The imperative, and it is a biblical imperative, is one of listening, being challenged and questioned especially by those on the margins, those on the outside (2011, p. 81). In searching the Gospels for the question of where wisdom is to be found, Ford does not posit a formula or easily sustained ethical position, instead he argues that wisdom is found in the 'discernment that responds to cries' (2011, p. 64). This discernment involves specialisms but specialisms engaged in conversation and collaboration, an interpersonal drama for the quest for knowledge. This, suggests Ford, entails the risk of forming

unlikely friendships (2011, p. 96). Although fully aware of the complexity of such conversation, Ford insists that the deepest theological wisdom is likely to be discovered in these unlikely friendships with diverse partners (2011, p. 119). These claims suggest that theology does not enter the educational dialogue with a complete and fundamental assessment of need but with a particular narrative and in the spirit of mutual challenge and friendship. Theology enters the dialogue seeking the good in the knowledge that this good demands our universal transformation and engagement. As Graham submits, 'we are all children of God before we are academics' (2013, p. 184) or indeed policy makers, experts or school leaders.

This idea of shared humanity means simply for the theologian that we belong to each other - we are *relational* beings. This does not imply that we strip all the *complexities* that we find between us but find ways of seeking the common good and peace. These are likely to be messy affairs in pursuit of the common good but as we learn to learn from one another, the Gospel's call to listen intently to those who speak, perhaps our more defensive natures may also be faced. Listening will take time and consensus will not always be possible but in belonging together in seeking the common good, in discerning the cries and listening to the marginalised a more fruitful path will be trod. It is perhaps in this spirit that the theologian can address the educationist. Not as one with a set agenda but as one with quite unique resources for inspiring transformation. Not as one who lacks fragility but as one who seeks wisdom from the margins and the cries. Reflecting upon the Gethsemane scene, Lash goes on to suggest that the theologian is also reminded of the unbearable silence of waiting and listening on the still small voice. God, says Lash, does not shout and if we do then we shall not hear (1996, pp. 5-6). The evocation here is thus for patience and listening in difference.

The idea of listening in difference is given a musical analogy in Williams' hands (as cited in Higton, 2004, p. 112). Williams talks of the difference between all the individual members of an orchestra working in separate cacophonic disunity, playing different music in private practice rooms and compares this with the potential of a symphonic enterprise in which music becomes a shared endeavour.

It speaks for our need one of another, our shared interdependence and vulnerability, the possible effect of listening and patience, the singleness of the many transformed into a gift for all.

Ford proposes a dramatic/drama paradigm similar to that of Williams. He suggests that each major player identify themselves in dramatic terms contributing from within their own traditional resources and narratives: spiritual, ethical, intellectual, organizational, material. Ford proposes a turn away from individualism, fragmentation and disintegration (the *atomistic* self) towards dialogue, negotiation and collaboration (the *relational* self). Such a proposal insists upon a shared desire for participation and the work towards the common good working honestly and habitually (virtuously) in a pluralist reality (2013, pp. 48-49). Ford suggests:

'The vision is of a complexly secular and religious society with a healthy intensity of dramatic engagement in public life and all areas of ordinary life and work. Great things are at stake in this, but the flourishing of societies can only be achieved if there are limits on how any group can seek to get its own way' (2013, p. 52).

The analogies and insights of Williams and Ford are useful for imagining the hinterland of educational conversation. The theologian will speak with honesty and integrity and will listen with patience to the insights of others. This is a move away from the incommensurability of the RO programme which Graham labels the 'ego of self-authenticity' (2013, p. 185) and towards a Gospel picture of difference, attending and healing. Graham continues by advocating convincing rather than coercing through practice and demonstration bearing public scrutiny in dialogue through mutual accountability. This should be performed for Graham in a voice that is comprehensible but never afraid to speak truth to power (2013, p. 213).

The incarnation of Christ heavily implies that ordinary, fleshly, worldly life matters intently. Following Ford, it seems pertinent also for theology to hear and respond to the cries in education, whatever these may be, and to seek healing.

Free responsibility is thus accepted and the common good sought with all available resources within each situational context. However, the theologian must also be aware of the *complexity* of the persons and theories that are encountered, knowing that these too are formed through tradition and narrative that is far deeper that can be easily observed. Persons and theories already exist in relation to others in a complex web of association, making absolute true perception impossible. The theologian thus enters the educational dialogue being formed by tradition to ask questions about foundations (ontos and telos) of those whose difference is complex and real in the spirit of listening, patience and seeking the common good with all the resources that are shared by all. Resolution is never complete and the dialogue is continual and never neglected or retired to the private.

When Ford states explicitly that he has, 'not found lively creative wisdom apart from intensive conversation rooted in long-term living friendship' he sums up much of what has been intimated above about the spirit and necessity of conversation and reform. He goes on to advocate a deep-seated commitment one to another in costly and truthful sharing. What he makes clear however is that attempts to work in this way mean for the theologian both a deepening theological maturity and richness and a deep engagement within a particular area of life. A common weakness says Ford, is that theology often fails in one of these vital areas (2011, pp. 99-101). If Ford is correct then the religious have a responsibility in two aspects; that of a far greater understanding of the traditional narrative in which he or she is formed and a careful discernment and comprehension of the particulars in which they work. This is clearly no easy task but one that should be a life-long pursuit for those with religious belief.

It is to the wisdom of Williams as cited by Higton to whom in summary we finally turn. In his vision of peace, Williams insists upon a necessary openness to people who disagree. He maintains that the stranger does not mean a shared identity but a shared world and potential for growth. He warns how selfish fears often work to negate difference, the consequence of which is unchallenged control. He counsels that without the awareness of our own contingent narratives and history that we also disaffirm the contingencies of others and thus

the event of love that upholds these stories. In so doing we fail to be transformed through our more truthful relationships whether in surprise, joy, pain or puzzlement (2004, p. 118). For the theologian, conflict and contest are inescapable realities of persons yet these are rested upon a deeper unity – evidence again of the *complex relational* self. It is because of this deep insight that Williams writes:

'your elusiveness, your mystery, your terrible singleness and solitude… I must give up… and put away all hopes of trapping you in my words, my categories and my ideas, my plans and my solutions. I shall offer whatever I have to offer, but I shall not commit the blasphemy (I don't use the word lightly) of ordering your life or writing your script' (1994, p. 148).

3.5. Concluding remarks

Within this chapter, several philosophical and theological critiques of RO have been outlined. The aim was to show why the RO thesis successfully and rightfully open wounds, seeks out suppositions, challenge norms, make vulnerable the language we use and helps us therefore to rethink in fresh ways the ontological foundation of modern education – in particular *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self witnessed in cultures of performativity. RO have also served theology well by revisiting sites like the 'wars of religion' and 'the heresy of modern theology' that might explain the religious decline in public matters. Through their genealogical thesis RO have therefore cast a shadow over the secularists' historical narrative and the current prejudice against theological ontology amongst 'academics and intellectuals' (Taylor, 2007, p. 429).

At the same time, a distance between this study and the incommensurability of the RO thesis has been posited. Instead, this thesis is situated in the spirit of the contemplative tradition and the relational theology outlined above. Chapters five, six, seven and eight are written in this spirit of peaceful, conversational offering. This study is neither a complete nor a sufficiently comprehensive account of ontology or its manifestation in education. Rather, the following chapters are served as a rational theologically imbued contribution alluded to above; a theology for educational reform that is tangible and practical whilst at the same time non-violent and open.

This method is inspired by a certain reading of the theological *complex relational* self. It is a notion of self that has the potential to enrich educational policy, practice and dialogue. It is written as a response to the vernacular of Ofsted's Frameworks and School Inspection Handbook but also to the un-heard voices of the school community. The wish going forward is not only to advance this theologically inspired counter-ontology but also to listen to and explore our shared ontological imagination with the staff as a means to continue the conversation and drive potential reform to school life.

Chapter Four

A case study instance of universal significance

4.0. Introduction

The purpose of the previous chapters has been to introduce three of the chief contributors to this thesis: Ofsted, Radical Orthodoxy (RO) and the contemplative tradition. The language of Ofsted's documentation was reviewed as a means of extrapolating *neutrality* and the narrative of an *atomistic economic* self. The theologies of RO and the contemplative tradition were then examined and the *complex relational* self proffered as a counter-narrative. A critical evaluation of the RO sensibility then supported the notion that theology at its best might offer profound and unique rational arguments to be able to explain and critique current narratives in education albeit that this offering might be better placed in the spirit of peaceful dialogical discourse.

The fourth chief contributor to this thesis – the participants – have not hitherto been introduced, yet their experiences and accounts of wellbeing hold a central place. During the four chapters that follow, a case study will be espoused as a method for introducing, citing from and analysing the views that are held by the participants. The reader is reminded that the term 'case' refers here to the obtaining and analysis of participant data at a specific time and place to test a phenomenon/hypothesis; namely, that ontological hegemonies are embedded in policy making documents, are lived out daily in the curriculum and subsequently affect the wellbeing of those in the frontline (staff, students and parents). A theological analysis of Ofsted's vernacular will also be written with participant anxieties fully in mind. Finally, a proposal for action research in the school of the participants will be advanced – 'The Study of Self and Purpose' (SSP). A case study of participant interviews, in other words, will act as the bedrock for this academic analysis and proposal for future reform.

The aim of this particular chapter is two-fold. In the first part, the purpose is justification. Primarily it is to seek to explain and justify the adoption of case study as a relevant and fecund strategy for educational research. It will be argued that this case study might reasonably be understood as an instance pertaining to a universal significant. This will be achieved through reference to those scholars who favour the case study method and also by responding to some of the challenges posed by those who do not or who would see it revised. The wish is to justify the academic analysis of the case study more broadly and the theological analysis of the participant interviews more particularly.

During the second part of this chapter, the specific methods of this case study will be outlined. The interview method will be introduced and justified and an explanation of how this case study instance will be analysed and developed in future chapters will be written.

4.1. Justifying the case study approach

It is worth pausing first to recall again the three targeted audiences for whom these chapters are intended: the school, pedagogical expert and Ofsted. The school of the participants are, by necessity, unavoidably invested in the views expressed during interview and the hope is that the subsequent analysis and proposition for future action research might also be of substantial interest. The pedagogical experts (and other academics) might find interest in the testing of the overarching claim that ontological reasoning is central to reform. This, of course, is predicated upon the notion that a singular case study instance can be of universal significance. Ofsted, as the policy maker, might wish to contemplate how their underpinning narratives of self affect the wellbeing of staff, students and parents within their day-to-day lives. That said, it is far from my desire to insist what should or should not be seen as valuable to any individual or faculty and the hope is that this case study will be used to stimulate further dialogue and critical analysis across these boundaries. For that hope to be realised however,

the first stipulation is the justification of the case study as a potentially enriching method for research.

Punch and Oancea write that ‘the case study is more a strategy than a method’, situating the case study as a commitment to study phenomenon in a holistic manner (2009, p. 148). Gray writes that the single case study is the process by which a hypothesis or theory is tested using multiple units (2004, p. 132). The decision to commit to case study practice here is grounded upon these classifications that echo the overarching aim of this thesis first mentioned in the introduction - the testing of various hypotheses (section 0.3.1.). The case study is thereby commended in the spirit of Punch, Oancea and Gray as a strategy to test prior convictions. It would seem prudent at this point therefore to remind the reader of the overarching hypotheses that will be met through this case study research.

The hypotheses:
The question of ‘who we are’ should not and cannot be ignored in education. Narratives of self unavoidably permeate school culture whether they are hidden or transparent. These ontological hegemonies are embedded in policy making documents (Ofsted’s Frameworks and School Inspection Handbook), are lived out daily in the curriculum and subsequently affect the wellbeing of those in the frontline (staff, students and parents). These notions of self are not neutral or default but are always contingent.

It is possible however for staff, policy makers and academics to engage in ontological research. Through discussion and re-imagination, radically different educational hinterlands could be developed as predicated upon the centrality of the question of self. Such a venture would depend upon a shared commitment to explore narratives of self, to uncover current (hidden) narratives and to apply opposing counter-narratives to pedagogy.

The Christian theologies of the contemplative tradition and Radical Orthodoxy (RO) have the potential to enrich this conversation if presented in a rational,

peaceful and dialogical spirit. They provide an explanation for current normative ontological values discovered through research and offer a distinctive counter-narrative of self. Such theological wisdom has the potential to offer unique transformative ideas germane to policy, practice and dialogue and thus to improve the wellbeing of those in the frontline[1].

These hypotheses lead to four research questions. Written below are the parts of these questions that justify the employment of case study:

- Is there any evidence of a (hidden) narrative of self within a particular school and what are the effects of this narrative upon those in the frontline?
- Can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy help to explain any (hidden) narratives of self … within a particular school?
- Can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy offer any counter-narrative insights that might enrich this study?

The case study strategy was chosen as an appropriate means to continue the testing of hypotheses and the answering of these questions. The overarching purpose was to allow the convictions to be tested where the relationships between a phenomenon (real participant experience) and the context (the hypotheses) were uncertain (Gray, 2004, pp. 123-124). This was in view of pertaining to both experiential and propositional knowledge respectively (Stake, 1994, p. 245). Experiential through the themes extrapolated from the interviews, propositional through the theological analysis, proposals for transformation to school culture and the advancement of action research that followed the case study.

The academic criticisms of the case study are well-known (Punch and Oancea, 2009, pp. 153-154) but the issue of generality is often entrenched within these

[1] One of the reasons that I advance the case study as an instance of universal significance is that this re-evaluation of culture as grounded upon reformed narratives of self is considered to be relevant not only to education, but to many areas of public life including perhaps health care, the prison system and business.

negative critiques. Lieberson for instance cautions that a small number of case studies is not sufficient grounds to collate a proper generalisation. For him, with only a limited numbers of case studies, the policy maker (and perhaps the pedagogical expert) can only expect to identify probabilistic conclusions and therefore lack true external validity (2000). For Simons, it is this search for generalisations and evidence – underscored by a dominant 'scientific' prejudice - that has led towards the case study losing its authority since the 1970s (1996, p. 227). The criticism in short is that the case study does not produce objective evidence or measurements that can be easily generalised, lacks sufficient numerical value to be able to entertain empirical validity and thus cannot be judged an appropriate means for transforming policy, practice and dialogue.

MacDonald and Walker on the other hand define the case study as an 'examination of an instance in action' (1975, p. 2) suggesting that the 'instance' is the means and purpose of generalisation. The purpose of researching and highlighting a particular instance is, in other words, to demonstrate a more general aspect of phenomena. They argue that it is through this pursuit of generalisation from case study that developments in the field of education can be made and have been made. Furthermore as Kennedy argues, evidence suggests that case studies are substantially good for teaching practice – and the teachers who often conduct them – and so there is no reason to believe that they should not also be good for policy makers too (1999, p. 537).

As a teacher who undertook case study research in order to test prior convictions it will be obvious that the sentiments of MacDonald, Walker and Kennedy are ones that are shared. The interviews of the participants were admittedly limited not only in the number of interviewees (ten overall) but also in the lack of comparative case studies to which to compare; if one is searching for a comparable set of studies then the search will probably be in vain[1]. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to argue that this case study holds both intrinsic

[1] That said, an interested reader would only have to navigate the papers introduced in chapter one on performativity to conclude that this case study was not just one voice standing alone but one of a general type; a type that sought to gauge and critique the effects of the *atomistic economic* narrative on the lives of staff, parents and students.

and instrumental value (Punch and Oancea, 2009, p. 150). Intrinsic because the interviews offered rich, earnest and profound reflections of matters deeply personal and pertinent to the reality of school culture and wellbeing. Instrumental because this particular case study provides an instance of insight into a wider more universal issue that, as has been claimed, cannot be negated whether we like it or not – that narratives of self affect wellbeing. In this sense at least, the theological analysis focused upon both the unique (the interview data, particular experiences of wellbeing and official educational documentation) and what is common (a lived experience of (hidden) narratives for those who work in the public square). Moreover, if the case study does lead to transformations to school policy, practice and dialogue in the participant's institution (SSP) then this too is a reason for locating the case study as an authentic means for wider reflection for both the policy maker and pedagogical expert.

Stenhouse offers a different answer to the question of validity, utilisation and generality. For him educationists should adopt the historical method of study (1978). What Stenhouse envisioned was a retrospective generalisation of data based upon the culmination of papers, carefully archived and ordered. For Stenhouse, history as practical research, made publically available all the evidence and sources in readiness for interpretation and judgement. History works through the navigation in and through this data so that informed conclusions could be drawn (p. 25). Less was history about prediction but more a response to the unpredictable past (p. 26). Testimonies, case studies and documentary evidence are collated (p. 31) not as objective data but as the data that allows for other historians to validate the interpretation (p. 33). The historian's concern is thus for interpretation and critiques of this interpretation (p. 24) and an interpretation is validated or rejected not only upon the evaluation of the interpretation but upon the sources that feed the interpretation (p. 25). Historical practical action is therefore not about statistics (p. 28) but a method of discipline by which an accumulation of data and evidence can then successfully of unsuccessfully be verified. For Stenhouse, this methodology would be well placed as a paradigm for strong educational research that had hitherto faltered in its pursuit of generality and validity.

There is much to be said for Stenhouse's desire for archiving, order and accumulation of data in order to validate through the historical analysis. The utilisation of the historical method is certainly not irrelevant to good educational practice and lessons learnt from one faculty to another should neither be ignored nor feared. Indeed Stenhouse's work led him to differentiate between case study, case data and case record and this proved to be a useful tool for this study as will be evident shortly. However, neither need Stenhouse's predilection for historical method determine all educational research validity. On the contrary, as Simons argues there is much to be gained for the policy maker (Ofsted), the pedagogical expert (and experts in other fields) and the school, in learning from singular case study phenomena.

For Simons, the single case study generates both unique and universal understandings of the world (1996, p. 225). To put that into context, this is to suggest that the unique experiences of the interviewed participants highlight and mirror a wider brushstroke of shared experience. More precisely, the effects of particular narratives of self upon particular people hold a light up towards a more generalised conclusion: that narratives of self do underpin policy and practice, transform telos and affect wellbeing.

With Elliott and Lukeŝ I agree then that it is 'insight' that might form the basis of understanding (2009, p. 89) and not only the collation of numerous studies. The researcher is therefore potentially analogous to the artist whose work is validated by a reader whose perspective is changed as a reaction to the work/insight (p. 83). The key issue is not necessarily therefore one of collecting enough evidence to justify verification – whatever 'enough' might mean – but of being confident in the case study and confident in the interpretation and analysis; in short being confident in the individual(s) involved who hold up for inspection and evaluation a picture of captured reality (p. 103). Not that this captured reality should be thought neutral[1] or scientifically measurable but more that, like a piece of art, a

[1] Gray is wrong therefore in his assessment that the researcher should write for the audience and not himself because the researcher is also the conviction and hypothesis that is tested in the study and as such is an actor in the audience too (p. 144).

window is opened to reveal an account of meaning. It is through this case study of interviews that various hypotheses (the account of meaning) will be tested, the data and analysis revealed and this captured reality offered to Ofsted, pedagogical expert and school for their response.

If critical response to the analysis of particulars and generalised insight is thus the final purpose of this writing, it is hoped that judgements of validity will be made in this light. Where a reader might favour a more 'scientific', measurable, comparable or statistically verifiable type of analysis, the only truthful retort is that this not the intention of this case study. Whilst there might be reasons for discounting any findings on the principles of a favoured methodology, this should not be insisted upon with such haste as to overlook the lived experiences of these participants however. Nor are the overarching insights of the theological analysis or the central place of narratives of self considered to be of lesser significance due to a lack of comparable data. It is, on the other hand, on the basis of an insight born of hypotheses testing that the single case study and its analysis is here justified and vindicated. In a very purposeful sense, this sidesteps the issues of generalisation through measurement and numerical validity, pointing the reader instead towards a particular unique study whilst concurrently holding up for inspection and critique the (universal) analysis that unfolds.

In short, the purpose is not proof or to claim authority but to demonstrate through practical reasoning and through the testing of hypotheses an insight into educational ontological hegemony, the effects of this narrative of self on the lives of others and to proffer a radically different imagined hinterland of practice via the lens of a theological analysis. This is not to claim *the* way forward but *a* way forward and it is hoped that the reader will respond to this case study and analysis favourably. There is less interest in verifying or defending my data through the scientific analysis affiliated with 20th Century positivism[1] and more

[1] For an erudite and thorough critique of positivism and its legacy today the many works of David Bentley-Hart offer a cutting philosophical challenge. In particular, the issues are dealt with in typically fervent verve in his publication 'Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies' (2009) – chapter 16 especially. The works of Taylor (1989 and

interest in uncovering and challenging current ontological parlance – both of the reader and of my own – and advancing a different vision of self and purpose.

4.2. A justification for the academic (theological) analysis of educational instances

It will be clear that there is a commitment here to an academic (theological) analysis of case study instance (participant interviews). The intention now is to justify the use of a theological analysis. This can be surmised as a rejection of all dualistic[1] thinking in educational research and the rejection of value-free research as evidenced by Holliday (Shamin and Qureshi, 2010, pp. 10-11). It is a proposal for a convoluted demographic of document, experience, culture and theory (academic/theological) as a means of productive analysis. This can best be achieved by reference to Elliott's paper, 'Educational Theory, Practical Philosophy and Action Research' (1987) in which the works of Hirst, the Whites and Gadamer are evaluated.

In this paper, Elliott identifies a conclusion drawn by Pat and John White. The White's argued that the questions that were likely to be asked in a school environment were different from the questions being asked in the academic world. The academic disciplines were not therefore thought appropriate for analysing the actual experience of a teacher or student - in this case theology's engagement with participant data. For the Whites, the emphasis on research should be centred upon the questions asked by the teachers rather than by those posed by academics (1984).

Whilst it is entirely reasonable to create research around the questions asked by the teacher, this does not ultimately challenge the view that the academic endeavour should be divorced from this process of asking questions because this

2007) and MacIntyre (1981 and 1990) cited in chapter four are also useful genealogies in this regard.

[1] Dualism here implying the demarcation between two different types of epistemological position; teacher researcher and specialist expert (the academic disciplines).

assessment assumes a dualism between the academic world and the experience of the teacher that can and should be rejected. The assumption that the White's make is that the teacher is somehow stood apart from the world of academia negating any kind of reasoned prejudice and asking the questions in a vacuum of neutral rationality. Holliday rightly discards this view as "the 'naïve' postpositivist view of reality" (2010, pp. 10-11) because the participants/teachers cannot help but reflect and speak in a language formed in part by an academic dialect of which they are already familiar.

Thus the most obvious reason for rejecting the White's view is that the participants/teachers have already been trained in an academic institution – the School/University. To imagine that this training is value free would be to imagine the impossible and the relationship between academic values and the participant's values is surely intricate. Whilst it will always prove impossible to expose comprehensively the ways in which the disciplines determine values, to deny any correlation is equally impossible. As Elliott writes in the shadow of Gadamer, we are all people of prejudice, supposition and prejudgement (1987, p. 106). The views of all the actors or participants must therefore be already tainted in academic thought. Teachers for Gadamer, 'would be involved in the reflective process of phronesis in which they deliberated about concrete practical problems in relation to the principles, values, and beliefs they brought to the situation' (1987, p. 108) and here we see manifest the symbiosis of teacher (and student/parental) experience already infused in academic parlance.

Hirst argues for a different reason that the academic disciplines (theology) should not be considered the appropriate means for determining educational principles (1983). Such a conclusion is reasoned on the assumption that action should govern or found these principles. Practical action in a classroom should come first and from these actions only then the academic principles established. Hirst therefore argues for an ordering of research that rejects any notion of academic thought first informing the principles that are then acted out by the teacher. For the specialists (of theology) a 'response' should only thus be made to the particularity of school experience as embraced by the teacher (1983). In this way, academics identify ideas born of teaching experience and engender these examples of praxis into the

specialist area of expertise – an academic response to concrete classroom practice. From this, the teacher researcher can utilise the ideas and concepts of the academics with the aim of improving teaching.

In part, my research might appear to uphold this preferred ordering. For instance, the genealogical thesis of RO is used to 'respond' to the words of the participants through an analysis of economic life. This genealogical reading will also 'respond' to normative ontological values and the effects upon wellbeing that were expressed by the participants to proffer new vistas of educational possibility. However, there is not necessarily the natural order between the teaching experience and the academic response that Hirst imagines. Any such ordering suggests another dualism that should be discarded. On the contrary, it will be argued that educational practice cannot be prior to the academic response any more than the academic response can be prior to practice. Whilst it is entirely right to be mindful of academic experts like the theologian playing God (Elliott, 1987, p. 111), there is perhaps another way to envision the relationship between the participant, researcher and the academic theory.

As someone who both practices teaching and reads theology, this prayerful academic discipline has been experienced as deepening the extent of ontological reflection in the very context of teaching praxis. For example, any meditations upon the question of self stimulated through theological readings cannot be divorced from the real transformations that have taken place in the classroom. Better put, teaching practice is ingrained in theological reflection and theological reflection is only possible in the context of historical reality – in this instance, my teaching practice. In this sense, neither practice nor theory can come first because there is no first. The very hypotheses to be tested in this case study are thus located both in theological reasoning and simultaneously within day-to-day teaching practice and experience.

Rather than seeing the academic playing God therefore, we could envision theological reason in a manner akin to art, bringing to education reflections of the world not previously evidenced. Thus the hypotheses and case study must, as a matter of course, be necessarily saturated in the theological dispositions of which

I am familiar regardless of any volition to negate this. Concurrently the theologian (academic) might behold the participant interviews as offering historical realities that challenge pre-conceived theological prejudice. As Holiday succinctly advises, 'seek the proliferation of variables… acknowledge and capitalise on the impact of the researcher…have no fear of travelling to the hidden depths and mysterious complexities of reality' (Shamin and Qureshi; 2010, p. 12).

The positions of Hirst and the White's thus betray a dual epistemological prejudice; a matter of either/or. An assumption is made that knowledge belongs to or is owned by individuals, in this case 'either' researcher 'or' participant 'or' academic theology. The argument on whether the beliefs that underpin practice are best answered by formal disciplines as Hirst argued or by every day processes and teacher experience as the White's suggest, both signal this distinct epistemological false dualism. Two sides of the same coin. Alternatively, if knowledge is considered to be a shared principle of becoming or the convolution of reflections, experiences and cultures then this dualism can be challenged. Such a theory of knowledge is supported by the work of Gadamer who argues we are persons determined by history and narrative in a continuous practice of change. Our knowledge is thus a continual re-imagining of our place in the world. In view of research, all our beliefs will naturally be projected, our prejudice inevitable and prejudgments unavoidable (1975, pp. 238-240).

In short, this is to reject any dualistic thinking or assumed neutrality in this case study method but seek to proffer this particular instance of universal significance as an insight written for response. The prescient principle is that neither theological (academic) reasoning, participant value or researcher prejudice is considered complete, neutral or prior. More auspiciously perhaps, the acceptance of the osmosis of theory and practice, shared vulnerability of analysis and the inescapability of ontological predisposition leads potentially towards the spirit of dialogue and friendship. In the apt words of Williams:

'No project is just mine, wholly unique to me. I have learned from others how to think and speak my desires; I need to be heard – but that means that I need to speak into, not across, the flow of another's thought and speech. And, in all this, in the

thinking of what it is for me to think at all, I may gradually understand the sense in which the robust, primitive, individual self, seeking its fortune in a hostile world and fighting off its competitors, is a naïve fiction' (2000, p. 93).

4.3. The interview process

The following section outlines and seeks to justify the procedures involved in the interviews of ten participants as a central part of the case study. It also seeks to place these interviews in context of the broader aims of this thesis and hypotheses. It is important to note that at the time of interview the ontological *neutrality* or the *atomistic economic* self within Ofsted's directives had not yet been uncovered. Nor was it possible to predict exactly what a theological response to the interviews would entail. All these different aspects of the thesis gradually came together over time.

The question of 'self' and the 'purpose of education' were the two central strands of the two participant interviews. In the final analysis, two interviews of five teachers, four sixth form students and one parent were undertaken. Although this posed only a limited number of participants the number was enough to extract three common themes, enact a theological analysis and thus to provide a case study instance of a universal significant with the aim of inspiring responses from the school, pedagogical experts and Ofsted.

Before the participants were chosen, the only stipulation made was that a minimum of four members of staff and four students would be involved in the ten. This was to ensure a fair representation of what were considered the frontline main actors. An excel spreadsheet with a random variable generator was chosen to select the parents, teachers and staff. In the first instance, ten potential participants were selected. Letters (certified from the Ethics committee in 2015) were then sent to all the participants informing them about the research and inviting them to interview. The letters to the participants can be found in appendices 2 - 4. Within the 'opt in' consent forms it was explained that full anonymity would be ensured

and that any information would only be placed 'on the record' for the purpose of the research and with written consent. Otherwise, it would be destroyed. Two potential participants did not reply, so two further random selections were made, the letters sent and returned affirmatively and the ten participants who had decided to help then agreed times and dates for the interviews. There was no attempt to sample by gender, ethnicity, social class or any other category, as one of the overarching themes of the thesis and SSP is that our stories of self matter regardless of any particular category that we might fit into.

Each participant took part in two interviews that were recorded on a dictaphone. All the participants were assured anonymity. The first interview was semi-structured, the second interview structured. The reason for the choice of two different types of interview will be explained shortly but the ultimate aim was to gather – albeit from an admittedly limited number of interviews - a rich picture of participant experience predicated upon notions of self and educational purpose. The interviews were conducted one to one. There were no group or paired interviews to avoid possible peer pressure prejudice or the views of dominant individuals becoming central. The one to one interview also allowed for space, personal reflection and depth of response. The process of interviewing conducted as part of this case study combined both deductive and inductive reasoning; deductive because the hypotheses and theory were being deliberately tested, inductive because of the unpredictable patterns that emerged – the intention was to identify common themes that were consistently expressed during the interviews.

Before the first semi-structured interview the participants were informed that the two questions that they would discuss would be, 'what do we mean by the self?' and, 'what is the current purpose of education?' As a means of allowing the participants time to prepare, should they wish, they were all provided in advance with a list of the prompts that would be used again during the interview. The prompts were included to help the participants grapple with the two questions. They compiled a vast array of words and phrases to inspire reflection and confidence[1]. The decision to use prompts was in line with a process of instance

[1] The list of prompts can be found in appendix 5 and 6.

interviewing technique; the idea that discussion might be enhanced, confidence gained and events told through the meditation upon something concrete rather than relying solely upon memory.

During the first interview, the participants were given some time to assess the prompts relating to the question, 'what do we mean by the self?' The participants then identified any of the words of phrases that they thought were relevant or important. Having identified whatever was relevant or important a recorded interview was begun. I started all the interviews by asking the interviewee why the particular prompts had been selected. A semi-structured interview followed this initial question. Having ascertained that the first part of the interview had come to its natural end, the recording was interrupted and the interviewees were then given the prompts to the question, 'what is the purpose of education?' Again, time was given to reflect and identify the prompts before the interview recommenced. During this part of the interview, the interviewees were encouraged to reflect further on their experiences of working in an environment relative to the current purpose. During both parts of interview one, I would raise questions based upon the participant's responses, perhaps asking them to expand or seeking clarification of what had been said. The shortest interview conducted was timed at 50 minutes. The longest interview was 1hr 10 minutes.

This semi-structured approach was intended to allow freedom of response. With fewer restrictions and a certain freedom of expression the hope was that the interviewees would feel more confident and not think that I was looking for the right answer (Labov, 1973). This was especially true for the students who might have been suspicious of authority or power. The semi-structured interview was therefore aimed at raising confidence, providing time, establishing a climate of authentic response and allowing events/stories to be told with the purpose of gaining a range of experiences (Greene and Hogan, 2005).

The second interview was more structured. During this interview, ten formal pre-set questions were asked as a means to provide more exacting prompts[1]. The

[1] See appendix 7 for the questions.

questions were provided immediately after interview one and thus did not reflect any of the key findings of these interviews. The structured interview was utilised as a means to avoid the participants evading the point or becoming unnecessarily distracted (Powney and Watts, 1997). There was then a gap of between one and two weeks before interview two. This was to allow participants the time to reflect and prepare should they wish. The more controlled type interview questions were written on the same themes of interview one – the question of self and educational purpose – and with the same final aim of allowing the participants to tell their stories and experiences. The shortest interview was 25 minutes, the longest interview was 50 minutes.

In interview one, I did not knowingly push for a preferred response. The only requirement was that the participants spoke with relative freedom about their experiences of self and purpose in education. In interview two, the questions were more directed to avoid evasive responses. The two interviews together allowed for a rich procurement of participant data. Following each interview a full transcript was written. This enabled the navigation of data to be simplified and through the act of writing allowed me to become more aware of and extract common themes so that I could test my original hypotheses and later analyse these themes through the theological lens. The interviewees were handed the transcripts (called summary reports) within one week of the interviews and were offered the opportunity to qualify anything they had said, to amend or add to it, or strike it off the record. The participants then signed the transcripts, a copy given to them, and the original placed in my records.

In summary, participants were asked to take part in five ways:

1. By engaging (with prompts provided) with the question of self and the purpose of education prior to the first interview. These prompts took the form of a selection of individual words or phrases relating to the question of self and the purpose of education.

2. By participating in interview one. This was a semi-structured interview in which participants used the prompts to explore the question of self and purpose of education.

3. By reflecting (and commenting upon should they wish) a summary report of interview one.

Questions to be asked in interview two were also provided at this stage for the participants to prepare should they wish.

4. By participating in interview two. This was a structured interview of ten formal questions.

5. By reflecting (and commenting upon should they wish) a summary report of interview two.

4.4. The extraction of three key themes

Having completed twenty interviews of ten participants and having had the transcripts authenticated by the participants, the data then afforded itself towards a theological critical analysis and further testing of my hypotheses. As such, three prevalent themes were, in time, extracted from the interview data – called the case record[1] (Stenhouse, 1976, p. 37) - two of which lent themselves towards this theological exploration, one of which was included to substantiate the relevance of the interview process and by implication the proposal for action research in the school (SSP):

Theme 1: The participants consistently suggested that the self was *complex*. Moreover, the participants also elucidated a common desire to explore and discuss the *complex* self.

---

[1] The case record can be found on p. 289.

Although this particular theme was not one that would be theologically analysed, it was considered as important not only as a means of testing the hypotheses but also of justifying the potential of future action research in the participant's school and to indicate a shared wish to examine narratives of self more broadly in education.

Theme 2: The interviews evinced a current narrative of self in education – and concurrent pedagogical purpose – that could reasonably be interpreted as *atomistic economic*.

This, significantly, was analogous to the interpretation of Ofsted's ontological vernacular that was concurrently being uncovered in the Frameworks, School Report and School Inspection Handbook.

Theme 3: The participants universally agreed that the current *atomistic economic* culture was having negative effects on the wellbeing of those involved in the frontline of school.

These three themes proved the foundations for the justification of SSP and a theological analysis.

4.4.1. Challenges to this interview technique

There are of course challenges to this research process and what Gray summarised as the internal validity (2004, p. 136). The lack of generality and neutrality seemingly substantiate many of these critiques. The warnings include the lack of falsifiable data, the problem of interpretation, the narrow field of enquiry, the imposition of theory on practice, the prejudice of the prompts, the lack of researcher neutrality and the personal pedagogical prejudices that inspired the hypotheses in the first instance. An awareness of these challenges is

important and the hope is that these challenges have been partially met in the first part of this chapter through the justification of case study (section 4.1.) and will be answered more comprehensively shortly.

An informative paper by Steinar Kvale (2006) performs a sharper critique of the interview process and interviewer responsibility. He warns against the power involved in the interview process even – and perhaps especially – by well intentioned interviewers. Kvale writes of five power dynamics that can underpin the interview experience: The interviewer rules the interview, the interview is a one-way dialogue, the interview is an instrumental dialogue, the interview may be a manipulative dialogue, the interviewer has a monopoly of interpretation. In the light of these critiques and to justify the method employed, it proved useful to turn to the work of Stenhouse who made the important and relevant distinction between case data, case study and case record (1976, p. 37).

The case data refers to all the evidence gathered – the primary sources. This included here the interview audio recording and transcripts (and later Ofsted's documentary evidence). The case study is the interpretative account, grounded in data. More precisely this was the process of extracting three key themes from the participant interviews by including relevant excerpts. This secondary source was later analysed via the theological lens of RO and the contemplative tradition as explained above. This is evidenced in chapters five, six and seven.

It is the case record however that might best justify this case study's internal validity. The case record refers to a selection of data taken from the case data that is then organised around the central themes. The case record is an edited primary source that is written to enable others to later judge the validity of the researcher's interpretations and subsequent analysis. It is important to state that the case record is a selection from the totality of the case data, and that the case data minus the case record was destroyed upon submission of the research. In this instance, the case record contains much larger excerpts from the transcripts of interviews that justify the extraction of the three chosen themes. Although not included in the thesis, these excerpts nevertheless substantiate the claim that these themes were consistently held points of view. It is the case record therefore that best addresses

Gray and Kvale's concerns. It is this document that can be used to validate or not my choice of theme and my interpretation of participant interview. The case record is therefore a necessary inclusion (p. 289).

Having said that the extraction of these three themes was justified through the case record, it should be added immediately that the research was undertaken with suppositions at its heart. To imagine that any research begins with a tabula rasa would be wholly misleading, as explained above. Indeed, the hypotheses clearly betray my predilections and the hypotheses were written before the interviews. If, as assumed and argued in the thesis, there is no absolute neutrality and hence no neutrality from which to hypothesise, interview or analyse, then the bracketing out of theory or theology and personal supposition before, during or after the case study was never going to be entirely possible - how could it ever be otherwise?

Some will argue that the three themes identified reflect three different personal prejudices that inspired the hypotheses in the first place. That we discover in the world what we expect to find is a psychological axiom that needs little introduction (Rosenthal, 1966; Kierein and Gold, 2000). This is not to say that in interview one explicit leading questions or deliberately one-sided prompts were provided. On the contrary, the attempt to suspend personal belief was made during this process albeit in the knowledge that true impartiality is impossible. The claim is not that the choice of theme was arbitrary but that the themes were consistent and were motivated by participant experience, documentary evidence and academic persuasion. In other words, the three themes reflect the coming together of three different types of supporting reason: personal/experiential, academic/theoretical and research data. Thus if strands of the hypotheses are mirrored in the interview data, validated in the case record, supported in academic analysis (and later substantiated through a review of Ofsted's public documents) then this case study is still validated as an authentic instance of insight. During the theological analysis, my own tendencies and theological prejudices will become more obvious as the potential transformations to policy, practice and dialogue are made transparent. It is worth saying again however that the final aim is for this case study to present an instance of

universal significance and to await response from Ofsted, pedagogical experts and the school of the participants.

In short, implicit prejudice is not denied nor an exact measurable set of quantitative data provided. The purpose is simply one of attempting to disclose a particular instance in order to test the hypotheses - the validity of which will be judged by others. Kvale's warnings also support a fundamental theme running through the thesis - that neutrality is impossible to negate. As there is no desire on my part to claim that the choice of theme could ever negate neutrality, the justification of the case study remains as it was; to engender a universal significant and to potentially lead to further in school action research. The motivation was never to prove or measure a particular statistical reality.

It should also be noted that the choice of which themes to explore was in no way to deem as irrelevant the many other rich and pertinent observations that the participants made during the interviews. That teachers, students and the parent spoke with such passion and emotion and were willing to question with such honesty and thought is hardly beside the point. On the contrary, the suggestion is that it is through reflections and explorations of self of just this type, that schools, experts and policy makers might be inspired to re-think certain facets of educational direction. The prerogative question for me remains the question of 'who we are' and the need to ask this question regularly and listen wisely to one another really does matter. It is this ethos that underpins SSP.

4.5. How the data (and also Ofsted's ontological vernacular) will be analysed

Having identified three key themes, the intention next was to situate this data in conversation with RO and the contemplative tradition. The chief reason for using RO was to apply academic genealogical reasoning to pedagogy; to analyse the themes extracted from the primary sources. The foremost reason for the inclusion of the contemplative tradition was to highlight how a counter theological narrative

of self has the potential to transform the vistas of educational practice and answer some of the concerns of the participants. Chapters five, six and seven are written to fulfil this aim and to point towards the potential of an initiative like that described in chapter eight (SSP), an initiative that mirrors this type of action research.

In chapter five, the views of the participants are introduced to demonstrate their common desire for the *complex* self to be explored. This short section is written to justify the interview process and simultaneously an initiative like SSP. Excerpts from the participants will also be cited to expose a narrative close to the *atomistic economic* self that seemingly permeate their experiences of school policy, practice and dialogue. This narrative of self is then analysed and the meaning of the *economic* self deepened via RO's genealogical thesis as contextualised within Cavanaugh's interpretation of the basics of economic life.

In Chapter six, the effects of working in a culture underpinned by an *atomistic economic* narrative is written by citing from the participants. These negative accounts are then analysed by re-introducing the contemplative tradition and applying the *complex relational* self as a counter-narrative. The conclusion is a re-imagined educational hinterland.

Within chapter seven, the language of Ofsted is analysed. Firstly, the thesis of RO is introduced to challenge the *neutral* and *atomistic economic* narrative that saturates Ofsted's documents to illustrate the need of ontological awareness in education. Secondly, the counter-narrative of self of the contemplative tradition is offered as a means to imagine changes to pedagogy and culture. Finally, the wisdom of the contemplative tradition will be written to justify the radical risks that would be needed to transform school pedagogy and the lack of wellbeing expressed by the participants.

Within chapter eight, SSP will be outlined. The intention by then is to have justified the case study strategy as a rich source of reflection and to have encouraged the school leaders to consider action research. SSP is an initiative that could be employed in the school of the participants to meet four aims that

will have already been modelled in chapters one to seven; raising awareness of the narratives of self, uncovering current hegemonies, exploring counter-narratives and applying reimagined narratives to policy, practice and dialogue.

4.6. Concluding remarks

It is claimed that despite the limitations of numerical, measurable and scientific data that this case study research will stand as a means of reflection and response. The aim is not to present a statistical analysis of pedagogical data, but to test the convictions written into my hypotheses through reference to the case data, case record and later to theological analysis. That any notion of neutrality is considered fictitious will be clear by now, nevertheless the wish is for this particular case study to highlight, in a way analogous to art, an instance of a more universal significant. As such, both the validity and the evaluation of this instance of insight will become a matter for the reader to discern. This, in short, is the justification for the case study strategy.

In writing for the three audiences in particular, the hope is also that a gap will be closed slightly between the policy maker and school, the expert and the policy maker and the expert and the school. It is now time that we moved beyond these narrow boundaries of faculty. Indeed, if any such dualisms or value-free approaches are finally decreed mythical, as indicated in this chapter, then any attempt to widen this sectarian approach is surely misguided.

The aim of the following three chapters is to present a case study through which these three audiences might respond. Ofsted, pedagogical experts and the school of the participants will be introduced to an instance of participant interview and Ofsted vernacular. These primary sources will be analysed through a theological lens as a means both to critique the current culture and to point towards a different conceivable educational possibility. This analysis will be predicated upon a theological counter-narrative of self. It is for the audience to judge the validity and profundity of the following analysis; reading as they must through the lens of their own preconceptions and prejudices.

Chapter Five

The (hidden) *economic* self and economic life

5.0. Introduction

That our narratives of self cannot be divorced from school purpose is a central claim of this thesis. A further prerogative has been to insist that ontological neutrality is mythic and that any decision, whether implicitly or explicitly, to bypass the ontological question in school will essentially prove impossible. The conclusion of these claims is to contend that an uncovering of ontological hegemony in school is as vital as the need to resituate policy, practice and dialogue in line with renewed awareness and exploration of ontological reasoning. Better put, it is necessary first for leadership and staff to be aware of the centrality of narratives of self and then to transform school praxis through a range of ontological reflections. These reflections might usefully include the adoption of a particular theological narrative: the *complex relational* self.

The *complex relational* self was first introduced in chapter two as a theologically inspired counter-narrative. The *complexity* was described as the myriad of inter-connected experiences and realities that form a person. The first aim in this chapter is to illustrate where the interviewed participants shared the idea of the *complex* self. It is also to suggest with the participants, that even where the question of self is complex, that the ontological exploration is still deemed fruitful - theme 1[1]. By inference, it is to suggest that an initiative like 'The Study of Self and Purpose' (SSP), which seeks to allow our ontological imagination to determine policy, practice and dialogue might be welcomed by the participants in their school. This addresses research question 1: Is there any evidence of a (hidden) narrative of self within Ofsted documentation and within a particular

[1] The reader is reminded that further and more developed excerpts for themes 1, 2 and 3 can be found in the case record p. 289.

school and what are the effects of this narrative upon the wellbeing of those in the frontline?

In the second section, citations from the participants will demonstrate the economic telos that is universally evident in their school experience. Because the teleological vision cannot be divorced from ontological imagination, this pertains to the *economic* self (also addressing research question 1). The aim is also, by implication, to support my interpretation of Ofsted's (hidden) *economic* vernacular. However, it should be noted again, that during the interviews the prejudice within official documentation had not yet been researched or recognised. Establishing the *economic* self and economic telos as a formative narrative was a conclusion that was reached by drawing from both the review of Ofsted's language (chapter one) and the navigation of interview data (chapters five, six and seven) over a substantial period of time.

A selection of participant excerpts are then analysed via a Radical Orthodox (RO) critique of economic life. The aim is to allow the participants to speak their wellbeing concerns – theme 3 - in the light of an academic theological analysis. This addresses research question 4: What might action research look like in the school of the participants and can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy offer any insights stemming from a counter-narrative of self that might enrich this study? This theological critique is useful as it adds to the texture and meaning of the *economic* narrative articulated by the participants – theme 2. This will become gradually clearer during the chapter through an analysis that validates and deepens the definition of the *economic* self.

5.1. The participants: a desire to explore the *complex* self[1] (theme 1)

[1] For further participant accounts than are evidenced in this section, refer to the case record, p.289: The desire to explore the complex self (Theme 1).

For many of the participants the notion of the self was *complex*. Although only one participant, Rachel, selected the ‘complex’ prompt, eight out of the ten participants used the word ‘complex’ during the interviews and arguably all participants alluded to this notion by inference. Indeed the divergence of opinion drawn from the data demonstrated clearly the complexity of our notions of self.

For teacher Rachel for instance the self was like a blank canvas that was evolved throughout our lives:

‘*this was right… that a person was not just one holistic thing but that a person had different parts… It is almost like a blank canvas that is then added to throughout your life… it’s complex, it’s changeable, it’s evolving’* (Interview One, 2015).

Whilst student Logan agreed that the self was also like a blank canvas he was more specific in how it evolved identifying this change as being ‘ultimately psychologically constructed’. But for another student Grace, the self was more than the just psychologically anchored. For her it included not only our psychological reality but also ‘background and upbringing’, more informed by society. Student Harriet went further when she suggested that the self was thought to be determined and reduced to ‘sociological behavioural patterns’, and this view was supported in part by teacher Mike who said:

A self is certainly socially constructed to a degree, but within those parameters there is scope for pushing those boundaries. To a huge degree the self is dependent upon others. …… This (social construction of the self) *can be parents but not only parents. Teachers and the school community can be different influences from the parents and home life perhaps there were belief and values that were buried deep under other things’* (Interview One, 2015).

For others, including student Ned, the self was also more than socially constructed but was part of our natural disposition, ‘something innate’. For other participants the sheer complexity of the self made any comprehensive

penetration of this notion impossible. Rachel for instance commented that we could never get 'beneath the surface' of this complexity and Mike shared this point of view suggested something similar:

'*We can say that a person is complex or multi-faceted. We cannot dissect tangibly that complexity and know entirely who or what they are… We cannot get beneath the surface of this complexity without it becoming incredibly broad'* (Interview One, 2015)

Indeed, two of the students went further than this by stating that the self was not even a definitive concept that could ever properly be defined:

'*you just see your-self as you, and you don't know how to explain it – it is just who you are. It is different for everyone. People have different perceptions so there is not a definite concept. Even now I would not know how to define it properly (Grace,* Interview One, 2015).

'This also changes how you are seen by others and how you act. It might be that the true self is hidden from others who might not know what your inner self really is…there is no definite concept, there are too many aspects that can be brought into it… it was impossible to put it down to one thing. I personally do not know what it is myself but it is a mixture of different things that come together to make one' (Logan, Interview One, 2015).

And the view that there was no absolute definition was also held by the one parent to be interviewed, Daisy, who retorted:

'*no there is not a true concept of self – it is just too complicated. There are too many layers to us all… I know that I am complex' (Interview One, 2015).*

The *complex* self is here evidenced not only explicitly through the words of the participants but also in the fact that they did not agree upon a definitive shared account. In the excerpts above we moved from the self as a blank canvas that is formed by psychological and/or social experience towards a self that is innate.

Other participants suggested that the self could not ever be named and finally others who suggest that there is not a true concept. During an interview with student Ned, a potential problem of discussing the *complex* self was concisely stated. For Ned:

'Everyone is going to have a slightly different idea of self. No opinion is ever going to be a true fact. There is only interpretation' (Interview One, 2015).

It could be argued therefore that the complexity of self is a valid reason for overlooking the ontological concern in education; that there is little point reforming pedagogy from our narratives of self when our narratives are so convoluted and distinct. However, it can reasonably be argued that there is a need to discuss these notions in order to enrich educational dialogue and, perhaps more pointedly, that it is a question that ultimately cannot be negated whether we are inclined to explore or not. This is to defend the significance of dialogue as the means through which we move beyond the narrow vistas of interpretation to open up new and unexpected areas of thought and deepen awareness. This is true regardless of whether we reach consensus or continue to diverge; the process is still necessary and rich.

It was deeply significant too that the interviewed participants, although admitting to the complexity of self, also shared the desire to uncover and explore narratives of self and as such justified the proposal for deepening the investigation (and by inference the process of SSP). Parent Daisy thought this dialogue might happen between teachers and parents insisting that we do need to do 'something different in education', suggesting that we do need to explore the question of who we are. The idea of having a conversation about our narratives of self was also advanced by experienced teacher Patel who also wished 'a meaningful conversation about it'. For Patel, this conversation would allow us to know better the reasons for a child's deviant behaviour at school. For Patel therefore the exploration of self was one that potentially opened up avenues for understanding the motivation and attitudes of students.

However, contrary to this common desire for dialogue and conversation, in the words of two of the teachers, a very different picture was painted. Rachel stated that unfortunately she have not had one conversation about it since she started teaching and David lamented that it is 'almost totally forgotten, ignored or never thought about'. In an astute observation, teacher Mike speculated as to why there might be a reticence to explore narratives of self in education. He suggested that when people do ask challenging questions or decide to contemplate difficult ideas then 'we ask about huge fundamental shifts in the ways that people think' including the way we think about the culture of the school. However, in the simple but evocative words of Mike, such dialogue 'does matter because the self matters'. For Harriet too, the exploration of the indefinable self was difficult but was important to develop awareness and to think rather than just go along with things as they are. Nonetheless, she was also cautions about the reality of challenging the way things are:

'*It does not matter that there is not a definable self…It is still worth exploring…I think it allows you to question things but then again you are hit with the harsh truth that this is the way that society functions, this is what we go along with, and there isn't much escaping that. So I think it's worth it to be aware, rather than going along without thinking'* (Interview Two, 2015).

It was significant to note the participants' shared conviction of a *complex* self, yet equally their desire to speak and explore and the hope is that SSP might be adopted into school as a vehicle for enacting these challenging questions. All of the participants interviewed agreed that the questions of self and purpose were important to ask and all were similarly positive about the chance to explore the questions during the interview process[1]. Yet contrary to this wish for dialogue, there is no encouragement to explore narratives of self in Ofsted directives nor consequently in the school's policy or philosophy. There are many explanations for this lack of desire including the neutrality and nihilistic thesis of RO, which

[1] See case record: iv) The participants responses to the question "To what degree do you think that policy makers, school leaders and teachers should consider and explore the concept of 'self'?", p. 301

is a line of enquiry that will be taken up in chapter seven (sections 7.2.1. and 7.2.2.).

The more definitive *complex relational* self of Christian theology was not broached by any of the participants but given that one of the goals of SSP is that of learning across boundaries, it will be suggested that the *complex relational* self is a theological notion that would enrich this discussion going forward and potentially lead towards munificent reform. This hypothetical application will be discussed more comprehensively in chapters six and seven. Before this analysis, it is prudent first to introduce the narrative of self and purpose that became evident through a navigation of the participant data – the *economic*.

5.1.1. The participants: towards an economic telos and the *economic* self[1]

The following section is concerned with the purpose of education as articulated by the participants and as such to an ontological identification that cannot be divorced from this telos. In the final analysis, the participant data alluded to an economic purpose, to an inferred *economic* self and also to what is lost in this system. The section will begin by citing from the five teachers who all suggested that meeting targets, achieving grades and examination results was the ultimate goal of education for the staff. In short, the purpose of teaching is to achieve favourable measurable data – to be ‘judged like a business’ as Daniel retorted. For the four interviewed students too, examination grades were the goal of educational purpose but these participants often went further by suggesting that the final purpose was employment and money. That examination results, measurable data, meeting targets, business type judgement, employability and money were quite clearly the fundamental goals of education for these participants is to suggest evidence of an *economic* telos and ontology. The reader should note that Cavanaugh’s thesis of economic life will shortly be

[1] For further participant accounts than are evidenced in this section, refer to the case record: Evidence of the atomistic economic self (Theme 2), p. 293.

introduced as a means to justify this conclusion and also to deepen the narrative of the *economic* self (section 5.2.). The reader might also refer back to chapter one in which similar economic facets were outlined within the academic action research into performativity.

During his first interview, Daniel spoke of the economic ideal with the analogy of the school and a business venture being a particularly germane citation:

'*but education is now a business and examination results are what we are judged on… that is how we are judged like a business, stuff in and stuff out* (Interview One, 2015).

In his second interview, Daniel went further when he not only described an economic vision of the purpose of education, 'production line, competition, jobs' - and by inference a (hidden) *economic* narrative of self - but also spoke with regret about the empty nature of this purpose and what was being lost – the idea of just 'being':

'*It's just pieces of paper, production line, we're in the business of competition, jobs… that is our system… There is not much place for anything else as long as that is our instructed place… We are more interested in achieving and doing rather than being'* (Interview Two, 2015).

For Beth also, the final ends of education was exam results and measurable data and, like Daniel, as a consequence of this economic ideal something else quite profound was getting lost; for Beth it was the student's perceptions of success:

'The school think of success as grades… The whole education system needs to recognise that, it is not all about exam results at the end of it. But with such an emphasis on exam grades and league tables this gets forgotten in education. This is a real shame and we should be more willing to celebrate the successes that the students think that they make rather than our idea of success… The government works by having standards that can be measured and governed. We

have league tables and comparable exam grades and these are the measures that can be compared between schools' (Interview One, 2015).

For Rachel, like Daniel and Beth, the ultimate goal for the teacher and for the school was the achievement of examination targets and standards that were set by the government. For Rachel too, regrettably there was something that was being negated in a system that is fixated by economic ideals only. For her it was that the government do not consider the question of self:

'The Government has an idea how education should be and it depends upon who is leading the country as to how it is run. But they do not consider the question of what people are like they just have a criteria for meeting standards and targets so the question of self is not considered when designing this system' (Interview One, 2015).

Thus for Daniel, Beth and Rachel the economic drive in school was responsible for an unfortunate loss of 'being', 'different notions of success' and 'the question of self'. Mike also articulated an imagined counter-purpose to the economic ideal of data and target achievement. Through this comparison, Mike demonstrated both the weight of this *economic* prejudice and the possibility of transformation through nurture and exploration. He thus added support to the position that something is being lost in the current system:

'Only today I have been listening to an article in which head teachers, unions and others were talking over the implications of assessing 4 and 5 year olds as a benchmark for their future – I just know it's not necessary… (we need) *a more nurturing system in which the self was given to exploring, being creative, working out for themselves the parameters of thought and creativity and value... We are educators, we should be finding more experiences that are valuable for them, not just pieces of data. Education should be far more than which University they are capable of getting into'* (Interview One, 2015).

Interestingly another teacher, Patel, also spoke about the reality of examination grades as the top (economic) priority but also about how staff might actually

present a different but misleading story if asked about the primary purpose of education - forming individuals. Arguably, this demonstrated the ubiquitous nature of the economic pursuit but one that is in divergence with what staff might like education to be:

'*If you spoke with 10 head teachers or teachers or whoever that they would likely to tell you that the purpose of education was to, say, form individuals or something akin to this but the real purpose was always to pass exams… We work in a system that sets targets with the purpose of achieving the greatest exam results and this was the one major primary purpose of education… this is where there is evidence of a flawed project or system'* (Patel, Interview One, 2015).

In a similar vein to the teachers, the students also spoke about their experiences in economic terms. Two of the students, Ned and Logan, summarised the thoughts of these students pointedly. Ned suggested that if you were to ask most people what the purpose of education was that they would most like say 'exam results and then go further and say to get a good job'. Logan's comments are also telling for in this citation he associated opportunity with success and success with employment; again underlying the economic prejudice:

'*These enable you to get good grades which then provide you to go on past education or the first part of education into the real world, the world of opportunity. Opportunities are also found within education which enable you to go on and be successful. There are parts of education which prepare you for getting a job... So education prepares you for paid work… Education prepares you for success in whatever kind of job you wish to do'* (Interview One, 2015).

With Ned and Logan, the ultimate telos of education for Grace was also little more than passing exams in order to prepare for the life of work. The final sentence of the excerpt below is hugely informative for here, having first exposed the reality of a hidden *economic* hegemony – 'we may not talk about this but everyone knows that it is true' - Grace then spoke negatively about her experience of this within the context of judgement and setting:

‘*Ultimately it is preparing us for work. What has been ingrained in us from the very beginning of high school is that you go through high school, do well and get good grades and that’s either to go on to university, further education or get a job… We may not talk about this but everyone knows that it is true… So the final purpose of education is to get a job. It is also clear what kind of job someone should get. Those who achieve high grades are pushed harder to get further whereas the middle students are seen as people who are more likely to* (Grace pauses and sighs here), *and you know what place you are in because you are put in a certain set and judged accordingly’* (Interview One, 2015).

The words of Grace address a concern with the current economic telos and it was noticeable too how Harriet wished for a different system. During her first interview, having chosen her ten prompts, I asked Harriet to pick out what the most important purpose of education was. Without hesitation, she picked out ‘the pursuit of the best grades and examination results’. Harriet mirrored the responses of the three other students who said that the idea that examination results underpin education as a function to get people in employment and shared with Grace the dissatisfaction with a system whose fundamental economic goal is functional. Harriet went further by suggesting that a counter-telos - ‘exploring the real inner person’ - might ordain a better system, where getting the best grades possible was not seen as sole the determining force:

‘the fact remained that the purpose of education was getting the best grades possible rather than even exploring the real inner person… The education system is not what it should be. There are other options but in practice it is hard to make another option work. Although the system is flawed it does work in order to get people jobs – as a function’ (Interview One, 2015).

There were many other instances where the students and teachers pertained towards an economic purpose and the subsequent negative effects on wellbeing. During the next section, some of these instances will be substantiated and

developed. The following theological analysis will also continue to show the effects of these narratives upon wellbeing[1] – theme 3.

5.2. RO and the basic matters of economic life: deepening the notion of the *economic* self and the effects upon wellbeing[2] (themes 2 and 3)

Cavanaugh – writing under the rubric of RO - introduces his readers to what he called the 'basic matters of economic life' and the effects of these cultural values upon societies (2008, p. vii). It should be noted that it is not the economic life that is evil in and of itself – indeed economics is necessary for survival - but for Cavanaugh it is the particular economic desire (telos) that is at the heart of the issue. He suggests that this desire/telos can be either rightly directed towards the good or it can be misplaced. Where the right economic desire is actualised, then a space is opened up for enhancing the possibility of communion between persons and human flourishing. This community between persons is analogous with what has been called in this study the Eucharistic *relational* self. Where a misplaced economic desire is enacted the possibility of communion between persons is diminished and persons cease to flourish (2008, pp. vii-x). For Cavanaugh, disconnection, dissatisfaction and unfulfillment are the manifest realities of a misplaced economic life.

The aim is here to map Cavanaugh's reading of misplaced economic telos upon this case study instance. Put more concisely, it is to identify in the participant data evidence of disconnection, dissatisfaction and unfulfillment, whilst concurrently substantiating the claim that the telos of education for the participants was bound up with economic life: data, employment, measurement competition etc. Were it possible to draw an analogy between Cavanaugh's thesis of a misplaced economic life with the participant data, then the narrative of

---

[1] This line of enquiry anticipates and will be developed in chapter six through a theological analysis of a culture of acute accountability.

[2] For further participant accounts than are evidenced in this section, refer to the case record p. 289.

the *economic* self posited in this study would be both illuminated and deepened. At the same time, it would help to explain the wellbeing issues experienced by the participants.

5.2.1. Disconnection

According to Cavanaugh, one of the unfortunate effects of a misplaced economic practice is a disconnection between different bodies. People today, he states, feel besieged by marketing and powerless in the face of disconnected politics and surveillance. There are disconnections too between the powerful corporations and the communities where people live (2008, p. 1). Cavanaugh notes two results of this disconnection; the lack of a clear common ends and the arbitrary power of one will against another. In the words of Cavanaugh, ‘the liberation of desire from ends, on the one hand, and the domination of impersonal power, on the other, are two sides of the same coin’ (2008, p. 2). The following participant excerpts are symptomatic of the disconnections born of misplaced economic desire that Cavanaugh identifies. They highlight both the question of impersonal power that he raises and also the lack of a shared common ends in education. They authenticate his claim that a particular economic pursuit is one that will lead to a lack of human flourishing and weakened communion.

For one of the students, Logan, a disconnection was apparent because teachers ‘lumped together’ the students as one critical mass whilst negating their individual idiosyncrasies, needs and desires. What Logan highlighted was a perceived lack of common ends; the student body wishing to be seen as persons, the teachers seeing them as ‘as one body rather than as individuals’. Another student Harriet, who thought that teachers often saw the students as data, echoed a similar observation of separation between the student body and the teaching body. It is significant that where she spoke of the system being ‘programmed into us’ that she also hinted at the impersonal power of one will against. It is worth noting too, before citing from Harriet, that this disconnection and the reason for it was not solely a student perception. Teachers were also concerned that the system demand that students be read as measurable data. Mike, for

instance, had to question the ethics of his own teaching practice where he found himself 'reducing the student body to data', a reality that, as suggested above, had not escaped student Harriet's perception:

'*we are all labelled as grades and numbers. In short as data – not the real person that we are… the system is flawed…* (the system is) *programmed into us*' (Interview One, 2015).

A similar picture was evinced during an interview with parent Daisy. When I asked Daisy to confirm whether she thought that the school value more the grades of her children that her children she agreed adding that was why her own 'average' children, 'you can forget about them because they are the ones that you can rely on'. For Daisy, her children were seen less as persons and more as potential data and because they were reasonably safe data – being 'self-sufficient and well behaved' - this meant that they could be often 'forgotten'. This therefore pointed towards a gulf between her own perceptions of her children and those of the school. As such, it is possible to observe in this instance a lack of common ends, a radical difference in the way that the same children are viewed by parents and staff.

Arguably, an economic system that reduces the person to data is also a system that exacerbates the disconnection between one will and another. In the words of Rachel for instance, the current system meant that teachers were 'judged upon our successes and failures' and this stemmed a culture of blame. Thinking back on a conversation between herself and a student, Rachel remembered feeling 'worried and anxious' during her first couple of years of teaching. The student had challenged Rachel openly, suggesting that if they did badly in their examination results that it would be her fault. For Rachel this was not an unusual occasion in the teaching profession. If Rachel's experience is representative then we can conclude that a space, brought about by blame, is manifest between the student body and the teaching body. Perhaps this is indicative of Cavanaugh's misplaced *economic* life in which we discover evidence of one will against another in this case predicated upon the fear of failure or poor results:

'*students learnt to blame or hold to account teachers…Teachers are in part responsible for preparing the students adequately and provide the relevant information but that the culture of teacher accountability deflects the responsibility from students to teachers'* (Interview One, 2015).

In reflecting further on the education system, Harriet identified a gap between her own wishes for education and a more impersonal education system. Harriet lamented that students are told that exam results enable them to, 'get on in life, to be the best and out-do other people, fulfil certain roles' pointing towards the misdirected economic life in which people out-do rather than flourish in communion. And Harriet also unearthed a gap between her own aspirations to 'think and question' and the government's economic aspiration of 'moving up the ladder' and thus to this lack of common ends:

'*This fits in with the way in which society is constructed – the ideas of being the best and moving up the ladder… that we all supposedly want to get to… part of the beauty of the world is to question, just thinking. But I think that the education system just sidesteps that'* (Interview One, 2015).

For the teachers too there was a remove between their own notions of success and that of the government who yield the power to decide. Whereas for Beth we should be teaching about life, for the government we should be teaching for an exam. At the root of this was the government who, 'just have a criteria for meeting standards and targets'. Reflecting upon the culture of exam grades and league tables as the government's measures of success compared to those of her form group, Beth illustrated this disjunction and lack of common ends. For the government, exam success was everything but for her students, success could be measured through sport, music and even friendship:

'*Working as a form tutor has demonstrated how many students think of other measure for success rather than simply academic successes. For some this might be not getting a detention in a given week. For others this might be a musical or sporting success. For others it might be about having good*

relationships with other students – good friendship groups. I am learning that defining success is very difficult and different in different situations. The whole education system needs to recognise that, it is not all about exam results at the end of it' (Interview One, 2015).

During a single part of his second interview, Mike spoke passionately about a number of disconnections that he had perceived. The quote can be divided into three parts. The first shows a disjunction between the rhetoric of the policy makers and the reality of the system, the second between his personal volition of what should be celebrated and that of the exam board and the third between his desire to encourage something profound in the face of modern society and education. They follow the same pattern that Cavanaugh drew of a erroneous economic life. It is evidence of, and emblematic of, the lack of common ends and the powerlessness of one will (the teacher) in the face of another (policy maker):

'(i) W*e hear educational policy makers saying things like "every child matters, inclusion"... which always seems to have come from a good place… but it is actually like a factory...* (ii) W*hat makes this country great is a celebration of difference; culture and tradition – something that the exam boards do not consider at all…* (iii) *Modern society and modern education does not allow for or encourage introspection, reflection, evaluation – it might in a tokenistic way but not in any meaningful way* (Interview Two, 2015).

Mike's observations illustrate another sign of a misplaced economic life for one of the most striking aspects of disconnection for Cavanaugh had to do with the powerlessness of people in the face of marketing and advertisement (2008, pp. 18-19). He writes, 'Marketers produce an imbalance of power… through the use of the information…to saturate the social environments' (p. 19). In reviewing the disconnection born of this misplaced economic ideal, Cavanaugh warns of a paternalistic direction, '*We* know what you really want, and we are going to organise society accordingly' (2008, p. 15). The question was whether the same could be recognised also in education through the stories told by the participants. In other words, to trace the interview data for evidence of any ubiquitous

message (marketing of the powerful) being told in education that might have led towards feelings of powerlessness.

In section 5.1.1. the participants were shown to share a common perception that the goal of education was economic (examination results, measurable data, meeting targets, business type judgement, employability and money). The issue here is not to labour this point. Instead, it is to provide some examples of what Cavanaugh describes as the weight of a continual drive towards this goal and the powerlessness of people in the face of this marketing and as such to the disconnection between students/teachers and a foreign external power – the policy maker. Ned for instance spoke about how students were 'programmed as a class as a school as a year' to think always about exams and the next exams that were coming up. In a similar vein, Harriet expressed her concern that students 'are all constructed to think that this (the best grades possible) is what we want' and parent Daisy referred to her Children's school as akin to getting on a 'treadmill like everybody else'. For Mike too it was not only students who were driven in this way but also teachers who 'are ensnared in this system and therefore have to teach in such a narrow way'. Perhaps these notions of being programmed, constructed, treadmilled or ensnared are representative of a pervasive and inflexible marketing expectation. They suggest a system of power and powerlessness, an evasive enterprise, which has dampened the wills of those on the frontline. In the following citation, Harriet expressed this same concern when she suggested that 'it has been drilled into us' and hinted too at the powerlessness that Cavanaugh evinces:

'*it had been drilled into the students that they had this role and this role was the achievement of the best grades and not freedom of thought. This makes me feel trapped…* (it was) *restrictive and programmed into us… it was separate from the real inner person...* E*ven though it is supposedly for my own good, being able to get good grades and do certain jobs and earn money, the whole concept of that is not as you would wish'* (Interview Two, 2015).

Here the phrase 'drilled into the students' could be interpreted to be symptomatic of incessant marketing and the fact that this made Harriet feel 'trapped' shows a

disconnection outlined by Cavanagh between the powerless (the student) and an impersonal power. That this is not what Harriet would wish is also to highlight the negative affect upon her wellbeing. Thus what Harriet demonstrated in this very short passage is a summary of two of Cavanaugh's points; the power of the advertisement and the gulf between her own desires and the will of others within education.

The question of powerlessness that was evident in the interview data can be seen again in the following two examples. The first example is taken from Grace's first interview. Within this interview, an emotional Grace spoke plainly about the economic prejudice in education and in the citation below emphasised again the lack of perceived power to change the norm. The second example is taken from a teacher's perspective. In this excerpt, Mike spoke about how his own vision of education and what he wanted to do and how this was so different from the leaders and policy makers. He also hinted at the powerlessness of the plight to realise these differences in his words, 'you cannot escape':

'*we are all taught not to fight against the system, to conform to the rules… so you know what you have to do'* (Grace, Interview One, 2015).

'S*ometimes they* (the teacher's visions) *are at variance with the leaders and policy makers themselves and again there is a toeing the line element that you cannot escape from because you would be considered a maverick, eccentric and out of step… if you were to decide that the reasons for doing your job were different from everybody's else's'* (Mike, Interview Two, 2015).

It is possible to conclude that a reading of the participants' transcripts bore an analogous representation of Cavanaugh's observations of disconnection born of a misplaced economic desire. All participants at some point in their interviews indicated a disconnection between themselves and other bodies or powers. There was also evidence of a lack of common ends and a pervasive marketing of an *economic* purpose that impaired their wellbeing.

5.2.2. Dissatisfaction

Cavanaugh also cites dissatisfaction as a necessary outcome of an improper economic desire/telos. Such dissatisfaction is determined by and epitomised in what the General Motors people call "the organised creation of dissatisfaction"[1]. A dissatisfaction, in other words, that is devised and willed (2008, p. 46). He suggests that this dissatisfaction can be witnessed in consumerist cultures by the endless restlessness of persons to continue buying, a culture of short-term fixes, but by a power that does not allow or wish for long-term contentment (2008, pp. 33-35). Through an analysis of participant transcripts, the aim was to ascertain whether it was possible to unearth a culture that was comparable to this 'organised creation of dissatisfaction'. If it were possible, then this would both deepen the understanding of what has been termed the *economic* self and also go some way to explaining the negative affects upon wellbeing expressed by the participants.

The economic equivalent to restless shopping in education is plausibly the restlessness to continue improving grades/results ad infinitum. Many student and teacher interviews appeared to validate this claim. The aim here is to identify where the participants indicated a system that is designed to cause them repeated dissatisfaction with performance and to gauge the effects of this upon wellbeing. Take for example two instances that were expressed by Ned during part of his first interview. Firstly, Ned spoke about the pressures that he and his peers felt to continually drive towards improved exam grades. Ned expressed concern that students were being 'trained' to think 'constantly' about improving and it is also worth noting that for him, 'most people seem to think that the way it is at the moment is wrong'. That Ned should think that there is a 'continual', 'constant' 'training' to improve, is to suggest that students are being taught that current performance grades could be better – that they should be restless in their pursuit of improvement. In suggesting that most students wish to resist this restless drive is to highlight his concern. It would be misleading to take Ned's

[1] Quoted in Larson, E. (1992) *The Naked Consumer: How Our Private Lives Become Pubic Commodities*, New York: Henry Holt and Company.

views to mean that for him performance improvement is necessarily to be resisted, but instead that the problem lay in the ever-present insistence and pressure that grades could always be better. The difference is in the constancy of this pressure. This conclusion is drawn because in another part of the interview, Ned spoke positively of other schools that 'think not only about exams but also about the students themselves' indicating that a healthy balance of improvement and wellbeing was possible and desirable.

In the second instance, Ned recounted a familial account of dissatisfaction. Ned spoke with a deep sadness when he told the story of his sister who had quit working as a primary school teacher after only one year 'due to the continual pressure to meet targets rather than work with the students themselves as people'. This continual pressure to meet targets is at least suggestive of a power that demands that teachers too should never be satisfied with current performance and the fact that his sister quit a job for this reason is evidence again of the negative consequences of willed discontent. The relentless and restless drive to improve that Ned was able to observe in both the student and teaching body could therefore be allusive of an "organised creation of dissatisfaction" and analogous to the misplaced economic drive that Cavanaugh exposed. It was telling too that for both Ned and Cavanaugh in their respective contexts, it was affecting negatively the wellbeing of those involved.

In the next example, it is necessary to gauge the intonation evident in Rachel's account of teaching year 11's. Rachel spoke with great emotion and the hope is that the reader will be able to pick up on the urgency and exasperation in her voice as she described a relentless demand bound within policy; a policy that might well be said to deliberately inspire discontent in the teaching profession in order to meet 'standards and targets'. That Rachel also lamented the lack of 'joy' in her teaching experience betrayed the negative effects of such volition:

'(the government have) *a criteria for meeting standards and targets… there is no joy in teaching year 11 at the moment... constantly target setting, reaching targets, setting targets, must be meeting targets, only giving right answers on exam questions, knowing what the right answer is, and getting the best results*

possible – which sounds quite negative… they just have a criteria for meeting standards and targets' (Interview One, 2015).

The final example is taken again from an interview with a teacher. The requirement to improve the grades of pupil premium students[1] has recently become a target for all schools. As a Head of Department, it has been noticeable that over the last few years there has been an increasing pressure from the government to close the academic gap between pupil premium students and non-pupil premium. In the following excerpt, Beth provided a teacher's perspective on the drive to achieve this goal:

'*Prove to me that you are pushing your pupil premium… there is so much of a trail to show that you are doing everything you can for a student. So that if it does go wrong they can't come back to you and say "you did not do this"… But you can do all of this and the students still might choose not to work hard… We have a life outside of teaching too and I am not balancing that very well at the moment… I keep getting told that I am doing too much. People have told me that if I carry on like this then I will be worn out by Easter… there must be more trust… accountability does not motivate me because I am doing these things anyway'* (Interview One, 2015).

That Beth bemoaned that 'a trail (of evidence)' was needed to placate leadership pressure is significant because it was indicative of a perceived pressure to 'prove to' the leadership what is being done. Furthermore, Beth also indicated that the trail was a system of continuous proof as if what was being done was never enough or had to be justified incessantly as her words 'so much (of a trail)' betray. The fact that Beth felt a burden to do 'everything (she could) for a student' could also be interpreted in this context to mean that whatever she did was never seen as satisfactory. This continual restlessness to improve endlessly the grades of pupil premium students also had physical and mental consequences

[1] A pupil premium student is one who receives or who has received free school meals or is a looked after child. See the following government link for a comprehensive account https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2020-to-2021 (Accessed: 08/07/2020).

for Beth. She reflected on just how much there was to do even when such expectations might lead towards being ‘worn out’. Beth also made clear that a more cohesive system would not abjure trust and that motivation was not actually heightened by this high level of accountability. It is reasonable to argue that lack of trust and acute accountability are symptomatic of a system in which discontentment is well imbedded and indeed willed.

The culture of incessant accountability and targets felt by the teachers was often apparent and will be evidenced more fully in chapter six. For now, it is enough to posit that it was possible to find, through the participant’s responses, not only signs of a restlessness to constantly improve and the marketing of this idiom but also of the engrained creation of dissatisfaction that is characteristic of this culture. In a system of high accountability, the onus must be on student and teacher to always improve, and consequently to be repeatedly dissatisfied with what has gone before. Perhaps a reason for this organised dissatisfaction is to motivate students and staff to achieve better job prospects, economic advantage or exam results. The point of this section is not to rebuff the desire to improve academic performance but to illustrate the consequences of working in an environment in which this goal is relentlessly charted. It is to begin to ask whether this is a culture of dissatisfaction that has been designed and organised in order to motivate improvement at all costs; even the cost of human wellbeing.

5.2.3. Unfulfillment

Within Cavanaugh’s work, a considerable amount of time is given to the reflection of Augustine’s theology. For Cavanaugh, Augustine has some prescient thoughts on the ideas of desire and telos. Desire itself is not evil but a necessary part of the human person. However, if desire is arbitrary or performed without awareness of any good ends (telos) other than the desire itself, then the desire becomes a desire for nothing. When a person who buys something, for instance, without any notion of final ends, then the product will soon turn into a nothing, becomes empty and the person will lack fulfilment (2008, pp. 14-15).

In short, we desire something, but ultimately what we desire becomes empty and we are left unfulfilled. It is to this pattern of desire and unfulfillment that we now turn.

If an equivalence between education and Cavanaugh's thesis is drawn, then perhaps the following analogous speculation might be made: within the school the desire, as Patel comments, is primarily one of improving exam grades/results at all costs, 'when a school is defined by school grades, we become fixated [the desire] by exam grades'. If Cavanaugh's line of thought is followed, then the desire to continue improving ad infinitum would require a good ultimate telos to make it fulfilling. The question here is therefore of an ultimate nature: does the omnipresent pursuit of improved grades/results above all else end up being unfulfilling or even harmful, lacking as it does a 'good' final telos? The exercise here is to trace the participants' transcripts to establish whether there was an unfulfilling telos. If evidence was found of an unfulfilling telos then this might also mark the lack of a 'good' telos and thus present further evidence of a misplaced economic desire – leading to the negation of human flourishing and communion. Once again, were this possible, then this would add more texture to the notion of the *economic* self being developed in this chapter.

In his second interview, Daniel spoke about the potential emptiness of the current system. He reflected sadly upon the ways in which teachers were gradually worn down by the endless pursuit of improvement. It is not hard to note the lack of enriching ends evinced in Daniel's musings and his concern for the teachers and students who find themselves in an empty and perpetuating cycle of 'doing' rather than 'being' and he captures too the essence of Cavanaugh's unfulfillment by suggesting that knowledge learnt in school is abstract and lacks any ultimate telos. In the words of Daniel:

'(in the current system teachers will not) *do anything more than turn up, prepare some stuff, throw it out to the masses, see what they give you back, put your comments on it and do it again… we have turned ourselves into human doings rather than human beings… we have filled their heads with abstract knowledge that lacks any final purpose'* (Interview Two, 2015).

A similarly concerning account was made by Harriet. What is most significant here is what, for Harriet, is lost in a system that locates exam outcomes as the final telos. Although Harriet is aware of why the system is as it is, the lack of fulfilment felt is most obvious:

'Society has deemed grades and outcomes as the most important purpose of education… but freedom is lost' (Interview Two, 2015).

For both Daniel and Harriet something very important is being lost in a system 'fixated by exam grades': 'being' and 'freedom'. Reflecting on the same issue, Mike spoke about the 'quite disconcerting' consequences to wellbeing in a system in which, inevitably, some pupils will fail. The lack of self-esteem that Mike notes is the antithesis of human flourishing and communion that Cavanaugh wishes to advance. For these children the purpose within education is anything but fulfilling. Commenting in particular upon the assessment for the new GCSEs and the fact of failure for some, Mike said:

'*what on earth is that going to do with their self-esteem? What is that going to do with their children's self-esteem? How is that going to encourage them to take risks?... So yes, bleak days in terms of education'* (Interview Two, 2015).

Mike also spoke of an 'ensnaring system' in which even, 'successful people are still dissatisfied'. He then likened the current situation to 'Social Darwinism in which both the fittest and the weakest both lose' and other teachers felt this misplaced desire and unfulfilling telos strongly too. It is also important to note that these teachers did offer an alternative to the contemporary norm. Rachel, for instance, was saddened that rather than an, 'exploration of the world' it actually just, 'came down to results' and for Beth the system should change, 'recognising individual success…rewarding everyone's successes and reaching their own potential'. For another teacher Daniel there was also a strong feeling of the lack of final purpose or 'ultimate worth' in the system and a further suggestion for a more enriching path. During this interview, Daniel reflected upon a formative conversation with a line manager who corrected him when he said that he taught

‘PE’ by reminding him that he taught ‘children’. The point for Daniel was that persons should lay at the heart of education and not the data and grade. In the following excerpt, Daniel spoke of ‘virtue or consideration’ as a richer telos and points therefore towards a more fulfilling system:

‘Although the results look great, I am not sure that the people are more equipped for the modern world… or virtuous or considerate… which is a shame…Education should be more about nurture and the anecdotal and almost immeasurable concepts such as virtue. There is no place for nurture when you have to continually push them towards exams but this is not the reason for getting up in the morning or wishing to become a teacher. I would prefer it if we had more time to know a little bit more about background, upbringing, where they are coming from rather than looking forward to exam grades of thirty students….But there is an expectation that examination results is top of the list because ultimately that is where the rest of the country see our school’.

.

Regrettably for Daniel, it was ‘league tables’ that were the top consideration. That is why, for Daniel, teachers are told to direct their desire towards the achievement of better grades at all times perhaps in the same way that a ‘business’ instructs its employees to desire maximising profits. At the same time, he spoke of what is missing education and what real fulfilment might look like:

‘*but education is now a business… a real satisfaction is seeing the student in school – just being here, talking to adults, looking out from behind long locks of hair, overcoming eating disorders or self harm issues’* (Interview One, 2015).

The excerpts above are characteristic of the participant responses. There was a shared concern that the relentless pursuit (desire) of improvement did not lead to fulfilment but to loss. As such, we can conclude that the economic desire at present is not healthy which consequently deepens the notion of the (misplaced) *economic* self. In other words, the *economic* self that is fundamentally grounded principally in data, employability, competition, measurement is concurrently vulnerable to a lack of fulfilment – in short, to a lack of wellbeing.

Perhaps we should not be surprised by the adoption of a misplaced economic ideology in 21st Century Western education. For if we have moved, as RO argue from a deep Eucharistic relational ontology of peace, communion and human flourishing to a flattened ontology of violence and a willed un-hooked autonomous and competitive order (section 2.3.1.), then this might help to explain in part the advent of the *economic self* in education. It will be suggested shortly that a vastly different hinterland could still be contemplated should we choose to navigate towards one narrative of self - the *complex relational* - and away from the unsatisfactory (disconnection, dissatisfaction, unfulfillment) *economic* prejudice that currently dominates. During chapters six and seven more detailed accounts of possible reform will be outlined in this light.

5.3. Concluding remarks

Within this chapter, having first shared the notion of the *complex* self, the participant data indicated that an exploration into our ontological imagination was considered a valuable venture in school. The participants also spoke of an *economic* narrative and therefore both motivated and supported the interpretation of Ofsted's documentation in chapter one. The excerpts clearly showed the detriment to wellbeing in day-to-day life of working in this type of culture and it was interesting to note the counter-teleological goals posited by the participants. Consequently, it is submitted that the participant data justifies why an initiative like the one outlined in chapter eight (SSP) might be welcomed in school to explore further the question of self as a means to transform policy, practice and dialogue. This conclusion will be advanced with further supporting extracts in the next chapter.

A selection of participant interview data was then written in the shadow of Cavanaugh's critique of misplaced economic desire. It was evident that Cavanaugh's notions of disconnection, dissatisfaction and unfulfillment were mirrored palpably in the participant's experiences of school life. That these notions have deepened the notion of the *economic* self should be clear, as should the anxieties and concerns of the participants who spoke so honestly about their experiences under the pressure of this cultural leaning.

Chapter Six

A culture of acute accountability: a contemplative analysis of the participant's anxieties

6.0. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore through the participant's interviews the consequences of working in an environment of accountability that is subject to a particular *atomistic economic* supposition. It will become clear via the participant's interviews, that this culture of acute accountability is damaging to teacher and student wellbeing – themes 2 and 3[1]. This addresses research question 1: Is there any evidence of a (hidden) narrative of self within Ofsted documentation and within a particular school and what are the effects of this narrative upon the wellbeing of those in the frontline? There will also be very brief references to the authors who critiqued the culture of performativity in chapter one. The purpose is to validate the interview data within this broader academic analysis.

It is also to engage and respond to the anxieties and concerns of these participants via a theological lens. Put simply, the notion of the *complex relational* self of the contemplative tradition will challenge the current preference for the *atomistic economic* self and ensuing culture of accountability. Not only will this competing narrative be used to consider the anxieties as expressed by the participants, but it will also be positioned as a potential means to transform school culture; a theological vision that seeks therefore not only to challenge the current (hidden) ontological hegemony but also to change the current educational hinterland. This addresses research question 4: What might action research look like in the school of the participants and can the Christian

[1] [1] The reader is reminded that further and more developed excerpts for themes 1, 2 and 3 can be found in the case record, p. 289.

contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy offer any insights stemming from a counter-narrative of self that might enrich this study? Two examples will be introduced to ground this hypothetical application and challenge the culture of accountability; 'a contemplative analysis of performance related pay' and 'reclaiming contemplative desire in the classroom: beyond economic desire'. A section on why these suggestions for reform are distinct from similar suggestions made in secular philosophical thought will also be included.

It is through this ontological comparison - *atomistic economic* vs *complex relational* - that the claim that it is possible to reform school pedagogy by reflecting upon narratives of self will be justified. As such, the significance of 'The Study of Self and Purpose' (SSP) will also be highlighted (also addressing research question 4).

6.1. Identifying the culture of accountability[1] (themes 2 and 3)

The language of Ofsted (chapter one) and the participant responses (chapter five) suggest heavily that an *atomistic economic* ontological and teleological prejudice undergirds much policy and practice in education. Daniel, for instance, could not have been more blunt when he suggested that education is 'now a business' and Patel explained why, 'we become fixated by exam results' whilst Mike lamented that those on the frontline of schools have become 'shackled by league tables and data'. The following excerpts pertain to the idea that in an *economic* culture such as this, *atomistic* accountability has become a reality of school life. Teachers and students in other words, feel a considerable weight of individualised pressure to achieve better and better results. Many of the participants spoke candidly about these high levels of individual (*atomistic*) accountability and unremitting pressures to achieve better results (*economic*).

Take for instance teacher Rachel who having first surmised that teaching could all be reduced to 'a culture of accountability' then re-called a conversation in

[1] For further participant accounts than are evidenced in this section, refer to the case record, p. 289.

which a student had said to her that it would be her fault if she did not do well in her exams. I asked Rachel whether she thought that the education system was responsible for the student belief that teachers are accountable for their grades. Rachel suggested at first that she was unsure where it was that the students learnt to blame or hold to account teachers but subsequently articulated that the reason was because of the hierarchy of the school. Rachel thought that teachers were widely believed to be service providers and said with regret that 'if the service is not good enough then someone will be accountable'. Significantly, this same pattern of accountability and anxiety is also captured by Ball in his critique of performativity (2003, p. 20). The result of accountability for teachers was often to the detriment of wellbeing. For Rachel the cost of this system was of increased 'anxiety' and 'stress'; an anxiety caused by a need to always improve and keep up with other's expectations:

'*This* (accountability and judgement) *made me feel rubbish but also made me consider how again it seemed to be about what we, the teachers, are doing and not what the students are doing… in my first couple of years of teaching I felt worried and anxious about results because of this accountability.'* (Interview One, 2015).

Commenting upon the same idea that teachers are accountable for good results over and above all else, Mike began to contemplate the dissatisfaction felt even by those who achieved successful outcomes. One of Mike's concern was that he was 'thinking of the individual as data'. This is reminiscent perhaps of Jeffrey's analysis that a gulf has been created between students and teachers as a result of a culture of performativity (2002, p. 4) and we might recognise too the teacher's loss of personal identity as highlighted by Ball in Mike's words. For Ball, the culture of performativity (including high levels of accountability) has led to teachers setting aside their own beliefs and values (2003, p. 215) and this is mirrored in Mike's questioning of his own practice:

'*I have to question, as an educator, the purpose of just collecting data and thinking of the individual as data… But we see time and again that successful*

people are still dissatisfied… it underpins where education is right now.' (Interview One, 2015).

Beth, a teacher with new responsibility, also spoke honestly about a level of accountability that had not been expected and was not desirable. For Beth, this feeling of accountability was not only being laid at the feet of the teachers by leadership and students but also by parents and she was keen to question the purpose of this normalised culture of accountability:

'*Becoming a head of a subject has made me realise how much accountability there is in the job. This has been unexpected… It is that kind of concept of blame that I do not like. You feel as though you have to completely cover yourself… (*there was) *a feeling amongst some students that they could lay the blame for their results on the teacher. That if they fail then they could deflect responsibility… It used to be that the parents would blame their children for poor results but now there is more accountability held for the teachers…This has been a shock this year'* (Interview One, 2015).

Interestingly Beth noted not only the cost to herself and her own work-life balance born of this culture but also significantly the cost to the students. It is worth reading this excerpt in the light of Biesta's warning that, 'we end up valuing what is measured, rather than that we engage in measurement of what we value' (2009, p. 43). Put simply, for Beth we appear to value documenting our accountability - 'writing down what we were doing for students' - rather than engage with – 'have more time with' - the students to whom we are accountable; those we value:

'*The hope is that next year things will get a little easier and I will therefore be able to maintain the energy… I have so much to do and I just feel as though I have to keep going to get through it… I think that if we were not writing down what we were doing for students then we would have more time for the students'* (Interview Two, 2015).

This lack of time for the students was a concern shared by Daniel who also experienced the negative consequences for the children when a teacher's time is misspent. During an interview, Daniel reflected upon his own particular work with more vulnerable children. The failure of these children to keep up with the work – to be accountable for their grades – was a cause of suffering and for Daniel efforts should be channelled instead towards the provision of more time and space for nurture. His remarks are similar to those of Chua who also argued that non-performative goals should be central to educational reform (2009, p. 166). However for Daniel, as it stands at present:

'*Low self-esteem and confidence has blighted the ability and expectations of these children. They are in deficit. They struggle to keep up with work and keep up with peers. They are feeling beaten already. There is no point in telling them that the work is the most important thing, it comes as a secondary or tertiary thing. They feel lost and often do not understand the situation that they find themselves in'* (Interview One, 2015).

Seemingly, where you have a strong imposition of pressure upon teachers, concurrently this pressure is inadvertently passed onto the students. Patel for instance recalled the effects of stress and anxiety that he had witnessed as a teacher in the wider student body as they felt the pressure of achievement, failure and accountability over the exam period. Patel spoke of children 'crying, anger, going into their shells' and he remembered one particular example of a student who went mute due to exam stress. Compare this to what education might look like were teachers to re-shape education as Burnard and White champion (2008, p. 677) and a very different institution can be imagined. Perhaps we might learn something from the words of teacher Daniel:

'[a better education system would offer] *people safe places to be, working with them as individual beings, speaking with them, listening to them about their fears and worries, providing wider opportunities - it is in these ways that we can begin to change perceptions of self and engage them better in wider education*' (Interview Two, 2015).

The students too spoke unequivocally of their experience of suffering in cultures of accountability. The wellbeing of students has become a growing concern in education as a whole. There have been calls for more counsellors to be employed in schools and a move towards greater awareness and more developed links between schools and the NHS. There are many reasons for mental health problems in schools but arguably the culture of accountability so deeply embedded is a significant one. The question is whether the *atomistic economic* narrative that underpins the culture of acute accountability has heightened anxiety in school. Certainly if we turn to the participant responses, a number of these equate depression, anxiety and mental health disorders with the huge personalised pressure to achieve good grades (accountability) as predicated upon this *atomistic economic* ontology.

Take for example the following emotional articulation of this problem during an interview with Logan. When I clarified Logan's response that the fundamental aim of education 'the pursuit of grades', was causing anxiety to students, and that this was having a negative effect on who they were, Logan responded:

'yes definitely for the two years before and after the exams. Such anxiety can cause depression and addictions…. I personally think that the pursuit of examination results and the best grades should be changed or taken away to help with the stresses and anxieties that are caused… it was a good education system in getting knowledge into people but the stress that it causes at the moment is wrong… (with students) *ending up in a dark place… As it stands at the moment the system is unfair. It makes you feel isolated… you go into yourself. You kick yourself for not getting the best grades… students are being diagnosed with clinical depression and anxiety and that can be from the result of having the pressure on them to get an 'A' in their exams… The system makes people think negatively rather than positively* (Interview Two, 2015).

This powerful depiction of the range of mental health disorders caused by the pressure to achieve, the pressures predicated to a culture of accountability, were recognised in a different but equally concerning way by another student Harriet whose own experience was captured in a loss of imagination:

‘(It) *had been drilled into the students that they had a role and this role was the achievement of best grades and not freedom of thought. Once again, this makes me feel trapped…. Sadly there is no room in education for these kinds of things, for imagination and being an individual* (Interview One, 2015).

Thus the participants spoke openly and often emotionally of many deeply worrying symptoms of the current system. Acute accountability was for the participants clearly manifest in many aspects of life at school and led to unfortunate effects: lack of imagination, low self-esteem, low confidence, feeling lost, anxiety, addiction, depression, feeling trapped, isolation. Grace observed furthermore that the students who were not high achievers – who did not account for good grades – ‘did not have a voice’ at school and so would ‘not speak out’ and this, for Grace, made them feel bad about themselves. This is clearly a worrying trend and if Ned is correct, then this will have a collective detriment. For Ned ‘we are no longer a race of people who think the best of people’ and this was down to the purpose of the education system that demands that students are always accountable for achieving the best grades possible. This ubiquitous nature of this cultural norm was reiterated by Harriet who suggested that students are all conditioned to think that this is the only path, that ‘we are almost forced to follow that path’.

Harriet’s unhappy diagnosis and the other anxieties shared by the participants should not be considered the default position of education however; we are not perhaps ‘forced to follow this path’ of acute accountability. A claim in this thesis is that should we begin educational reform with a counter narrative of self, and this might offer the best opportunity to tread a different path. This claim will now be substantiated through reference to the contemplative tradition and the *complex relational* self.

6.2. Applying the counter-narrative of the contemplatives

The current culture of accountability and subsequent wellbeing issues are written upon a (hidden) *atomistic economic* ontology and teleology. To repeat, this claim is made upon the assumption that the pressures to achieve the best data/grade (*economic*) weighs heavily on the shoulders of individual (*atomistic*) teachers and students and that this system is devised to increase the levels of acute accountability which can lead to declining mental health. The purpose now is to explore whether the wisdom of the contemplatives can provide a counter narrative of self that might help to address this culture and the suffering that is caused. It is, in other words, to begin to explore what education might look like were the *complex relational* self to be favoured above the *atomistic economic* self. It is to speculate how the insights of the contemplatives might respond to the participant concerns (acute accountability) and dampen mental health problems without hindering learning. This analysis and the hypothetical changes mirror the possibilities imagined through the adoption of SSP in school.

The contemplative reminds us that within the contemporary *atomistic economic* system of accountability that we lose sight of the one basic and true foundational ontological reality: *relationship*. Speaking about the discovery of this narrative of self is according to Thomas Merton, ‘to grasp the meaning of one’s own existence, to find one’s true place in the scheme of things’ (1968, p. 72). It is a knowledge of primary union, a knowledge that lies beyond the narrow reductionist accounts of the *atomistic economic* self, a knowledge that repositions *relationship* as the shared and enduring ontological reality for all people - regardless of the contingent variances of achievement and performance. This first principle of life, which is relationship, is spoken by persons of prayer as ‘beyond the grasp of comprehension…a great, flowing abyss, a depthless depth’ (Laird, 2006, p. 14) beyond psychological dispositions and individual idiosyncrasies; a depth captured in metaphor by St John of the Cross as ‘the living flame of love’ (p. 639). It is a principle moreover, that has the potential to transcend accountability and inspire fecund and enriching reform in school.

With this in mind, we might warrant a hypothetical application. For instance, we might consider a move away from the idea of mental illness/wellbeing being an individual's problem or issue towards a collective responsibility and shared desire for healing. When stripped of the illusion of autonomy, the contemplative teaches that the issues of anxiety and depression caused by acute accountability can become one that matters for all members of the school and not the sole burden of the isolated individual[1].

This is the antithesis of the *atomistic economically* construed self in which the individual is accountable only for him/herself. It is a vision of a more vulnerable self whose potential is bound up in the *relational* rather than the individual's self-serving achievements or failings. In the contemplative tradition, the self, rather than grasp at abstract knowledge for personal gain and suffer/rejoice alone because of a system of atomistic accountability, is grasped instead by inter-dependence, relationship and love (Sonderegger, 2015, p. 301). The question is whether the school, pedagogical experts and Ofsted as policy maker wish to reflect this wisdom and enact something that mirrors this insight; it is whether we wish to foster a culture in which an individual's suffering is seen as 'ours'. If this is a serious consideration, then perhaps there is a warrant to move beyond a culture of atomistic accountability.

It is in this light that the following theological analysis of the participant's interviews is written. My wish is to provide two hypothetical accounts of possible school transformation: 'a contemplative analysis of performance related pay' and 'reclaiming contemplative desire in the classroom: beyond economic desire'. The two aspects - performance related pay and moving beyond economic desire – have been chosen because they are both educational realities are the outcome of a system of acute accountability. This is also to justify the claim that changes to policy, practice and dialogue can be stimulated through a counter-narrative of self; in this instance through an analysis of participant response via the contemplative tradition. The writing will flit between the interviewee's negative experiences of a culture underscored by *atomistic*

[1] This can be referenced alongside RO's understanding of the body of Christ written about in section 2.2.

economic accountability and a contemplative analysis as premised upon the *complex relational* self.

6.2.1. A contemplative analysis of performance related pay

The performance related pay scheme is a system in which the individual (*atomistic)* teacher justifies a pay increase based upon measurable criteria (*economic)* outlined by the Head Teacher and the governing body. Capital is thereby supposed to motivate individual performance and engender good individual practice and results; thus intensifying the culture acute accountability. It is of course examination results that play an important part in justifying a pay increase as highlighted in the words of a senior teacher Patel who noted a culture in school in which at the end of the year teachers 'think themselves accountable for exam results'. Ofsted too commend this performance related pay scheme as evidenced in the Inspection Report[1] (IR) of the participant's school (p. 7). We can conclude therefore that acute accountability born of performance related pay is not only endorsed in official documentation but is a lived reality in the school of the participants. It will be supposed that as performance related pay schemes become more embedded in school culture, so too will an increased feeling of accountability for teachers, subsequent pressure for students and damaging wellbeing for all. It is also reasonable to conclude that performance related pay is reinforced by the axiomatic *atomistic economic* prejudice already unearthed in this study. Given that this system is adding to stress and anxiety, the results of this underlying ontological assumption should be of concern.

It will be obvious by now that for the contemplatives it is folly to think that knowledge of the *complex* teacher is ever accessible. The attempt to juxtapose this faux knowledge to monetary reward is consequently problematic. If the contemplatives are right in thinking that the 'original provisionality' (McIntosh, 1998, p. 228) of the *complex self* is an aspect of 'the unknowable depth of things'

[1] A reminder that IR refers to the Inspection Report that Ofsted wrote for the school following an in section in 2013. At the time of writing this was the last visit.

(Lossky, 1957, p. 33), then our knowledge of the teacher's performance will be predicated by limit and personal prejudice. The contemplative counsels that our supposed understanding of the other (the student/teacher) can be at best provisional and will be interrupted by the filters of our own minds, prejudices and experiences as Teresa of Avila explains (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez, 1976, p. 449). Any judgement about why a student or class perform or not to expectation requires reasons that lie beyond intellectual ability. We simply do not have the knowledge to judge the complexity of factors that determine the effort/performance of the teacher or the results of the students and to pay accordingly. As it stands at present, the system is ominously written upon our limited knowledge and ability (Byrne, 1998, p. 55) and falsely assumes a level playing field as an ethical justification for rewarding performance. That is not to say that we should overlook measures to inspire teacher improvement and intellectual growth. It is to suggest that our judgements relating to meeting targets, exceeding expectation, measuring effort or desire and discerning final success or failure are fragile and narrow.

Ofsted (and others) might argue however, that despite judgements being imperfect a best-fit overall judgement it is still possible taking into account the 'performance' (data) of teachers over a period of time. This would appear to justify the stance in the school of the participants and so the contemplative vision must therefore offer further reasons to be wary of performance related pay other than simply by pointing out the vulnerability of the process of judgement.

In this light, a question inspired by the contemplatives is offered: What is lost in a culture of performance related pay underscored by *atomistic economic* preference and how can this culture of accountability be successfully challenged by resituating the self as *relational*? The answer is convoluted.

Once the performance of students is equated to the amount of pay received by a teacher then individuals/students are secured with economics. At this point, a student is viewed, at least in part, as data that determines a financial decision or directive. A student is seen here as a means to an end, as a subject or factor in determining capital reward. Students become subjects with pound signs

invisibly written into their performance and effort and there are implications of viewing the student through the economic lens when divorced from the centrality of the relational.

There is for instance the possibility that a student who has not produced work that meets a particular target be advised to leave or swap to another subject if the risk of them remaining is not deemed economically viable. Within a class of twenty, the removal of two underachieving students would have a considerable impact upon the final percentage success of the class. Where financial reward is won and lost in the final analysis of data, the temptation to offload more risky students to other subjects or schools must surely increase where underachievement is viewed suspiciously. Rather than engaging in the relational but risky endeavours of dialogue, support and time - 'A man who fails well is greater than one who succeeds well' (Merton, 1955, p. 111) - the underachieving student, as a means of negatively effecting the salary, becomes a potential source of burden and 'debt'. This deficit was captured by Harriet, a student, who lamented:

'*there is not much personal identity in education we are all labelled as grades and numbers, in short as data, not the real person that we are… they are more focused on processing us all as data'* (Interview One, 2015).

It was reinforced by Grace who said:

'*It is also important for people to be aware of who they are because we are not just the roles that we play… I think that you connect to more people at school if you can connect to them on a personal level'* (Interview Two, 2015).

.

Implicit within these citations is another possible negative consequence; that the wellbeing of an individual student is relegated to a secondary concern as the school becomes more fixated upon the mass of student performance. In other words, where the focus of the school's attention is balanced between the general wellbeing of the student body and acute accountability for the grades that they achieve, as the emphasis shifts towards the *economic* and away from the

relational, then the wellbeing of individual students is necessarily lessened. Grace, a student, spoke in an interview about the problems of simply reducing the student to measureable data (as data that might determine pay increase) and the ramifications for relationships. She thought 'every student had a different story' and that to 'judge the student body as whole was wrong'.

This insight is relevant for all students including the more vulnerable. For example, because a student with regular absence creates a negative residual for the teacher, the temptation could well be to overlook the nurture of the person and their individual needs if the person in question is causing personal financial downfall. Daniel expressed this real and disquieting cost to the students when he suggested that if we are interested only in getting the students through the exams year after year without thought of any other purpose then 'nurture is undermined by examination results'. Compare this with the wisdom of the contemplative vision of St Benedict who speaks of the one who has gone astray as requiring compassion and favour and the distinction is made abundantly clear (Byrne, 1998, p. 64). Merton goes as far as suggesting that existence only has meaning when one is fixated not upon individual gain but is compelled towards others (1968, p. 24).

Further questions raised by the contemplative vision and reflected in the choice of school culture also require response from Ofsted, pedagogical expert and the school. How will the school protect the most vulnerable of students - the truants, the de-motivated, the unruly, the sick? Will it potentially lead to a school that negates 'pastoral care altogether' as Patel experienced at a previous school? Patel recalled that the Head Teacher had decided, 'to negate pastoral care altogether', the idea being that that the school would have not consider the 'extra baggage' that students brought with them into school so as to view them all equally. The assumption by this Head Teacher was that equality was best served by reducing the student to measurable knowable data as an attempt to sidestep the complexity of their individual idiosyncrasies, habits and behaviours. The question is whether this 'extra baggage' will also be overlooked in a culture determined by a teacher's financial reward and culpability. Whilst St Benedict maintains that over and above all else the sick should be looked after as if they

were Christ (Byrne, 1989, p. 66) in an economic culture, the sick (and their poor results and effort) conversely become the object of antipathy and distrust.

In the classroom too there are questions to be answered. How for instance will teachers come to think of those who fail in class? Will they in other words be driven from their true relational telos, 'the virtues of humility, patience and love' towards an impoverished and flattened economic ends, 'these people hold these virtues in their minds and wills but not in their hearts' (Hilton, 1973, p. 39)? Perhaps some of these questions are answered by Ned who spoke about how weaker students are perceived and the loss of freedom encountered at school. For him, schools only wish to make public the smartest of their students so as to be seen as the best. More worryingly, 'the other students are looked down upon'. Another student Grace, also alluded to how the failed child is grasped when she said that education is really just about a set of things to learn and 'if you fail then that is not their problem'. If these student perceptions are correct then they certainly shine a light on the issue of failure and how it is felt in a culture of accountability.

Another consequence of performance related pay is the relationship between and within department and faculty. If one's pay is in any way dependent upon value added data (a system whereby an *atomistic* department/teacher is judged through *economic* comparison with the other subjects/teachers) then there is potential here for an unhealthy desire for another department or teacher to fail. One department or teacher's failure is here a factor in another's success and pay is relocated accordingly. Yet this type of community and culture is behest to modern visions of accountability and Mike spoke plainly about the toll and the loss of teaching in such an environment:

'*teachers may come in as idealists, romantics even to the profession, but the system perhaps grinds them down'* (Interview One, 2015).

The contemplatives on the other hand, call instead for such covetousness to be purged and for friendship to be ordained as central. Speaking on covetousness, Hilton warns that it is wrong to desire anything but the basics and that it is not

wrong to make use of the possessions that you do have for others (1973, p. 118). The teaching of Hilton, if applied to school culture, requires that we share our gifts for the good of all; that we do not set ourselves against one another desiring to possess or supersede the grades or data of another. Presently, the reality of an axiomatic *atomistic economic* ontology arguably breeds an unhealthy competition between teachers and departments that subsequently fosters an unhealthy individualism - for where is the 'other' when a teacher is either being financially rewarded or denied? The community in this system of accountability is ironically diminished and the purpose of school reduced to an impoverished competitive system of atomised performance of child, teacher and department. As Merton warns, 'as long as we regard other men as obstacles to our own happiness, we are the enemies of society and we have only a very small capacity for sharing the common good' (1955, p. 145).

This culture of accountability and performance related pay raises the further issue of justification; that the struggling teacher does not deserve a pay increase. This is of course one type of justice and culture that the school and Ofsted deem fair. However, there are problems with choosing this type of justice. Not only does it suggest that measuring work ethic, ability and performance is possible and predicated upon a level playing field but, moreover, that the (sometimes public) exposure of those teachers who struggle and fail is morally acceptable. Such exposure is a necessary outcome of performance related pay - for their must be struggling teachers (the losers) for pay to be distributed according to the relative success of others (the winners).

Hence, what is potentially sacrificed within the *atomistic economic* culture of accountability and performance related pay is a trust that a teacher is giving in their time and effort relative to a myriad of factors that cannot be known. What is bred is resentment between the teaching body and those who make judgements and a subsequent loss of relationship between the two. What is sacrificed is the nurture and care of the most vulnerable teacher who for whatever reasons (reasons that lie beyond the casual glance of leadership team) fail to achieve good enough data. Furthermore, the contemplative reminds us not only of the folly of such individualism and meritocracy but also of what is sacrificed for the

‘winner’ should this culture be chosen at the expense of relationship, ‘A person who asserts himself as an individual…far from realising himself fully becomes impoverished. In giving up its own special good, it expands infinitely, and is enriched by everything that belongs to all’ (Merton, 1944, p. 123).

As Williams helpfully reminds his reader, when encountering failure we are challenged about the habit of wanting control (2002, p. 11). It is a reminder, in other words, of our great need one for another not one against the other. Instead, what we propagate for the failing teacher is demotivation and cycles of disappointment both on an individual and a department basis whilst simultaneously cultivating divisive and dividing pride and hubris amongst the ‘best’ and most successful (Hilton, 1992, p. 117). We sacrifice patience and healthy dialogue between teachers, departments and schools for anxiety, justification, recrimination and reproach founded upon an unhealthy, unjustified and imbalanced competition. A work-life balance may also be sacrificed in the face of growing anxiety and stress caused either by fear of failure or over-ambition.

The pivotal question in all this is how to work with the weak and the failing teacher or subject and in a similar way the weak or failing student. If a community is judged by how it treats its more vulnerable members - a traditional contemplative ethos exemplified by St Benedict (Byrne, 1998, p. 71-72) - then the decisions that are made regarding the pay structure cannot but help holding up a mirror to this unfortunate choice of culture. For the contemplative, relationship and not capital or data should be at the very centre of decision making for the person is fundamentally a relational self as the anonymous author of ‘The Hermitage Within’ makes clear when he defines the common reality of human isolation as a sort of damnation (1977, p. 124).

The adoption of the *atomistic economic self*, manifest in performance related pay and cultures of high accountability is an arbitrary and deeply concerning choice with deep-rooted consequences engrained thereafter in school telos and culture. The wisdom of the contemplatives offers therefore a choice about what culture the school wishes to inaugurate. One is an *economic* culture (justice system) of

success and failure, of potential conflict and anxiety, of constant judgement, of winners and losers, of resentment and unhealthy *atomistic* desire. This is a culture in which the weak are identified as weak and resented as weak; a culture in which departments potentially compete rather than support; and in which students have a price on their heads. This is a culture of acute accountability. The other is one of shared responsibility of and for the weak; a culture of nurture, care, support and trust where relationship is the fundamental grounding of all decision-making and policy. As Daisy, a parent commented, 'we all crave that, we all wish to have some kind of relationship'. For the contemplative this craving is rooted in our very being and our very purpose. It is a craving that when ignored has severe consequences for the prevailing culture as the interviews of the participants exposed.

The desired goal is therefore the training of school staff and students in the unknowability and vulnerability of performance and person, away from the current trend of atomistic accountability and towards a more collective inter-dependence; away from the pressures of competitive desire towards policy, practice and dialogue that is directed towards relationship. This type of training and potential revision of ontology is envisioned as part of SSP and if Beth is right, a vision that would never be at the expense of grades. Beth argued that no teachers would ever enter the profession if they did not wish to help the children and as a consequence the culture of accountability will not make any difference to how teachers support the children.

6.2.2. Reclaiming contemplative desire in the classroom: beyond economic desire

The second potential change to school transformation is far more broad and far-reaching than performance related pay. It is a contemplative critique of the very purpose of classroom teaching and its possible affects upon wellbeing. If we only skim the surface of the contemplative tradition and attempt to apply this wisdom in school then the purpose of study, the reason, style and tone of

education, and the ethos through which teachers and leaders work is radically challenged. It is a move from acute accountability for results, grades, data, league tables towards something far richer.

During an interview with the articulate and thoughtful student Harriet, she managed, possibly without awareness, to pave a route away from the current *economic* system of acute accountability, 'to get on in life', to a hypothetical possibility more akin to the contemplative way:

'Ever since lower school it has been instilled in the students that exam results and grades are what enable students to get on in life, to be the best and out-do other people, fulfil certain roles… At the same time generally in school there is not much exploration of the questions that we won't finally be able to exhaust. In certain subjects there are these questions but generally throughout the school there is not really any place for contemplating questions that we won't find the answers to. This is demonstrated in the priorities of education and schooling dealing with fact and not the potential of the universe and just being able to question things… We don't necessarily need an answer to everything and that kind of makes the world the way it is' (Interview One, 2015).

For Harriet therefore, beyond the economic telos there are questions that we don't necessarily need an answer for and questions we won't finally be able to exhaust. This is a point that will be returned to shortly in the contemplative analysis. For teacher Daniel too, a similar questioning of the purpose of education was succinctly broached when he suggested that 'we have filled their heads with abstract knowledge that lacks any final purpose'. Although for Daniel the school did look good if one was to read only the data (the data that teachers are accountable for), for many students sadly there was 'not anything much to take out of school life'. It is perhaps here that the contemplatives are able to offer a unique wisdom in response to the musings of Harriet and Daniel.

In contemplative experience, the distinction between the subject (I) and the object (God) is blurred. This is because God is not an object of or in the world and 'I' is not an autonomous individual in search of God. Put more distinctly,

God is the subject who is also the question of what is our being. The agency of God creates the question of our being and is also the answer to this question (Merton, 1968, p. 71). As a consequence of this reasoning there is a different perception of the self's relationship with the world that the contemplatives pose. This is because everything for the contemplative is held in relationship with God the source of all being. Everything is only manifest because it is the outpouring of a transcendent divinity, who is existence itself. Everything is relational, owing all that it is to Him in whom 'we live and move and have our very being' (Acts 17:28). Everything can therefore be known as one. Thus we participate in this one gratuitous gift, immersed in creation and bound together in a shared dependence. All that exists does so as one, in relation to the mystery (the infinitely inexhaustible depth) of God.

Not only here is the self essentially sustained in relationship and dependence but so too is the world. This provides a stark clue as to how a very differently conceived classroom telos might look because a holistic reality is recognised. For the contemplative, the world is not the distinct object, nor worse the resource, for the autonomous student to simply label and know in discreet subject areas and then describe under exam conditions. Contrary to knowledge of the world being equated only with individual economic gain, and consequently to deepening accountability and mental health problems, knowledge is more the uncovering of our shared dependence, inter-dependence and gradual discovery of this as divine outpouring (Eckhart, 1996, p. 36). The world is learnt about not for the sake of personal pecuniary advantage or individual social mobility but instead as the lifetime's discovery of this depthless gift of oneness and relationship (Merton, 1962, p. 25).

Such immersion and participation in thinking and unearthing the world as a depthless gift carries with it the potential to reintroduce wonder and awe as the mainstays of curriculum purpose. The final purpose of maths for instance does not have to be achieving the grade 5 that will open the doors to more financial opportunity but instead to behold the mystery and existence of the realities that hold the universe together. Physics does not need to be reduced to an A-Level

that is completed in order to gain a place at a renowned university but as a means of gazing upon the cosmos and the laws that determine and sustain existence.

There is in education the chance, and the time if we make it, to allow students the opportunity to simply gaze, be, become aware and relate to what is real or proposed. This might mean to simply listen to stories in English without the ubiquitous task that meets a specific objective or to be aware of the life of the bee in Biology without the need to always label what is seen or heard. It might be giving time to wonder about our purpose and origin in the universe in RE or to witness our own contextual and arbitrary place in the History of the world, to recognise and feel our dependence upon the frightening but complex beauty of the physical world in Geography etc. Significantly, there is no regard here for ability, success or failure but rather our innocent curiosity, oneness and inter-dependent participation with the world (Merton, 1962, p. 25).

Some would argue that there must be a place in education for the learning of technique in order to pass exams that supersede any notions of relationship or awe. But again, the language used to share and improve these writing skills can be transformed. From the idea that essay technique is learnt in order to pass exams – in order to open the doors of opportunity – to the idea that the better we are able to write, the better we can express, argue, communicate, analyse, witness, think, change, evaluate and challenge. It is in this way that we might participate with and flourish in the world via the joy and struggle of communication and relationship. Thus, even essay technique (required for the exam but not learnt for the exam) becomes a way of engaging with the world, making more sophisticated arguments, explanations and conclusions, questioning and sharing in the very fabric of the world's oneness.

Of huge relevance today, the classroom affords the opportunity to study the ecological crisis that so threatens. Knowledge of the issue and impending disaster can be discussed and acknowledged in many different faculties including Science, RE and Geography but the contemplative reminds the teacher that the relationship between us and the planet is intimate, inter-dependent and vital. Like all profound relationships, the issue transcends the necessity of ethics,

information and simple knowledge. The recognition of the calamitous imminent consequences need not be taught as distinct from the more binding interpersonal reality. It is false to consider that the scientific age provides detached impersonal knowledge. Indeed the traditional contemplative wisdom resituates the inseparable symbiotic mode as central – a symbiosis of natural science/spirituality/oneness/participation/awe/dependence. As such, the contemplative seeks to rediscover relationship as the central imperative of environmental education; an imperative that lies beyond impassive recall, memory and grade.

The theological voice has the propensity to change the vernacular of learning here. This is because the uniqueness of the Eucharistic event and contemplative prayer evince a self that is born of and for relationship. This relational self is not bound between one person and another only but by a knowledge of the depth of inter-dependence that exists between the person and the world. Particularly at a time in which environmental concerns are so prevalent, theological wisdom has the integrity and indeed the moral obligation to table its unique perspective because the destruction of the world, in this context, is concurrently a destruction of self and other in more than just the obvious correlation. The *complex relational* self proffers the belief that the world is quite literally a shared gift of inter-dependence and hence the destruction of the world is synonymous with self-destruction. Our negation of this truth signals violently our absolute rejection of relationship in the modern world.

Yet the economic prejudice will always be to the detriment of the contemplative possibility if the students are told to be accountable for their results to improve atomistic opportunity rather than the engage with and wonder of what is. This prejudice was experienced by teacher Rachel who understood, 'that if we as teachers become fixated upon results then it will make us more nervous about contemplation'. The following excerpt helps explain why this accountability often out-weighs a more relational/participatory way of teaching:

'*I often find myself saying that we don't need to focus upon that because it is not relevant when actually it is not that it isn't relevant it is that it won't ever come*

*up on an exam paper. It's treated as a waste of time but it is not necessarily a waste of time. It is probably a really good question or idea but you have to, not shoot it down, but steer it in a direction that brings it back to that (*Rachel points towards the prompt 'examination results') *because that is what it boils down to and actually if you were going off and talking about stuff which isn't relevant to the exam but might be a genuinely interesting conversation – if you did that every lesson… that would be considered unacceptable'* (Interview Two, 2015).

To bring gazing, awe and participation into the classroom clearly means risk – 'considered unacceptable'. It is the risk of freedom born of time, space and wonder. It is a risk that depends upon a teacher's belief that our subjects really do matter in and of themselves – 'a genuinely interesting conversation' - irrespective of any grade or qualification achieved. It is a risk that is anchored upon the oneness of the universe where awareness of reality negates the ceaseless pursuit for classification. The mystical poetic verse of Merton calls our attention towards things prosaic and at the same time towards the beyondness of these same things and a latent renewed relationship, 'The rain ceases, and a bird's clear song suddenly announces the difference between Heaven and Hell' (1955, p. 224). An unrelenting potential for our subjects to challenge us and change us should we only stop and gaze is very real.

The confidence of the teacher to be able to allow the pace to drop and the lesson objective to haze will not be easy in the current economic climate. The difference between a contemplative gaze and the reality of the classroom experienced by Patel could not be more distinct, 'we work in a system that sets targets with the purpose of achieving the greatest exam results and this was the one major primary purpose of education'. However, there seems little to fear in regards to final student performance if as part of a scheme of work time is given to simply 'gazing'. On the contrary far from being a waste of precious time, work of this sort offers the potential of inflaming our students (either immediately or even perhaps in years to come) with the love of subject that is perhaps so often missing in education.

The contemplative reminds us that things in the world possess an integrity of their own regardless of our knowledge of them. They remind us too that there is no getting to the end of this mystery – 'the questions that we won't finally be able to exhaust' (Harriet) - just as there is no getting to the end of education as the shared exploration and meditation of idea, theory and physical reality. It is a reminder that there is much in the universe that is unknown and perhaps unknowable, strange and overwhelming. This is to say in a paraphrasing of Aquinas' celebrated remark that all the efforts of the mind will not capture the essence of a single fly or with Thomas Merton that 'every moment and every event of everyone's life on earth plants something in our soul' (1962, p. 21).

The hope is that we embrace the reality and awe of complexity and oneness rather than desire to understand it all comprehensively (Eckhart, 1996, p. 81). And, if we begin to teach with this mystery and complexity in mind then might not the more auspicious response of humility and excitement supersede in school the anxiety seemingly born of reducing knowledge to only grades, money and opportunity in a culture of accountability? (Merton, 1955, p. 230) The suggestion is thus a move away from grade toward gratitude, from entry requirement toward exploration and from job chances to joy. It is an education premised upon relationship and dependence with the world in wonderment which is the true recollection of our sensory life according to St John of the Cross (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez, 1991, p. 630). Any practical realisation of such a move however would of course require radical change and the desire and bravery of staff who wish to commit to some kind of re-imagined classroom telos. Such radical transformation could only come about through teacher corroboration but perhaps this is not an impossibility given the strength of teacher disquiet and the current sadness of, 'feeling like a machine' as Rachel commented.

The culture of economic accountability is however often axiomatic. This should not be a surprise given Ofsted's unwritten but implicit economic ontological commitment and the modern preference for all things measurable. But it is arguably possible to change the vernacular in school without changing the grades that the students achieve. The motivation to learn is not unquestionably determined by, nor does it require an economically inspired purpose, this is

something chosen and as such can be re-thought (Radcliffe, 2005, p. 210). On the contrary, it is possible for teachers to invest and recover in their subjects a meaning beyond pass/fail, monetary reward and comparable measurements. It is possible for students to contemplate the oneness of the world through the various faculties and describe, explain, evaluate and wonder because somehow we exist in this beautiful and complex reality. It is therefore possible to enable students to engage without the baggage of competition or the stress related to thinking that all our financial futures depend upon examination grades – the culture of acute accountability. Such a definitive uncompromising theological purpose is echoed in the words of Mike who cautions:

'*don't let them think the system is working against them…* (develop) a *more nurturing system in which the self was given to exploring, being creative, working out for themselves the parameters of thought and creativity and value'* (Interview One, 2015).

By allowing more the grades and pay to take care of themselves without the burden of acute accountability whilst fostering instead this culture of shared exploration and gazing, the very purpose of schooling would change. Far less in this climate would those who struggle academically feel the weight of unnecessary anxiety, those who regularly perform at the top stress over perfection and those in the middle lose spirit and heart in the face of unrelenting economic pressure. This is a peaceful theological offering of traditional wisdom that challenges and presses the current status quo in the hope of reducing the anxiety and mental health illnesses suffered by many. If the culture of accountability and performativity is damaging to health and the contemplatives provide a different purpose that would not de-skill, de-motivate or effect negatively the performance but would decrease the tension caused by the economic prejudice, then perhaps these people of prayer are still worthy of consideration.

6.3. Have we been here before in educational thought?

It is necessary to admit here that there are similar suggestions to changes to policy and practice to the ones outlined above in other secular and philosophical writings. Take for instance the contemporary work of Pring whose claim that the secular has led the way to persons being treated as objects (2020, p. 97) might be seen as analogous to my assertion that students are reduced to data in a system of performance related pay. Alternatively, one can find partial similarities to 'contemplative desire in the classroom' in the work of Stenhouse and his reflections on the work of Bruner almost 50 years ago. In particular to Bruner's contention that a major part of student growth is 'appreciating the world' (1975, p. 29). Where my writing stands apart is in two aspects that intersect. The first is in the unique first principle of research and reform: the narrative of self upon which the study depends. The second is in its epistemological root: for in this instance the narrative of self and subsequent telos are located in and of the Divine.

To suggest that our narratives of self should determine pedagogical transformation is significant because it will ensure that the focus of study is always on the most valuable aspect of school culture – the human. It therefore de-centres the object of research to a question that, as has been argued, cannot be negated in the final analysis; the question of 'who we are'. To suggest that our human telos is fully realised in the darkness of contemplative prayer is simultaneously to claim that this particular theological ontological imagining is profound, weighty, of truth. As such, the contemplative *complex relational* self pertains to a deep and inescapable ontological reality that offers something distinct and unique to the public imagination.

Thus my alternative suggestions to acute accountability are not only anchored in theoretical reasoning and philosophical critique (as with Pring, Stenhouse and Bruner) but also principally in theological personhood and purpose; a personhood and purpose, which for the contemplative, is held in the reality of Divine outpouring. It is only from this prayerful participatory disposition that

relationship with the (unknown) other is grasped as the true definitive telos of all humanity. The realisation of transfiguring educational practice is therefore a matter of living out the very purpose of our existence through an application of our relational narrative of self not simply the application of a preferred theoretical vision. It is a lived reality that demands that an individual's needs be met only within and for a collective body of others because this narrative of self speaks of an unremitting bond – we are all of us hooked, always, to the transcendent, the world and other. It is a bond that we participate in and echo in life if we are to live most freely. This is the contemplative narrative of self, born, only and uniquely, through the negation of control and mastery in silence. These proposals for transformation are therefore born of Divine participation, a call to who we really are (ontos) in the event of Divine life (love), which concurrently feeds a speculative academic endeavour into new relational possibility (telos)[1].

This distinctive theological *complex relational* self has inspired and sustained these suggestions for reform. Thus, my plea to reject performance related pay and introduce contemplative wonder into the classroom substantiates a major claim of this thesis: that theological meditations upon narratives of self do have the propensity to radically and uniquely reform pedagogy. This chapter also demonstrates the practical implications of research that is predicated upon our ontological imagination and as such points forward towards further 'collective' action research (SSP) to improve wellbeing in school as will be show in chapter eight. This is to suggest that we all seek, as ever in education, to be more humane, which of course requires that we understand first what it means to be human. And this collective ontological imagining coupled with an absolute but peaceful theological narrative is exactly what this thesis asks the school, expert and Ofsted to deliberate as they consider educational reform going forward.

[1] The reader is reminded however that any dualism between academic endeavour and prayerful insight is as wholly fallacious as the dualism between ontos and telos for the contemplative

6.4. Accountability is not the default position

In previous chapters the genealogies of RO, Taylor, MacIntyre and the work of Foucault were written in part to expose the myth of neutral politics or ideology. As such, the current *atomistic economic* predisposition, as with any political reality, can be attributed to an outcome of multifaceted historical contingency and modern lexicon (Foucault, 1976, p. 12). These scholars implicitly challenge therefore those in education, in this instance the leaders of the school, pedagogical experts and policy makers, to be mindful of the vulnerability of contemporary norms. Thus the *atomistic economic* culture is here named a contingent event and not a truth or default position de facto (Smith, 2004, p. 252-254).

If performance related pay and economic desire have been adopted into this educational environment of accountability because they are the offspring of a dominant economic narrative then we should be aware not only of this current prejudice but also need to be aware of dissenting critiques and counter-narratives. For if the issues of pay and desire mirror the underpinning ethos of the community and encompasses something of the overall telos for this school then this would suggest that the choice is really a decision between two possible narratives of self; the *atomistic economic* (the contemporary preference) and the *relational* (the contemplative preference). This type of comparison forms an important part of SSP and hints at the difference that a re-imagination could make; in short, the end of performance related pay and a revised culture that seeks a more nuanced contemplative desire in the classroom.

6.5. Concluding remarks

The roots of accountability at school are likely to be complex and convoluted. What is clear however is that the interview data suggests a strong link between accountability (the continuous pursuit of the best grades/results) and mental health disorders. This is true for both teachers and students. In the simplest terms possible: anxiety, depression and other wellbeing problems are caused by acute accountability. We can also conclude that the *atomistic economic* ontological supposition that has now been exposed in document and through interview, underpins a culture of acute accountability in which the individual (*atomistic)* teacher or student is driven by this *economic* telos.

The contemplatives on the other hand proffer a distinct ontology and an equally distinct vision for education. Moving away from the damaging effects of accountability towards a culture of relationship, the contemplatives challenge performance related pay. Through the lens of this traditional wisdom, performance related pay is recognised as a system that is predicated upon the assumption that the teacher is knowable and that effort and achievement can be easily and fairly measured – yet this assumption, as it turns out, is false. In positioning relationship as central, the contemplative analysis also suggests that performance related pay is an immoral divisive and dividing system that exacerbates hubris in the successful whilst isolating the weak. It is, as such, a system in which there are no winners.

The contemplatives also inspire a more nuanced style of teaching in which awe and participation drive the motivation to learn. This would entail a move away from the *atomistic economically* driven telos of getting the best grades possible at all costs (acute accountability), towards one of wonder, oneness and gazing; a sea change in the very purpose of education as grounded upon a distinct counter-ontological narrative.

Neither of these possible transformations necessarily lead towards a decrease in teacher or student performance but do have the propensity to reduce mental

health problems in school. Moreover, they demonstrate the potential of an initiative like SSP that situates the question of self at the very centre of educational reform.

Chapter Seven

Transparency, reform and bravery: a theological analysis of Ofsted's vernacular

7.0. Introduction

In the next chapter, 'The Study of Self and Purpose' (SSP) will be introduced. It is a plan for radical change in the school of the participants and would necessarily demand bravery of leadership and staff. The study would demand a growing awareness of Ofsted's notional prejudice and a shared desire for the school to reform policy, practice and dialogue as predicated upon our narratives of self. It is possible that the theological analysis of the participant's interviews (chapters five and six) might act as a formative motivation for such radical change. The current chapter will mainly move away from the participant responses however and turn again to Ofsted's ontological vernacular to meet the same aim. In this chapter, key words such as 'achievement' and phrases such as 'spiritual and cultural development' taken from Ofsted's documents will be seated under a non-violent theological analysis. That said, the issues expressed by the participants will be firmly in mind when suggestions for school reform are made and each section will therefore begin with a relevant citation and will include other small excerpts where necessary to remind the reader of the participant's concerns.

Within the first section of this chapter, the thesis of Radical Orthodoxy (RO) will critique the notions of neutral language and neutral reason. The reason for this critique is to suggest that Ofsted be more transparent in their enunciation of ontological meaning. RO's nihilistic thesis first presented in chapter one will then be re-introduced to examine whether this line of thinking might provide a

clue as to why such transparency is copious by its absence in documentation[1]. This addresses research questions 2 and 3: Can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy help to explain any (hidden) narratives of self in Ofsted documentation and within a particular school? Can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy justify its public relevance as interlocutor in educational dialogue and in what spirit should it participate in any such educational dialogue?

.

Within the second section of this chapter, the contemplative narrative of the *complex relational* self will be re-introduced as an ontological notion that challenges *neutrality* and the *atomistic economic* self, uncovered within Ofsted's vernacular. The purpose is to propose again that a theological counter-narrative of self can successfully stir imagined reforms to elements of school culture. More precisely, reference will be made firstly to school language; and how we might develop community by reforming how we speak to and of the other. Secondly to achievement; and how this notion might be transfigured to improve wellbeing. This addresses research question 4: What might action research look like in the school of the participants and can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy offer any insights stemming from a counter-narrative of self that might enrich this study?

During the final part of this chapter, the wisdom of the contemplatives will be employed to justify the risks and bravery needed to bring about radical change in school through SSP. An interpretation of contemplative practice will lead to the conclusion that it is the very gift of naked vulnerability, fragility and honesty that eventuates in new unimagined possibility. In the spirit of peaceful theological participation, the insights of this tradition will be offered to inspire the necessary bravery needed should the leadership choose to reform pedagogy and wellbeing as predicated upon ontological exploration (also addressing research questions 3 and 4).

---

[1]The point here is not that neutrality and nihilism provide the only reason for Ofsted's ontological oversight. There are, of course, other possible reasons for the lack of engagement with the ontological question in school including issues of time, resource, desire, or simply staff awareness.

The broad aim is to continue to test whether a Christian counter-narrative may enable rich changes to policy, practice and dialogue so that the tripartite audience of Ofsted, expert and school can respond.

7.1. The myth of neutrality: towards ontological transparency

'T*hey* (the government/policy maker) *just have a criteria for meeting standards and targets so the question of self is not considered when designing this system'* (Rachel, Interview One, 2015).

In chapter one, evidence was forwarded to illustrate where Ofsted appear to express, at least provisionally, a *neutrality* of ontological imagining. It was noted how words such as '*tolerance'* were used without reference to any grounded explication. Arguably, of even more significance, tolerance also lacks explanation in the Inspectors Report (IR) (p. 8) [1]. It is also true that no definitions were thought necessary to determine the language of 'pupil', 'purpose' or 'achievement' in this formative document (p. 8). That Ofsted praised the school of the participants in how it contributes towards 'spiritual and cultural development' (p. 6), without first defining the spiritual or cultural, illustrates again this perceived neutrality and a reluctance to make clear its predilections or meanings. Notwithstanding the critiques of RO's genealogical thesis (discussed in chapter three), *neutral* ontological designs are clearly evidenced not only in Ofsted's Frameworks but also in the semantics of the IR - the document that most demands school discernment and action.

[1] In 2013, Ofsted completed a School Inspection of the participant's school. This Inspection Report is the published document following inspection. It reflects the language of the Frameworks and SIH but provides more particular feedback to the school. Its inclusion here is to provide further examples of Ofsted's language, but language that in this instance is tailored specifically for those affiliated with the school; making it individualised, unavoidable and thus wholly relevant to current pedagogy and school culture. For reasons of anonymity, the published report cannot be openly referenced. I would add however that my citations from the report are consistent with the overarching ethos of the aforementioned Frameworks.

In chapter two a reason for this neutrality was provided. For RO, reflecting on Aquinas, things in and of themselves are wholly gifts and our experience of them is saturated ultimately with their origin, which is God (Milbank, 1990, p. 279 and p. 289). To think, explore, study, theorise, relate and be are synonymous with participation in the divine event. Following Scotus' theology, the immanent was unhooked from the transcendent and a space free of the transcendent assumed. It was from this perception of autonomous space that the fallacious concept of *neutrality* became a possibility. We have moved, in other words, away from an understanding of the universe as gift to the possibility of an autonomous/*neutral* perception of things. This move from gift to *neutrality* included our notions of self and reason (Milbank, Pickstock and Ward, 1999, pp. 2-3).

The question is whether this assumption of *neutrality* partially explains why there is in education a reticence in policy to table the ontological question. Simply put, if Ofsted (and possibly staff/expert) falsely assume that our ontological language is neutral then there is no obvious reason for linguistic transparency or motivation to explore the notion of, say, the pupil. This might explain why Ofsted have not seen it necessary to clarify their ontological position, why experts have not critiqued these suppositions and why schools might have failed to explore more fervently any narratives of self embedded in the curriculum.

Of equal significance, 'ontological neutrality' also implies the supposition of 'neutral reason'. This is predicated upon the claim that if we all share the same neutral reason by which to interpret the meaning of neutral words such as 'pupil, 'moral' and 'spiritual', then the meaning of these words will be universally understood. As such, there is no need for transparency. On the basis that Ofsted do not make clear their own ontological preconceptions or wish to engage in a discussion of meaning, it is reasonable to conclude that they do perhaps assume neutral reason. Linguistic neutrality and neutral (universal) reason are here two sides of the same coin.

For Milbank however, reason is not a neutral faculty by which to determine the meaning of these pregnant words but is the result of culture, narrative and

influence (1990, p. 9). It is important in this light to be aware of reasons' vulnerability and the historical and cultural factors that determine any current perspectives.[1] That is not to say that reason should not be applied in education – clearly any reform will be considered reasonable - but that we should all be clear that reason lacks neutrality and cannot be divorced from historical hegemonies, particulars and circumstance.

The point here is that Ofsted, expert and staff need to be aware that our narratives of self and the reason by which we interpret the self, always lack neutrality. It is only in becoming first aware, that moves can then be made to uncover current hegemonies, open up dialogues and in this way feed potential reforms to school culture and improve wellbeing. There is therefore a prerogative for Ofsted to make more transparent their documented ontological intentions. Failure to disclose these ontological values have led to my own investigation into Ofsted's suppositions (chapter one) but it would be far simpler – and fairer to Ofsted - to critique any preferred narratives of self were they made explicit in the first instance.

7.1.1. The possibility of nihilism: towards ontological transparency

'Everyone is going to have a slightly different idea of self. No opinion is ever going to be a true fact. There is only interpretation' (Ned, Interview One, 2015).

That the ontological language of Ofsted directives and secular educational policy in general can be described as nihilistic is a challenge of some force. Yet the point here is rather modest; if our ontological language does rest ultimately upon nothing, then this might provide a clue for the reticence to examine narratives of

---

[1] This is not a conclusion drawn only in theological circles. Zizek, as one academic amongst many others, reaches the same conclusion that reason does not and cannot come from nowhere. *'For is it not the case that modernity's mode of reason – for all its worth – cannot bring reason under its own critique? Is not the Achilles heel of reason precisely the fact that it cannot be deployed against itself? This is because if you fold reason back against itself, it panics. In this respect, like a person without a face, reason cannot tolerate the representation of its own mirror image' (2009, p. 10).*

self in policy and in school. Put simply, one reason for the disinclination of those in education to name the self is the belief that everyone will hold a different arbitrary story of who we are - each of which will finally lack certainty and depth.

For RO, nihilism is an historic event (section 2.3.1.) through which our perceptions of self have become complex and grounded in nothing; they have become un-weighted. The logic of nihilism is best understood as the taking apart of 'something', the theophanic reality, to then articulate this something as 'nothing' and then to ground this 'nothing' as 'something'. Connor Cunningham, in tracing the genealogy of nihilism argues that whatever is displaced from the divine mind is by implication rendered 'ontologically neutral'. It becomes, in other words, 'a given rather than a gift'. For Cunningham it follows that this 'given' thus becomes open to 'indefinite epistemic investigation' (2002, p. 174). In a central claim, Cunningham argues that in this manner the biological self has been reduced and reduced again to the sum of its parts and its descriptive abilities, the physical self likewise reduced to neutral events and finally all narratives of self (and the universe) reduced and rested ultimately upon nothing. This finally weightless self is underpinned by nothing but the manifestations of opinion, culture and populist ideals. Thus for RO there can be no definitive self in secular culture, no overarching identity of which to commit, so ultimately this self only finds its identity in what is given, what is devised and what is imagined (Milbank, 1990, pp. 282-289). In regards to this thesis, the nihilistic thesis might mean the taking apart the '*relational* self' (as divine absolute gift), articulating this self as nothing (a *neutral* self) then suggesting that this nothing is something (the *atomistic economic* self of contemporary education).

If it is true that nihilistic ontology (the *complex* self that is divorced from the *relational* self) indicates why Ofsted, expert and school fail to encourage ontological discussion, then perhaps this needs to be documented and challenged. Put differently, if a fear of the unfathomable complexity or weightlessness of self can explain a modern evasion to explore narratives of self there is a need to be aware of this. This is because there is a responsibility in education and in

schools to deal with the unavoidability of ontological prejudice and the effects of this prejudice upon wellbeing as well as questioning why exploratory practice is not often undertaken. Questions and deliberations of this type are crucial if we are to foster a more reflective culture of exploration moving always from opacity to transparency.

7.1.2. Neutrality and nihilism: towards ontological transparency

The overall point is very simple. Ontological reasoning cannot be sidestepped yet the question is rarely visible in education. A possible and of course partial explanation for this lack of discussion or disclosure is because the self is falsely assumed to be neutral, our reason by which we interpret ontological meaning thought to be neutral and/or that our narratives of self are drawn ultimately from a void and therefore lack weight.

The case against neutrality is reasonably strong. Whatever the reader might think about my interpretation of Ofsted's ontological meaning in chapter one, what is less controversial is that an interpretation was in fact possible. That it was possible demonstrates clearly the myth of neutrality. It is also a quite necessary venture as without such interpretation a (hidden) hegemony will necessarily take root and always effect wellbeing. As such, a strong conclusion is surely that the language of Ofsted cannot be identified as neutral and needs therefore to be made explicit.

The nihilistic thesis on the other hand might be more contentious and vulnerable to critique[1]. Nevertheless, its inclusion here is to pose a crucial question rather than substantiate the claims of Cunningham and RO. The question is why, if ontology cannot be divorced from our thinking and politic, are we in education so reticent to explore and disclose our ideas of self – why is there such a lack of transparency of meaning? The answer is likely to be complicated, but perhaps

[1] Not least the paradoxical notion that a perceived lack of meaning actually substantiates some kind of meaning.

one answer lies in our fear that ultimately our notions are thought weightless and any prevailing exploration will lead thus only towards further confusion and apathy. If this is a reason then the nihilistic thesis can, rather ironically, stimulate ontological reflection in education and consequently augment our re-evaluations of pedagogy. Advancing RO's nihilistic thesis, in other words, is one way to engage and discuss the lack of ontological clarity with Ofsted, pedagogical expert and school; which also substantiates the hypothesis that theology at its best is entirely relevant as public interlocutor. At the very least the hope by this part in the thesis is to have validated the claim that ontological suppositions are unavoidable and that any reticence or resistance by school, Ofsted or expert in examining narratives of self is not only stultifying but finally self-defeating.

7.2. Imagining school reform via a theological counter-narrative

Within this section of the chapter, a counter ontological and teleological vision will be offered via the lens of the contemplative tradition. The aim is to highlight how the theological *complex relational* self vis a vis Ofsted's *neutrality* and/or the *atomistic economic* self might provide a rich resource from which to reform policy, practice and dialogue within the school. The section will take the form of two parts and changes to leadership and staff ethos will be at the forefront of both.

.

The first part will compare the ambiguous roots of Ofsted's ontological prejudice to a clearer and more deep-seated theological narrative of self to illustrate the difference that language might make to reform. It will be argued that our unknowability and desire for relationship should be the first principle behind any conversation about staff and student. Concurrently, a move away from the unchallenged (hidden) *neutral* or *atomistic economic* language of tolerance is necessary as a means to anchor school community on something more definite. It will be suggested instead that a move towards a community founded upon

attentiveness towards the unknowable other and grounded upon our absolute need of relationship has the potential to improve wellbeing in school.

The second part will focus upon narratives of self and achievement. It will be argued that a move away from achievement as *neutral* or *atomistic economic* is a prerogative and as a competing counter-narrative, the *complex relational* self will pertain towards a radically altered meaning of achievement. With respect to imagined changes, the following five areas of achievement will be analysed: students who do not wish to achieve, achievement and stress, student achievement, staff achievement, behaviour and achievement.

7.2.1. School language: and how we might develop community by reforming how we speak to and of the other

'*Teachers may come in as idealists, romantics even to the profession, but the system perhaps grinds them down'* (Mike, Interview One, 2015).

'Those who are not high achievers do not have a voice and cannot speak out… they can't really shout out because no one is going to listen to them' (Grace, Interview One, 2015).

Like the Framework and SIH, the IR appears at face value to assume ontological *neutrality*. Take again the concept of spirituality as just one example of many: 'Boys and girls participate eagerly in the musical and choral productions. These contribute exceptionally well to pupils' spiritual and cultural development' (IR, p. 6). This report makes no further claim to what might be meant by spiritual assuming perhaps neutral language and/or neutral reason (see above). It was shown in chapter one however, that if read in the light of The Framework (2015) a more defined version is evident. Here the Framework writes of spirituality as 'an ability', 'willingness to reflect', 'sense of', 'use of', 'interest in' and 'respect for' (p. 40) and spirituality was also shown to be somewhat controversially underpinned by 'the promotion of fundamental British Values' (p. 41) without

any mention of the transcendent. The argument was then posed that the language of spirituality – and the same was true of 'morality', 'pupil' and 'other' - lacked any final, essential or absolute depth and left us with an ambiguous and paradoxical ontological root (section 1.2.2.).

It is in this abstruse ontological light that two difficulties have arguably arisen in school. The first is that because Ofsted do not attempt to make transparent their underpinning narrative of self then it follows that the school's language of self will similarly be vague. When, in other words, spirituality, otherness or morality are referred to, the meaning of self that undergirds these concepts is equally hidden in the school's policy, practice and dialogue. Secondly and as a consequence, with no framework from which to think about our language of each other, the adoption of the *atomistic economic* self has now become axiomatic and this, as evidenced in chapters five and six, has led to a detriment to wellbeing. The narrative of the *complex relational* self on the other hand presents a clearer picture of self, contests the ambiguity and unchallenged assumptions of Ofsted whilst pertains to a more healing telos. In short, this counter-ontology suggests that our fundamental unknowability and absolute desire for relationship should determine how we might speak to and of the other. This will now be explained.

The *complex* 'intersubjective' self as Davies terms it (2002, p. 213) suggests that we are unable to ascertain the determining factors of an individual and the experiences and narratives that have led to certain behaviours and performances. Consequently, it is not easy to sit comfortably with our preconceptions or labels of students and teachers either individually or collectively because it is the unknown that is always encountered. Just as ambiguous are the lenses through which we judge or see the other - for no lens is prejudice free, neutral nor transparent but equally as complex and formed (Myres, 2012, p. 44).

Yet paradoxically, for the contemplatives, a community is actually strengthened through an awareness of this unknowability (Laird, 2006, pp. 133-142). When our unknowability is firstly recognised and accepted by members of the

community, then this inescapable unknowability develops, paradoxically, into a shared community belief – and that is what binds together the community. If this idiom is provisionally granted, then the school community is challenged to negate its certainty of language about others and to commit to an attentiveness to the unknown. Hence, the community is impelled to listen to the (often silent) unknowable other and, in simultaneously refuting mastery and control (Coakley, 2013, p. 331) or in thinking that the other is understood, to challenge convention, current practice and parlance.

As stated above, although it may not be possible to finally know or label a person(s), in the thoughts of the contemplatives it is still possible to form binding relationships (The Cloud of Unknowing, 1961, p. 63). This is relevant to how we see others because the knowledge of persons is not a simple theoretical discovery, a certain type or label to be considered in the abstract but a relational ontological reality born primarily of our shared divine dependence and natural desire for relationship. To know the other is, in other words, to be aware of our need of one another and to be formed by and with the unknowable other through humble relationship (Ward, 2006, p. 81). For this to occur successfully in school there must be times when the labels are dropped, our lack of knowledge laid bare and attentive listening practiced.

To imagine a community that accepts its vulnerability and inability to capture the other, is to imagine the antithesis of current society and modern pedagogy that are often saturated with labels (Laird, 2006, p. 139). Take for instance a sample of adjectives that describe the self as taken from the Framework: 'disadvantaged, pupil premium, special educational, spiritual, moral, social, cultural' (2015, pp. 46-47). Take also more general teacher vernacular including perhaps: 'low ability, disruptive, coasting, underperforming, gifted'. The argument is not that these adjectives are without warrant. These labels of course are useful in school and the challenge then is not to displace them immediately but of huge significance to see simultaneously beyond them to a reality we rarely visit; our shared unknowability and ultimate dependence and need of one another (Lossky, 1957, p. 33). Staff would therefore need to be trained in the ethos that beyond the labels that we use of students stands another profound reality.

This potentially liberates the teacher and student at the point of day-to-day classroom interaction. It is entirely possible for teachers to become fixated with data and labels in an economic system and it would be interesting to investigate to what degree such pre-conceptions tainted relationships in the class as a part of future research. During the introduction, a number of educational papers that highlighted various hidden hegemonies were presented to illustrate this association between pre-conceptions and school experience (section 0.5.). The question here is whether or not there is a cost to student-teacher interaction and dialogue where teachers are led by labels such as 'Pupil Premium' or 'Underperforming'. This would require further in-school research in which teachers become the masters of the research[1]. This is a possible avenue motivated by SSP. It is certainly hard to predict and even harder to evidence, nonetheless it would be fascinating to research to what degree classroom dialogue and practice might change were we all to move beyond the labels that teachers have of students in the classroom.

For McIntosh it is this very desire for seeing beyond the label, relationship and awareness of inter-dependence that 'effects new possibilities' (1998, p. 229), for it is in this process of sidestepping control and knowledge of the other that nurture and relationship become dominant. It is through this wish to negate knowledge of the other that other possibilities are opened up. It is therefore the paradoxical knowledge of unknowing that effects positive relationship and unforeseen transformations (Lossky, 1957, pp. 199-201). This applies to dialogue between the staff too. Whether in our judgements about classroom performance during formal observations, the language used in staff appraisals or in the leadership engagement with the pedagogical visions of teachers that might run contrary to the norm, the call for quiet attentiveness and reframed analysis remains the same. The central point of this argument is that it would be misguided to reduce our conversations to and about the other as agents we fully

[1] There might be little harm in students reflecting too upon the idea that behind the label of 'teacher' exists a weightier reality – a human – and to research what difference this might make to dialogue in class.

understand but instead to accept their ultimate unknowability. More auspiciously, it is to claim that communities are more richly developed and relational when directing their desire towards a shared awareness of unknowability. It is the call for us all to be a little less certain of our knowledge (hubris) and a desire to seek first and foremost relationship (humility).

Such a counter-ontological stance runs contrary to what was evidenced in chapter one. Here, the Frameworks (2014/15) point towards tolerance as the bedrock of good community. The Frameworks also appeared at first to allude to the language of tolerance as *neutral* with closer inspection illustrating the reality of a (hidden) hegemony and/or unchallenged ontological assumption that lay behind the semantic – possibly *atomistic economic*. The conclusion drawn in chapter one was that good community currently rests and is judged upon a nebulous yet paradoxically laden ontology that arguably leads to apathy and indifference (section 1.2.1.).

In the section above, it was claimed on the other hand that should we adopt a vision of the contemplative *complex relational* self, then there might follow in school a prerogative to listen attentively to the unknown other as a shared relational inter-dependent need (Myers, 2012, pp. 44-47) and it is this, that leads towards good community. Davies alludes to the fruits of this type of community. He speaks of how listening helps to create dialogue with other silences in the world, with those and for those whose voices are not heard; for the place of silence in the contemplative way teaches us 'not to trust too glibly the sweet cadences of our own voice' (2002, p. 222). Such listening not only silences our own preconceptions and conventional ways of understanding each other but simultaneously opens us to the silent stories of these others, invokes us to meet these strangers who are acknowledged as different but met in peace. All of this necessarily entails the perhaps uneasy provisional negation of control and mastery of students, leadership and staff, but the result for the contemplatives can be liberating.

Take for instance the class community as one such example where it is possible to reflect the contemplative's wisdom in discussions in the classroom. In this

instance, students might be schooled in the idea of listening to the normally silent other. Rather than begin a discussion with those who are often at the forefront of debate, the teacher might ask all the students to write a small evaluative response to a statement. These could then be collated and used to foster a meaningful debate in which the teacher brings to the fore the thoughts of the quietest or voiceless. In a similar manner, it might be providential for the school council to take proper account of the voices of those students who normally say nothing during form time – this is the time when students are asked to share their concerns - by employing the same kind of technique.

This could be a radical (and perhaps ironic) challenge for school leaders and teachers too. If good community is strengthened by provisionally relinquishing control, listening to others and bravely challenging convention then the contemplative theologian, as one who allows her ontological vision and philosophy to be daily purged and transformed, has something unique to offer the staff. It is not only the openness to fragility and the need of dispossession and inter-dependence, not only the call of the powerful to be attentive to the silent but also the encouragement that through this method, relationships are healed and communities strengthened. The suggestion is therefore for normalised hierarchies to be temporarily blurred. This might occur between leaders and teachers during yearly performance management assessments, within departments during planned meetings or between teachers and students during daily form time activities and mentoring.

This might also mean ascertaining what telos is being communicated to parents, teachers and students and to uncover therefore the (hidden) ontological hegemony that has been assumed. The interviews conducted for this thesis (chapters five and six) might act as a model for this type of enquiry particularly in reference to the *atomistic economic* prejudice that was so evident. But this uncovering of what ultimate purpose the school is transmitting outward might be achieved in any number of ways: interview, questionnaire, dialogue, departmental discussion, whole school debate and governors mediation being just a few of the possibilities. The important aspect of all this would be that the exploration is not undertaken superficially but only with a genuine and long-term

commitment to investigation, surprise (for good or ill) and to the possibility of change.

That the school already demonstrates a desire to listen to the silent in some of its practices is clearly commendable and welcomed. To develop this praxis is to forward the idea that dialogue becomes normalised in the school culture, a continual project of listening and attentiveness in the journey, perhaps, from *atomistic economic* value to *relational*. This is only possible where relationship is the chief concern and the unshakable principle upon which all conversations are bound. This would mean enacting a practice that stresses the need to go beyond cliché and documentary supposition towards the enriching conversation about who we are (ontos) and what we do (telos) at school (Laird, 2006, p. 14). The process of exploration would need to be collective and this collective experience must have the potential to question standardised ways of thinking. This is an aim of SSP.

In summary, for the contemplatives the *complex* self cannot be known, but, more hopefully, a good community exceeds our ability to successfully know. In fact, far from our unknowability being something to fear, it is for the contemplative a liberating reality because it is through the shared impossibility of being fully known and/or fully knowing (or labelling) the other, that the community finds a commonality in relationship. Hence, paradoxically, it is our universal lack of knowledge of each other that potentially binds us together as a community. Furthermore, this thesis maintains that if school community is thought to be strengthened by tolerance then the community will be shrunk by a language that is vacuous and lacks transparency whilst if the community desires to place relationship before all else - to be attentive to the unknowable other - then this will result in honesty and pellucidity. It is a move in other words from “we tolerate you” to “we need you”.

The question here is whether the leadership and staff wish to contemplate unknowability and relationship (the *complex relational* self) as the pivotal and binding aspect of how we might speak to and of the other in community or whether the *neutral* or *atomistic/economic* dialect remains dominant. It is, as

such, a question of who we think we are. During the next section, attention is turned towards practical suggestions that are framed within and upon the notion of the *complex relational* self. The choice of subject matter is ‘achievement’.

7.2.2. Achievement: and how this notion might be transfigured to improve wellbeing

‘We are no longer a race of people who think the best of people and education does just that’ (Ned, Interview One, 2015).

Evidently, achievement in Ofsted’s Framework is saturated in atomistic economic statutes (section 1.2.3.). The IR likewise refers to ‘well above average’, ‘proportions of pupils, ‘pupils… are not penalised’, make excellent progress’, ‘fast progress’, ‘catch up quickly’, ‘achieve as well as other pupils’, ‘performance is high’ all of which contain elements of the atomistic economic telos. Achievement is thus presently judged on an assumed atomistic economic basic and there are, of course, consequences to teaching practice and wellbeing.

Consider for example how The Framework makes judgements based upon, ‘how well teaching nurtures children and promotes their sense of achievement and commitment to learning’ (p. 63). The Framework here assumes that nurture is tied to a child’s sense of individual achievement and that this sense of achievement is concurrently tied to their commitment to learn. In slightly different parlance, this entails that self-esteem is linked to progress and progress linked to motivation. As a consequence, in our collective pursuit of progress, and desire to avoid relative failure, we have taught our pupils that academic success (telos) is synonymous with esteem (ontos). This is currently practiced in school through a number of different mediums including mentoring, informal dialogue, marking, achievement schemes and reporting.

However, the perceived marriage between self-esteem and achievement has hidden insinuations. If we hope to persuade our children that academic success is intrinsically linked with esteem then implicitly and concurrently we cannot hide from them the reality and cost of this philosophy; that failure must thereby mean the loss of such esteem. In such a system founded upon *atomistic economic* meritocracy (esteem is earnt by an individual accumulating achievements), we should not be surprised to find the failing student lacking esteem. Indeed, this is the very outcome tacitly desired and actually required in order to judge the 'outstanding achievement' of other schools or students. Yet if relative failure results in relative lack of worth then arguably this will account in part for anxiety and stress in school and damage will consequently be caused to the wellbeing of both students and staff who work within this system:

'When students try and fail enough times this becomes part of their history. As a result of their history they then stop trying' (Patel, Interview One, 2015).

This is but one example of many that could be used to show the implications of an *atomistic economic* telos. For now, the *complex relational* self of the contemplative tradition will challenge this hegemonic narrative of self and offer a distinct possibility of reform. In placing relationship as central, the contemplatives provide a counter-vision of what achievement could mean rather than an economically driven system that currently dominates. The following hypothetical applications should be read therefore as a testing of the claim that our ontological imagination can reshape the vistas of education. Four of the five examples are by necessity briefly written but do provide the reader with accounts that foresee the potential of SSP. The fifth example refers to behaviour and is an example of a more developed account of transformed culture.

7.2.3. Students who do not want to achieve

'There is no point in telling them that the work is the most important thing, it comes as a secondary or tertiary thing. They feel lost and often do not understand the situation that they find themselves in' (Daniel, Interview One, 2015).

The school community is partly formed by the language that we use and the conversations that are held about others and the contemplative teaches that when we enter a conversation about or with a parent or student for instance that we relinquish first our temptation to mastery and control. This means in practice a desire to be attentive to the sheer depths of people's concerns that will not be written in any teaching manual. It means, for instance, listening with alarm to parents like Daisy who do not appear to think that teachers always value children when they fail and to question whether this is a reason for some students not wishing to achieve:

'This is definitely the role of the parent to ensure that all children are valued through success or failure but this is different for teachers' (Daisy, Interview One, 2015).

It also means to accept the narrow horizons and dramatic limit of our own lenses by which we encounter the parent or student, lenses that are inescapably coloured and partial. It means to think relationship as the primary concern, motivation and heartland of all school conversations about people rather than grade, opportunity or economic value. Relationship is not thereby conceived as a means to an economic ends, but desired only for the sake of relationship.

This means being attentive to the stories of those parents and students who seemingly lack any desire to work hard for good grades or economic ends to 'achieve very good results' (IR, p. 4) and consequently effect negatively the school's residual or data. At present, this can cause anxiety both to the teachers like Beth who are charged with having to turn students around and make them work harder, 'this has been a shock this year' and concurrently to the students and parents in question who lack this desire - 'they feel lost' (Daniel). The suggestion here is a move away from staff and student accountability born of

economic prejudice (the pressure to continually improve as an individual agent) towards a system of patient listening to those who are different – from the *atomistic economic* self towards the *complex relational* self.

The interview data does provide some responses in this light:

'Confidence can be hit in this way. If we receive negative feedback then this can affect our confidence. Some people do manage to pick themselves up quickly but others do not seem able to do this and take it more personally and doubt themselves more' (Grace, Interview One, 2015).

It is of course impossible to second guess the outcome of listening to the many other stories and why some strive to swim against the economic achievement tide, and so here the risk of attentiveness should be taken without preconceived answers in mind. However any dialogue conducted by the leadership team or classroom teacher should be preceded and founded on allowing time and space for those who do not wish to achieve to tell their story rather than working from defined strategies for improving the grades/data of the student/school. This is not to say of course that performance will not improve as a consequence of attentiveness and awareness but that the motivation and first principle is one of listening.

This has the potential to change our language and conversation in different school environments. Certainly in the classroom, a teacher's language may become a little less anxious if the desire is for relationship and attentiveness rather than current underperformance. Where a teacher is less concerned with a student's immediate grade/result and more with the person, seemingly the points of confrontation would reduce as Logan's words highlight, 'taking away the anxiety and stress caused by grades will have an effect upon how people view themselves'. At the same time, the underperforming child would not be so burdened with the expectation of instant conformity to economic ideals, freeing them to speak more honestly about their lack of motivation. Changes would be felt too by the leadership team in their own conversations with struggling families; a leadership who currently shoulder the weight of acute accountability

and league tables as the primary focus. However, the point is not to fully predict either these conversations or practical changes to pedagogy, but to allow relationship with the unknown other to drive changes in a newly revised vernacular going forward.

7.2.4. Students who suffer stress due to perceived achievement or lack of achievement

'It makes you feel isolated… you go into yourself. You kick yourself for not getting the best grades… students are being diagnosed with clinical depression and anxiety and that can be from the result of having the pressure on them to get an 'A' in their exams… The system makes people think negatively rather than positively' (Logan, Interview Two, 2015).

There are some students who struggle to see beyond every single grade they achieve (or do not achieve), those students for whom grades are all consuming to 'reach the levels they should be at' (IR, p. 4). The stress and suffocating pressure that can result from the straitjacket of personal accountability to reach good grades can be addressed by moving away from *atomistic economic* towards *relational* statutes through school ethos, culture and dialogue. In the words of Patel, 'students wouldn't feel a failure because we would not be hammering them to get them to this magical C grade'. The desire for an ontology of *complex relational* is a desire to recognise as fundamentally basic the intrinsic worth of students regardless of ability, conduct, idiosyncrasy, belief, characteristic or indeed achievement.

To allow the *complex relational* self to undergird our thinking here is to eventuate authentic communities in which persons work for and with each other. The purpose and language of, say, mentoring could hereby be deeply transformed. What might become most pressing within such conversations is not therefore so much a strategy to reduce stress through improved performance but a reminder of the sheer worth of the individual as part of the community

regardless of their achievement or failure. In the words of Mike, 'teach intrinsic worth, don't let them think the system is working against them'. It is the boldness to allow relationship and intrinsic worth to dominate the mentoring over and above any economic ends. Again, all such changes will not and cannot be truly predicted here but realised fully only in the collective exploration of staff though SSP.

7.2.5. Moving away from *atomistic* student achievement

'Ever since lower school it has been instilled in the students that exam results and grades are what enable students to get on in life, to be the best and out-do other people' (Harriet, Interview One, 2015).

The *complex relational* self might also involve moving from the idea and evocation that achievement is chosen by an isolated autonomous economic self whose will to succeed is an act of personal volition to an awareness that ability is something more communal, something formed and enabled only ever with and by others. This would mean schooling students and staff in the intricacies and networks of those aspects that develop a self; that we are not self-created agents who simply choose either achievement or failure. This would prove to be a significant and radical sea change in the way the school envisions performance but it is perhaps a more honest and humbling account with hidden benefits:

'the sad reality is that loads of students leave the education system thinking that they are failures' (Patel, Interview One, 2015).

'because you do not do well at school this can have a massive effect upon the rest of your life' (Grace, Interview One, 2015).

One benefit would be a subsequent change in meta-narrative; moving from how to utilise any grades for personal economic advantage, 'those with the best grades will then have the best opportunities' (Logan), towards learning how to be

attentive to others by positioning these abilities, 'conversation, reflective thinking, debate and questioning' (Daniel), for both the school and in the long term for the local community. To explore how, in other words, all achievement (and failure?) can be celebrated, shared and nurtured in and for the good of self *and* others rather than education being solely about the pursuit of individual grade for individual benefit.

7.2.6. Staff achievement

'*Prove to me that you are pushing your pupil premium… there is so much of a trail to show that you are doing everything you can for a student. So that if it does go wrong they can't come back to you and say "you did not do this"… But you can do all of this and the students still might choose not to work hard'* (Beth, Interview One, 2015).

A similar change to the philosophy of achievement could be adopted by the teaching staff too. This might mean ending the public economic process of departmental comparison in regards to grades and performance measurements, acute accountability and performance targets in which persons are reduced to grades: 'know their targets…take full account' (IR, p. 7). This is used presently as a strategy for engraining a competitive edge and improving performance. The negative consequences of performativity however should not be underestimated as the stories of the interviewees proved:

there is no joy in teaching year 11 at the moment… constantly target setting, reaching targets, setting targets, must be meeting targets, only giving right answers on exam questions, knowing what the right answer is, and getting the best results possible' (Rachel, Interview One, 2015).

This is not to say that efforts should not be made by Heads of Department/Faculty or leadership to improve or develop particular skills or departments where necessary. But it is to work from the belief that acute

accountability is unhealthy, that conversation for improvement should occur without prior judgement and with a desire to listen and relate to those who are failing. The conversation should always be understood as a shared common enterprise (our inescapable inter-subjectivity of the *relational* self). The suggestion is a move away from atomistic subject accountability towards holistic engagement with and for the community. Moreover, and to repeat the words of Beth, 'accountability does not motivate me because I am doing these things anyway and I would like to think that most teachers are like that, if not all'.

.

7.2.7. A 'community of virtue' as a behavioural expression of complex relational selves

'Although the results look great, I am not sure that the people are more equipped for the modern world… or virtuous or considerate… which is a shame…Education should be more about nurture and the anecdotal and almost immeasurable concepts such as virtue' (Daniel, Interview One, 2015).

We are educators, we should be finding more experiences that are valuable for them, not just pieces of data… Could we not rather talk about qualities rather than grades? (Mike, Interview One, 2015).

'What the students leave with that they can then pass down to their own families is questionable' (Daniel, Interview Two, 2015).

In his commentary on the ascent toward perfection, Lossky reminds his reader that perfection is achieved simultaneously on two different but closely interrelated levels: action and contemplation. Lossky significantly warns that contemplation without virtue is nothing other than imagination (1957, p. 202) and Merton echoes the notion that contemplative prayer is only ever perfected by the virtues (1955, p. 6). Similarly, Teresa of Avila, commenting upon her own upbringing, writes that it should have been enough for her to lead a good life with just the Grace of God and having virtuous parents who strived to introduce

her to virtuous deeds of every kind (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez, 1976, pp. 54-56). These three recognised writers are emblematic of many in the contemplative tradition who advance the necessity of virtue in the pursuit of perfection.

With respect to behaviour policy, we might therefore conclude that a policy based upon the *complex relational* self of the contemplatives also includes the practicing of virtue. This is because for the contemplative, what we all share in common, despite the sheer impossibility of fully knowing the other, is our essential need of each other and there is a necessity therefore to be formed in practices that enrich the other; deepen the community. In practical terms, were changes to be made to behavioural policy in this light then this might occasion a move towards a 'community of virtue' because the cultivating of virtues would offer every treasured individual the opportunity to flourish within and for the whole community – the *relational* self.

In an age of individualism and economics (the *atomistic economic* self), any change to the cultural hinterland (towards the community of virtue*)* would certainly call for creative leadership but it is this re-shaped ontological foundation that holds the key to change the nuance, style and means of behaviour management. This premise cannot be understated because it is the underlying ontological perception that influences the way we talk with one another, see one another and work with one another. What is pressing here is an alertness to what underpins any behavioural policy at root, the narrative of self that begets the procedure, for it is this foundational maxim that will determine to a large extent the application of sanction and the nuanced manner in which punishment is set by the staff and understood by the students.

If a punishment/policy is undergirded by economic factors for instance then the praxis, conversation and effect of punishment will also be economic; in the first instance to improve an individual's grades (and financial opportunity), in the second, to improve the results/data of the school. We can assume that students and staff will be fully aware of this economic telos and all policy, practice and dialogue would be experienced in this light. In summary, staff would punish deviant students in order to improve their individual grades and subsequently

improve the data of the school. All subsequent pedagogy would reflect this telos and would affect the wellbeing of those on the frontline.

The practicing of virtue on the other hand is a system governed to be undertaken by all, and for all. In communities of virtue, liberated from the *atomistic economic* incentive, any demarcation between the self and the school community would be necessarily blurred and behaviour would become an issue about and for the school community rather than about the individual's (*atomistic)* prospects and/or the public judgement made of the school (*economic).* Students would therefore need to be schooled and attentive to the idea that there is no isolated behaviour because all behaviour is experienced in and through the lives of others. The learning and practicing of virtues like consideration, honesty, humility and responsibility would be one way to engage students and staff in this philosophy as will now be shown.

In the classroom for instance, an individual who had disrupted a class might be charged with the practice of the virtue of consideration. It would be important first for the teacher to make it clear how the behaviour had affected others in the class. Once aware, the student would then be introduced to the idea of consideration and the meaning of this virtue. Traditionally it was supposed that the copying of role models was a useful way to develop and exemplify this meaning and it might be that the teacher ask the student for an example of someone they know who is considerate of others. Alternatively, the teacher might identify the considerate behaviour of a different role model and introduce the student to this person and their virtuous behaviour. In either case, the chosen person's actions could then be used to inspire imitation and as a consequence begin to challenge and change the behaviour of the student. It would be important then in the event of any improved behaviour to acknowledge any virtuous practice observed and the positive effects upon the others in the class.

Honesty is a second example of a virtue that might be practiced. In this slightly different scenario, honesty would be encouraged by the people who suffer as a result of poor behaviour: staff, parents and students. The following situation assumes that the student above has continued to lack consideration in the

classroom and this has caused upset and concern. This has led to an escalation of behaviour management. The student could now be challenged by the leadership to listen to the written testimonies of those students, parents and staff who had suffered as a result of their persistent deviance. Teachers, for instance, might speak honestly about the effect of this behaviour upon their own levels of stress and consequent physical health. Students (albeit anonymously if necessary) might write about the frustration and fear of a class that is dominated by confrontation. The parents of other students in the class might tell of their worries for their own children's learning. These stories would be told openly to the student with their own parents or carers present and in this way the student would be confronted with the effects of their behaviour upon the community. In listening and becoming aware of the honest appraisals of others - without ever displacing the intrinsic value of the perpetrator - reconciliation and more considerate behaviour would again be encouraged. However if students remain unaware of the significant effects of their behaviour – if behavioural policy is about improved grades rather than virtue – then an honest appraisal of the effects of behaviour upon the class community might remain untold.

In both the instances above, responsibility is repositioned as a necessary requirement for a healthy community rather than for personal individualised gain. The desire to behave for the student would be channelled away from self-obsessive economic aspiration towards living with and for others who depend upon the consideration of this student for their shared happiness. The reasons for any sanction and the language used to address would naturally mirror this philosophy. Responsibility would therefore be a third example of a virtue to be taught and practiced yet only ever in the light of the overarching ethos of inter-dependence and our deep need one of another. It might therefore be impossible to finally ascertain the intangible motivations of student's poor behaviour but would still be reasonable and possible to encourage more palpable virtues, like responsibility, to be practiced for the good of all.

The notion of the *complex* self would also engender the practicing of a further virtue: humility. This is simply because staff would need to relinquishing the idea that they always understand the reasons for poor behaviour. There is

already a process in school of attempting to piece together a picture of those individuals with more specific needs in the hope of offering more personal support. Yet we need not forget too that the *complex* self transcends our ability to fully understand motivation and that an awareness of our limits can actually be liberating. Perhaps, for instance, we cannot truthfully claim that there is "no excuse for that type of behaviour". If the *complex* self is adopted as nominal then a prerogative to move beyond simple individually attributable blame is recognised. Poor behaviour, in other words, is more than individual choice because a person's choice is the outcome of complex and an often unknowable broader web of factors. In this way, behavioural policy becomes more about healing and relationship because it draws upon an awareness that the whole school community is effected by behaviour rather than situating behaviour in a framework of personal blame and sanction where the ends are economic rather than holistic. The challenge is for staff judgement and language to reflect this complexity and this challenge might best be broached through the practicing of humility.

If an acceptance of our inability to fully understand the *complex* self and the unfathomable dynamics that determine behaviour were embedded into school culture, then clearly behavioural policy would need to be founded and re-thought upon this appraisal. What exactly this radical change might look like would depend entirely upon the re-imagined decisions of leadership and staff (SSP). But the principle offered here is that whatever decisions and policies are made that they are made in the light of the vulnerability, the 'intersubjectivity' of the *complex* self and the intrinsic value of the individual as an inseparable and inter-dependent member of a virtuous community – the *relational* self.

With over 120 teachers at this school, there are clearly the resources and experiences to further this conversation should it be wished. As part of SSP, a synopsis of this chapter and chapters five and six would be shared with the staff to further this discussion. In short, it would be submitted as part of this process, in the spirit of peaceful theological offering, that strong communities are created upon our unknowability and shared desire for virtuous living. To exercise

change however would require the desire of the community, cultural investment and the vulnerability of risk.

7.3. Planning for radical change: towards the efficacious risk of vulnerability

Within SSP, iterative cycles of reflection would be essential for the transfiguration of teaching practice. The imperative would always be one of awareness of the (hidden) ontological hegemonies in official documentation and practice and the re-evaluation of culture going forward. In essence, this would entail the admission that what has become normalised and axiomatic is not necessarily the most fruitful for staff and student. Put slightly differently, vulnerability and openness are precursors to challenging the status quo and embedded cultures; the readiness to question perceived truths an indispensable part of the process. SSP is therefore a risky endeavour. Yet the contemplatives have a rich history of standing at the point of such risk, which is exactly why perhaps, school leaders might lean upon their experience and wisdom.

For these men and women of prayer the fallibility of all knowledge is laid bare. This is the reason why the contemplative calls for the mind's darkening, which is to say 'unknowing' (The Cloud Of Unknowing, pp. 61-62). In this act of unknowing every notion and belief is decreed vulnerable (including beliefs about self and purpose). According to Coakley this involves 'naked disposition…simple waiting…surrender [of] control… which over the long haul, afford certain distinctive ways of knowing' (2013, p. 19). Such distinctive ways of knowing are understood to occur as harmful idolatrous ideas, pride and desires are exposed and purged over a life time of unknowing.

Commenting upon the thoughts of Simone Weil, McIntosh moreover invokes the idea that if the self is stripped of the illusions of autonomy, self-image and social role and surrenders to shared vulnerability and fallibility – the contemplative way - then a liberating act, the opening to potential new life is discovered (1998,

p. 229). A self that is thus exposed as fragile (*complex*) yet at the same time known and loved in awareness of our need of one another (*relational*) is one that is freed to be for others. This results in a sharing of suffering and joy, in success and failure and unforeseen vistas are opened up. This freedom is learnt through the displacement of the self and the freedom from self-preoccupation or 'the flawed capacity for idolatry, the tragic misdirecting of desire' (Coakely, 2013, p. 20) and has the potential to heal relationships and alter practice.

The purpose of negating self-image, social role and autonomy is described by McIntosh as continual self-dispossession that acts as the very means of liberation (1998, p. 230). In a similar manner Coakley drives the need of purgation in order to deepen our own sense of the possibilities of self-deception (2013, p. 326). What is practiced in contemplation for Coakley is a moral stripping that goes beyond any well intentioned empathy (tolerance) towards a destabilising act that leads eventually to attentiveness (2013, p. 48).

It is a destabilising risk to practice dispossession and ask questions about who we are in school too and the bravery needed by leadership is obvious. Yet if the outcome is deep attentiveness to the other, developing relationships and positive changes to school culture and community then the risk is justified. Within SSP a vastly different hinterland is being imagined in which (hidden) ontological hegemonies are firstly exposed then opened to critique vis a vis the *complex relational* self and other teacher led ontological imaginings. What the contemplative suggests is that this risk not only challenges over-confidence in individual notional ability, but serves as a reminder that our primary desire should be for relationship - for nothing is more significant.

The application of SSP would be a collective calling into question of current ontological reasoning and an exploration and unearthing of the narratives and hidden hegemonies that feed the current policy and practice. The method and breadth of dialogue in SSP will be introduced in chapter eight, but in leaning on the wisdom of the contemplatives, there remains a quiet evocation; to be a little less certain of existing unchallenged trends and assumptions and more discerning and open therefore to the stories of others. This is a demand for collective

questioning of current practice even where this includes challenges to the Ofsted directives and its presumption of a *neutral* or *atomistic economic* self. A humble, brave and creative leadership is thus required but it is this continuous act of dispossession that leads to stronger community and liberation. It is the risk of vulnerability, in other words, that not only unlocks the potential for new areas of possibility but also sustains the desire for relationship over and above all else.

7.4. Concluding remarks

Within this chapter, the thesis of RO and the *complex relational* self of the contemplative tradition has been referred to as a means to raise an ontological comparison. The reflections made and the hypothetical changes to policy, practice and dialogue submitted are intended to demonstrate the necessity for staff to be fully aware of competing narratives of self and the effect of any such (unavoidable) adoption within day-to-day school culture.

More particularly, the aim through an engagement with RO's arguments regarding neutrality and nihilism is to have stimulated some thinking into why the ontological transparency and exploration is seemingly not a prescient desire within school or within Ofsted's directives. The question for Ofsted, pedagogical expert and school is really whether the lack of ontological deliberation is due to a false notion of neutrality and/or because educators fear the ensuing subjectivity entailed in discussion. Given that a story of self will always be manifest in documentation and pedagogy and that this narrative will affect wellbeing, the need to overcome this oversight seems long overdue.

Through a hypothetical application of the *complex relational* self to facets of school pedagogy a validation of the uncovering of ontological visions has been made. In terms of practicalities, it has been suggested that the unknowable self be at the forefront of conversations about the other; an attentiveness and listening to the unknown other encouraged to open up new possibilities of community in school; and that our understanding of achievement be richly transformed should we think of achievement as *relational* rather than *atomistic economic*.

Finally, due to a recognition of the risk of SSP, reference to the notion of vulnerability when in the hands of the contemplatives was made. It would take a brave leadership team to adopt an iterative cycle of reform as derived from the ontological imagination of its staff. Yet the contemplative tradition gives confidence that in the provisional negation of control, mastery, knowledge and certainty and through the careful listening to the unknown other that new radical

possibilities are opened up. It is thus to the proposition of SSP that we know turn.

Chapter Eight

"The Study of Self and Purpose": an outline of a proposal for action research in the school of the participants

8.0. Introduction

The broad aim of chapters five, six and seven was to hold up for consideration a case study instance that tested three hypotheses: to test the claim that narratives of self cannot be avoided in education, that counter-narratives might transform the experiences of those who work on the frontline and that a theological ontology might help deepen this potential. The hope by now is that the reader may be sufficiently persuaded to evaluate and critique this work and as a consequence to widen the discussion. In this chapter I will outline a proposal for school-based action research, entitled 'The Study of Self and Purpose' (SSP), which could potentially engage colleagues as active participants in the research process, and draw on the insights contained in this thesis. Although the proposal has been written primarily for the school of participants in my research it could be equally applied to English schools more generally. This addresses research question 4: What might action research look like in the school of the participants and can the Christian contemplative tradition and/or Radical Orthodoxy offer any insights stemming from a counter-narrative of self that might enrich this study?

SSP will encourage colleagues to become aware of the ontological language of Ofsted and its effect upon the students and teachers. It will also encourage colleagues to reflect upon their own preferred narratives of self and to begin to transform pedagogy as a result of this reflection. The study will also introduce a

theological narrative of self to model this practice and potentially enrich these transformations. More exactly, the aim is to introduce my colleagues to the *complex relational* self vis-a-vis the *atomistic economic* self and to demonstrate the difference this makes to pedagogy. Through this comparison and notional application, it will be implied that SSP has the potential to improve the wellbeing of those in school.

Two established educational research practices will inform the pursuit of these aims: Stenhouse's methodology of Applied Research in Education and the Lesson Study method. These research practices will be outlined shortly.

8.1. SSP in brief

SSP is unremittingly and unapologetically ambitious. It is a proposal for radical curriculum development. By curriculum I am employing Stenhouse's broad definition of the term: it is an educational proposal that involves policy, practice and dialogue, is open to criticism and scrutiny and is at least in principle workable into practice (1970, p. 5). The aim is to suggest to my colleagues that developments to the curriculum might be made by focusing attention upon narratives of self during the action research. It is to encourage us to explore and situate the question of self as a possible determining factor in reforming pedagogy. It is a proposal encompassing three distinct but holistic phases that always have the question of self at the centre.

During phase 1, the central ambition will be to raise teacher awareness of the unavoidability of narratives of self that necessarily saturate all policy, practice and dialogue. This heightened awareness is intended to deepen the justification

for SSP and consequently to expand the motivation to research and transform school experience.

During phase 2, the collaborative planning and research into current ontological axioms will be the central ambition. Within this part, teacher led research would investigate and potentially uncover the narratives of self that currently inspire policy, practice and dialogue in school.

During phase 3, the re-imagination and application of counter-narratives of self by my colleagues would be the central ambition. The purpose here is for teachers to apply their own preferred narratives of self to policy, practice and dialogue and as such to begin to suggest transformations to day-to-day working life.

These three phases of SSP have, of course, already been modelled as a means to test the hypotheses. In effect, they mirror the methodology, praxis and analysis of this thesis. The fundamental need for teachers (and expert/policy maker) to be aware of the centrality of ontological reasoning should be clear following the introduction and literature reviews (chapters one and two). The research into the (hidden) hegemonies that underpin current practice have been enacted in the participant interviews and interpretation of Ofsted's language (chapters one, five, six and seven). The re-imagination and application of counter-narratives to drive curriculum development should be evident through the hypothetical application of the *Complex relational* self (chapters five, six and seven).

However, it is important to note that SSP will likely fail without the dialogue and the shared desire of my colleagues to be part of this process. The basis of this claim is made by reference to Stenhouse who saw the 'teacher as researcher' as integral to curriculum development (1975, p. 92). I will explain shortly. It is however an imperative that SSP should be practised as a continual and inclusive project. As such, any differences of value or interpretation evidenced during the process should not be sidestepped or ignored but tabled and discussed. That is to say from the start that my own research and theological analysis is posited as

provisional and limited and that the exchange of ideas and disagreement during the delivery of the three phases is welcomed as indispensable. This is consistent too with the spirit of theology as rational non-violent interlocutor explicated in chapter three (section 3.5.2.) and the complexity of the *complex relational* self.

It should also be noted that the proposals made in this chapter are only an outline of what is possible. In the event of concrete interest from the school, the SSP model would be offered as a means to instigate more discerning and defined discussion. At this point, a more exacting and bespoke design with more aligned, precise and detailed timings would be developed in co-operation with my colleagues. For obvious reasons, this more exact model cannot be anticipated in advance of any such discussions. The suggestions recorded below therefore act as an account of generality rather than a fastidiously orchestrated plan.

The scale of this task is clearly vast which is exactly why a thorough commitment in terms of time and desire is so crucial to realising real change. With this in mind, I would attempt to contextualise any work completed with my colleagues within the field of academic expertise and theory. As such, I would also introduce a selection of precepts gleaned from the work of Stenhouse and an educational action research method called Lesson Study. I would also rely upon these principles to suggest that the methods and practices of SSP are rooted in other traditions of action research. As a key part of the process, I would introduce these to my colleagues. It is to these strictures that we will now turn.

8.1.1. Stenhouse's methodology of applied research in education

Stenhouse, as a key thinker in 20th century educational action research, championed the teacher as primary researcher and consequently challenged those in British education to re-think how research should be carried out in schools.

Stenhouse favoured a process model of research in which teachers continued to reflect upon their policy and practice rather than aspire to objective utopian ends (1975). This process model in which the teacher acts as the primary researcher is one that will be adopted in SSP.

The fertility of this endeavour is made by Stenhouse by reference to a favoured case study. This is Bruner's 'Man: A Course of Study'. This film-based social science scheme of work was taught in America for 10-12 year olds. The method was comparative and significantly, the three questions that recurred during the scheme of work were ontological:

What is human about being human?
How did they get that way?
How can they be made more so?
(1966, p. 74)

Whilst Bruner set out the principles for handling these questions with the pupils, Stenhouse made a distinctive contribution by casting the teacher in the role of researcher. Teachers, for Stenhouse, taught this best when they themselves became learners along with the students rather than see themselves as experts in all fields, 'a new role for the teacher, in which he becomes a resource rather than an authority' (1975, p. 92). Stenhouse thus advanced the notion of teacher as researcher and learner and by inference recognised too the sheer depth of narratives of self. Arguably, both this methodology and the subject matter are no less vital for a school en masse today than they were for the children and teachers involved in this particular scheme of work. These are after all the ontological questions that none of us can bypass – even when this happens implicitly. SSP would be a similar but different process of uncovering and evaluating current ontological reality in which my colleagues would lead the research to develop the curriculum.

Stenhouse comments, 'Education enhances the freedom of man by inducting him into the knowledge of his culture as a thinking system…it is a structure to sustain creative thought and provide frameworks for judgement' (1975, p. 82). This is

evidenced in his commitment to the following principles of methodology: question-posing; information feeding analysis and application; the utilisation of first-hand resources; listening and discernment; legitimising the search; reflection on experience (1975, p. 92). Stenhouse here is speaking of classroom experience. The 'freedom enhanced by education' and the 'principles of pedagogy' are contextualised within a teaching and learning setting. It is reasonable to conclude however, that Stenhouse would not be averse to the idea that the same ideals could be true for a broader study like the one proposed here.

In creating a methodological link between SSP and Stenhouse's methodology the aim is to further deepen and extend the latter's range of application. The following principles are indicative of how the SSP process would be informed by Stenhouse's methodology.

- "Legitimising the search" (1975, p. 92): In this instance I would seek to advance the teacher's research by revealing the ways in which narratives of self determine and can be evidenced within current policy, practice and dialogue.

- "Information feeding analysis" (1975, p. 92): This principle would be achieved through teachers researching these current narratives of self and critiquing what they find.

- "The utilisation of first-hand resources" (1975, p. 92): I would realise this by introducing the teachers to the hypotheses and the case study participant data carried out in their school.

- "Question-posing; listening and discernment; reflection of experience" (1975, p. 92): These key aspects to Stenhousian methodology would be evident when teachers would be asked to re-imagine and apply counter narratives of self to policy, dialogue and practice.

- "The teacher as a resource" (1975, p. 92): For Stenhouse, this principle viewed the teacher as a resource of learning in the classroom. I would

expect the teachers to reflect upon their own preferred narratives of self. These reflections (the teacher as a resource) would then feed the developments to curriculum.

8.1.2. The relevance of Lesson Study as a form of applied research in education

The use of Lesson Study methods is broadly consistent with Stenhouse's applied research methodology and would be introduced to facilitate improvements to the workability of SSP.

Lesson Study originated in Japan more than 100 years ago. Evolving over many years, Lesson Study has become an integral part of Japanese professional culture. It is a professional development programme that has become increasingly more popular in the UK in recent years and there is a growing awareness and implementation of the programme in schools (Fukaya; Arani and Lassegard, 2010, pp. 171-173). The formation of the World Association of Lesson Studies (WALS) exemplifies the growing impact of this model on a global scale.

As with the Stenhousian concern, the underlying principle of Lesson Study is that of teacher-led research. Teachers, in other words, become the leaders and co-ordinators of active research in the classroom. Working in small groups, these teachers use existing evidence to collaborate on the planning, researching, teaching, observing and refining of particular lessons. A triad or more of teachers decide upon a particular focus of research, for instance a problem or issue encountered by students in their learning. From here, hypotheses are developed by researching relevant curriculum scholarship with support from a curriculum expert to attempt to resolve the issue. A lesson is then collaboratively planned to test the hypotheses. The focus of the lesson depends upon the context and specific aims of the participant researchers. One teacher

will then teach this lesson and the pupils observed by his or her peers with this focus in mind. Following the lesson, the teachers evaluate the observed lesson and decide upon refinements to the original lesson plan. This refined lesson will then be re-taught and observed.

Peter Dudley was one of the first to bring the Japanese model of Lesson Study to the UK. He argues that Lesson Study can work because it blends many of the aspects of teaching and learning that bring about success: taking time, real classroom experience, a collaborative and supportive ethos, sharper detailed focus and a commitment to improving the progress of pupils. For Dudley, this type of practice knowledge is not however always something that teachers may be aware of but he advocates it for both the experienced and the unexperienced teacher (2012, pp. 85-87).

SSP is informed by of some of the broad methods and evaluations of Lesson Study taken from three papers. The first is written by Lewis, Perry and Murata who ask how Lesson Study might contribute towards instructional improvements (2006). The authors explore the problems of historical studies and forward ways to avoid research pitfalls. The second paper is written by Cajkler and Wood (2016) who researched the mentor, student-teacher relationship in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The final thesis is authored by Lo and Marton (2012). It has been included due to its central argument that Variation Theory is useful as a guiding principle of pedagogical design.

It should be noted however that SSP does differ from Lesson Study as it is not only concerned about teaching and learning per se, but more generally with the ontological suppositions that shape the policies and practices and effect day-to-day life in school. My aim then would be to utilise some of the tools of Lesson Study that have been sharpened over many years and to incorporate these into this proposal for further study. The following methodological aspects of Lesson Study would therefore integrate the methodology of SSP to inform the process.

- “Local Proof”: Lewis, Perry and Murata insist upon a local proof for the validity of Lesson Study (2006, p. 6). This is to suggest that the final model of practice and research would be undertaken in mind of the particularities of the school. This is supported by Cajkler and Wood who realised in their own studies the need for bespoke direction and purpose.

- “Iterative cycles”: What Lewis, Perry and Murata call ‘iterative cycles’ (2006, p. 3), SSP would label ‘communities of re-thought’. The principle in both is the same; that for long-term success to be achieved, a long-term commitment to teacher-led research would be necessary.

- “Variation theory”: Variation theory is the belief that learning and research is enhanced through the critical comparison of different variables (Lo and Marton, 2012, p. 10). Variation theory would be applied to SSP with the hope of (i) raising teacher awareness of the centrality of narratives of self in policy, practice and dialogue, (ii) ensuring that the object of study (ontology) remains consistently central and (iii) enabling teachers to learn across different academic boundaries including the faculty of theology.

- “A clear rationale for research”: With Stenhouse, Lo and Marton insist upon a clear rationale for research (2012, p. 20). For Lewis, Perry and Murata this is evident in their collective resolve for a wide knowledge base for teachers. This would be written too within SSP when teachers were introduced to the participant research already carried out within their school and to the hypotheses that ground the proposal for further teacher-led research.

- “Modelling the plan for research”: For Lewis, Perry and Murata the modelling of expectations is essential for good research practice (2006, p. 11). I would provide examples during phases 2 and 3 of SSP in which teachers would be asked to research current narratives of self and their affect upon the wellbeing of others and also asked to provide counter-narratives that might drive potential reform in school.

- "Collaborative research": Cajklet and Wood concluded in their paper that collaborative study was an effective way to research and transform pedagogy (2016, p. 96). It is in this light that SSP advances research that is carried out by the teachers who work together.

The remainder of this chapter will be divided into three sections that reflect the 3 phases of SSP (awareness/justification, planning/research and re-imagination/application) coupled with selective Stehhousian theory and the methods of Lesson Study. It is very important to state clearly that I would introduce all and any reference to Stenhouse and Lesson Study in this chapter to my colleagues as part of SSP. This is necessary to provide them with a theoretical grounding to the study that, as will be explained shortly, is a crucial precursor to motivation.

8.2. Phase 1: Developing the ontological awareness and justifying SSP as a means to transform policy, practice and dialogue

The aim of this phase would be to introduce the teachers to the thesis that there is an unbreakable marriage between our narratives of self and our notions of purpose in education. It is to present the position that we need to be collectively aware that our ontological suppositions, which are never neutral, will be unavoidably manifest in the school culture and curriculum. It is also to imply that there is a need for a commitment to iterative cycles of teacher-led research within the school – what will be called 'communities of re-thought'.

In Stenhousian terms, this is about 'legitimising the search' (1975, p. 92). It is, in other words, about vindicating to my colleagues the time and effort that SSP would inevitably demand.

8.2.1. Developing ontological awareness through variation theory

Phase 1 is arguably the most important. Without a shared awareness that narratives of self saturate policy, practice and dialogue, it is hard to imagine any teacher engagement in SSP or the commitment to communities of re-thought; the initiative would clearly lack a coherent rationale from its advent. If my colleagues are to be asked to study the ontological suppositions grounded in their own curriculum in regular episodes, then being aware of why this is important is clearly necessary. If they are not convinced by the hypotheses and SSP is not justified then the research will lack vigour, the analysis depth, and the application energy.

The utilisation of variation theory as favoured by Lo and Marton would be employed as a method for enabling teacher awareness to grow and justification to develop. Variation theory is the notion that it is expedient to learn through comparison. Examples cited in their paper include learning male in variance with female, large vs small and red vs green. The principle in short is that it is not possible to know something without the object of study being comparable with something else. In regards to SSP, this would entail increasing teacher awareness of the comparison between different narratives of self and the constituent purpose in educational policy and pedagogy.

Using prompt cards displaying different understandings of the self, teachers might consider what educational policy, practice and dialogue might look like were they to adopt each distinct conception. For example, my colleagues might explore the differences to educational purpose were the school to hypothetically adopt a Neo-Darwinist ontology or a Marxist position. I would introduce many different variations to develop this awareness. The aim at this juncture would be simply to suggest to my colleagues the intrinsic relationship between our narratives of self and the purpose in education and the notion that narratives of self can never be neutral nor successfully negated.

Providing some time for conversations - involving comparisons, reflection, and reconsideration of assumptions - would also potentially illuminate the unbreakable relationship between ontos and telos and demonstrate how our narratives of self often pervade culture and purpose in quite implicit ways. Using patterns of variation might also develop a greater awareness of the ontological hegemonies that shape the educational experiences of my colleagues, and thereby serve to justify the use of the SSP approach as a form of applied research in education.

A further advantage of variation theory for Lo and Marton is the positioning of the object of learning (gender, size, colour or narrative of self) as the central tenet of the study (2012, p. 10). Variation theory thus undercuts a potential shortcoming of Lesson Study; that the study loses focus upon the real object of learning. As such, variation theory would help to safeguard the centrality of the object of learning in SSP as it is introduced to the teachers: the centrality of narratives of self in school culture.

I would use variation theory as a method for introducing the theological concept of the *complex relational* self as a counter-narrative that seeks to redefine self and purpose in education. Variation theory would be utilised to compare the *atomistic economic* self vis a vis the theologically inspired *complex relational* self. The teachers would be presented to the variances and provided the time to critically examine the hypothetical ramifications in policy, practice and dialogue should they be adopted in school. They would also be introduced to the participant data that indicated that the *atomistic economic* self negatively affects wellbeing. This might subsequently stimulate a wish to embed action research into the fabric of school as a means to improve the lives of students and teachers.

For Lewis, Perry and Murata there is a necessity to learn across different academic boundaries (2006, pp. 9–10) and at this point in the process, it would be possible to demonstrate the prolificacy of this through reference to the theologically grounded *complex relational* self. During chapters five, six and

seven this ontological notion pointed towards transformations to policy, practice and dialogue including a behaviour policy that was centred upon virtue, engraining a desire to listen to the normally voiceless unknown other and a transformed idea of achievement as shared gift. Further potential changes involved the relegation of achievement as *atomistic economic* due to the stress afforded to students and teachers and the inculcation of a different teaching ethos in which worldly exploration, wonder and participation become a guiding principle. Challenges were also made to performance related pay and the false assimilation of identity with success/failure. Concurrently, the willed adoption of humility and inter-dependence was advocated as a precursor to improved wellbeing. Learning across the academic boundary would indicate therefore the rich profundity and relevance of certain theological thought in opening up new vistas and transforming curriculum. The intention in modelling the difference that a particular narrative of self would make to school life would also illustrate the difference that the teachers' very varied ideals would make.

In short, variation theory would inform and justify SSP by comparing different narratives of self and relative purposes with particular reference to the *atomistic economic* self and *complex relational* self, centralising the issue at hand and underscoring the project with theoretical reasoning. If it is true that we learn in comparison with what is different, then variation theory would act as a catalyst for developing ontological awareness and thereby justify the adoption of SSP. The hope is to inspire my colleagues to 'reconstitute the already constituted world' (Lo and Marton, 2012, p. 11).

8.2.2. Developing ontological awareness through the introduction of the hypotheses and research

Concurrently, and as another necessary strategy for justifying SSP, my colleagues would be introduced to the hypotheses and the research carried out in their school. This would include an introduction to the (hidden) *neutrality and atomistic economic* narratives of self unearthed in Ofsted documentation.

Reference would be made specifically to the readings of 'tolerance' (section 1.2.1.), 'spirituality' (section 1.2.2.), 'morality' (section 1.2.2.) and 'achievement' (1.2.3.). The teachers would also be familiarised with the participant responses with respect to the issues of wellbeing perhaps, for instance, the words of student Harriet and teacher Mike:

'*we are all labelled as grades and numbers. In short as data – not the real person that we are'* (Harriet).

W*e hear educational policy makers saying things like "every child matters, inclusion"… which always seems to have come from a good place… but it is actually like a factory'* (Mike).

These and other citations would be selected from chapters five and six and also taken from the case record to share sources and develop awareness.

This disclosure of primary sources to inspire further analysis is what Stenhouse coined 'the utilisation of first-hand resources' (1975, p. 92).

It would be important for teachers to be aware that the language of Ofsted and the participant responses were in part the foundation and motivation for SSP. These first-hand resources would therefore be outlined clearly as a means to widen the knowledge base for the teachers. This need to share resources and widen the knowledge base for teachers is widely accepted as integral to the practice of Lesson Study as a form of applied research in education. Lewis, Perry and Murata for instance propose three ways to avoid the risk of Lesson Study being discarded, the first of which is the expansion of the existing knowledge base for teachers (2006, p. 4). For these authors there is a need for a clear definition of how the innovation relates to wider institutional endeavours (2006, p. 9) – in this instance how SSP relates to reform and wellbeing. The purpose of familiarising the teachers with the interpretations of Ofsted's vernacular and the participant data is to meet this clear definition.

This idea is well worth reflecting upon in the context of SSP. An exploration into narratives of self in education has the propensity to lack the descriptive knowledge base and clear definition that Lewis, Perry and Murata deem necessary. To enact collaborative study without first grounding SSP in first hand resources would run the risk of confusing the project for those involved. An introduction to Ofsted's language and participant response would therefore be an absolute prerequisite for more successful practice. The authors write 'Innovations often fail when educators focus on the surface features of the innovation rather than on the underlying mechanism that will enable it to work' (2006, p. 5). The relevance for SSP is obvious and significant. By highlighting Ofsted's documentary vernacular and participant experiences, the knowledge base is widened and a case for examining more collectively the institutional norms and trends (the underlying mechanism) is warranted.

The work of Lo and Marton make similar claims for what should be prior to Lesson Study when they call for a convincing and clear rationale for research (2012, p. 20). A similar need to explicate the legitimacy of SSP seems equally germane. Furthermore, if Lo and Marton are right in their analysis that teachers need theoretical reasoning to underpin wise decisions - for it would be folly to think that changes simply happen mechanically - then in the same way, the theory of the centrality of the ontological dynamic and its permeating affects in pedagogy and school culture needs digesting first if my colleagues are to be convinced by SSP. Put differently, teachers require a sound theory and transparent rationale before they commit to potentially transforming action research and it is my belief that many of these concerns could be met by introducing my hypotheses and research to the teachers. That Ofsted's documentation betrayed *neutrality* and an *atomistic economic* narrative of self that was mirrored in the reflections of the participants is research that supports this claim. It also reveals the depth of a current ontological predisposition and highlights the effects of this prejudice on the wellbeing of those at school. This sharing of hypotheses, legal prose and participant reflection would thus expand the knowledge base and concurrently legitimise SSP.

A particular critique of Lesson Study also portends to another potential problem for SSP. Lewis, Perry and Murata indicate the difficulty of assimilating the fruits of the research with empirical measurements by referring to the lack of 'a clear causal warrant' (2006, p. 7). With this in mind, my intention would be to share the desires, fears and considerations of the participants who expressed so clearly the damage to wellbeing caused by the weight of the *atomistic economic* self and to suggest that *this* is the clear causal warrant:

'*there is no joy in teaching year 11 at the moment… constantly target setting, reaching targets, setting targets, must be meeting targets, only giving right answers on exam questions, knowing what the right answer is, and getting the best results possible – which sounds quite negative'* (Rachel).

'(in the current system teachers will not) *do anything more than turn up, prepare some stuff, throw it out to the masses, see what they give you back, put your comments on it and do it again… we have turned ourselves into human doings rather than human beings… we have filled their heads with abstract knowledge that lacks any final purpose'* (Daniel)

'students are being diagnosed with clinical depression and anxiety and that can be from the result of having the pressure on them to get an 'A' in their exams… The system makes people think negatively rather than positively' (Logan).

The causal warrant for SSP is met, in other words, simply by turning to the experiences of those in the frontline of school. Moreover, the rhetoric of the participants, the sheer weight and profundity of the interviews, should certainly meet the concern that the study should relate to wider institutional endeavours; that, after all, was a fundamental motivation for the interview process from the outset.

8.2.3. Developing ontological awareness by challenging the myth of neutrality

A third aim of phase 1 would be to outline the myth of neutrality. The argument is simply that narratives of self in education are never neutral; there was, is and can never be an ontological default position. This is exactly why all the teachers would be introduced to current (hidden) hegemonies in Ofsted's documents (section 1.2.). This would also be achieved through reference to the Radical Orthodox (RO) challenge to neutrality and the nihilistic thesis (sections 7.2.2.). It would also be expedient moreover to refer to Lesson Study research where similar conclusions were drawn - albeit in a very different context. Extracts from reports of this research would be shared with the teachers as a means of substantiating this central claim.

For example, in explicating the need for a wide knowledge base in Lesson Study, Lewis, Perry and Murata highlight a key finding: that the intent and focus of any Lesson Study will be derived in part by the sponsor of the study (2006, p. 4). This may not be the most remarkable conclusion but it does not lessen the implication for it demonstrates the need to uncover the (hidden) intent, however well meaning, that lies behind the research incentive. This conclusion would be seated as analogous to the hidden intent discovered within official policy. This lack of neutrality is signified in a different way later in the paper with reference to the process of observation. The authors here are clear that they expect different lesson observers to see and discover different things within a lesson (2006, p. 10). This draws the reader's attention to the fact that the lens by which we experience the world is never neutral but determined by prior motivations and knowledge. This insight further highlights the myth of neutrality and implies a need for teachers to explore the ontological and teleological perspectives that are suppressed and denied in contemporary education.

In analysing the mentor responses to Lesson Study, Cajkler and Wood reach a parallel conclusion (2016, p. 91). The transcripts demonstrated how easy it is for observers – and indeed all of us – to falsely assume a correct and comprehensive perspective on reality. These transcripts indicated how the mentor's discernments and judgements often worked in the dark, unaware of other ways of

seeing the world, even where these other ways turned out in hindsight to be so obvious and worthwhile. The interviews proved the mentor's growing awareness of personal limitation and their surprise at novel ideas. Evidence once again of the lack of neutrality and the need to uncover and revise.

The lack of reflecting upon narratives of self in my teaching experience and in official documentation suggests perhaps that for some the self we encounter in contemporary education is the ontological default and that the purpose of education is neutral; but this is the very premise that this thesis has challenged. It is a challenge to uncover and re-imagine what is often "unthought" – the (hidden) ontological and teleological realities in school - but as an exciting and worthwhile endeavour. By citing from Lesson Study, drawing on RO's thesis and pointing towards Ofsted's vernacular, the suggestion is that SSP might provide a framework for this endeavour.

8.2.4. Justifying local proof and communities of re-thought as a necessary aspect of SSP

During his first interview, the experienced teacher Patel recalled a situation in which a newly appointed Head Teacher had attempted to employ the same type of philosophy and ethos into her new school as she had learnt at her previous school. Patel commented that the attempt did not work because '*the children were not the same'*. His observation is apropos and important to the notion posited in this thesis that explorations into the questions of self and purpose need to be happening in this school, with this research and these teachers – a process known as 'local proof'. With this in mind, teachers would be introduced to local proof as a sensible methodology favoured also by Stenhouse, Lewis, Perry and Murata and Cajkler and Wood.

Stenhouse for example is insistent that curriculum research should belong to the teacher and that much more than educational theory and policy is needed if significant development of teacher practice is to be actualised in the classroom

(1975, p. 142). It will never be enough, Stenhouse argues, to learn about educational ideas simply by reading books or papers but by seeing instead the classroom as a scientific laboratory in which experiment and observation are the basis for development. It is also vital that a teacher's practice should not be simply observed, but that the teacher should also study this practice themselves (1975, p. 143). In short 'effective curriculum development of the highest quality depends upon the capacity of teachers to take a research stance to their own teaching' (1975, p. 156). Stenhouse was equally convinced that designs should be implemented on a local scale by individual schools who may identify particular development plans (1975, p. 143).

This approach is mirrored by Lewis, Perry and Murata who argue for 'local proof as a legitimate route to educational improvement' (2006, p. 6). They make this claim firstly by highlighting the illegitimacy of substituting the Japanese for the US model and secondly by contending that local studies allow for instructional knowledge to be developed and amassed in a manner in which large-scale or centralised studies do not. Hence, they argue that positive changes are made more possible in localised institutions.

Thus whilst a theoretical underpinning to SSP would be employed – the utilisation of variation theory for example - this should be taken to mean that the utilisation of large-scale theory would work best when contextualised and deepened within a localised environment – the school of the participants. This does not mean that any research undertaken should not be made public, discussed and applied more widely. SSP is justified as relevant to pedagogical expert and Ofsted as policy maker because, as explicated in chapter four, it is a particular instance that signifies a far broader concern[1].

Moreover, if the school does decide to adopt SSP into the fabric and ethos of its vision through the practical involvement of my colleagues in school then this is consistent with Lewis, Perry and Murata's conclusion that 'our metric for

1 Moreover, the breadth of other distinct localised studies like that of SSP might actually deepen this thesis and test the hypotheses more vigorously.

judging innovation research design should therefore consider… whether it is likely to promote or undermine effective local adaptation' (2006, p. 11). This again equates to a preference for local proof in which changes are thought and known in the heart of a community; and whilst such changes might not always be easily quantified, this should not deflect from the possibility of palpably transfigured cultures in this particular school.

There is one further argument for the local proof and by implication for SSP. From the outset of their research, Cajkler and Wood identified a problem that SSP would share in its own different context: that there were relatively few analyses of Lesson Study in Initial Teaching Training (ITE) (2016, p. 85). Whilst they conclude that the relatively small amounts of research do contribute significantly to the developed practice of student-teachers, the lack of comparative material is important nonetheless. An initiative of collaborative teacher-led research in schools in which the central object of explicit concern is 'self' and 'purpose' is seemingly lacking in academic writing too. Thus whilst theory, theology and participant reflection would be introduced to the teachers, it would also be recognised that the citation of similar models would not be forthcoming. This leads by implication and necessity not only to the localised route but lends even more weight to the sharing of all first hand resources with the teachers (as described above). This is the necessary prerogative before the work of phase 2 can commence.

I would suggest that to actualise transactions of change that an iterative model is warranted and that significant time should be allocated to SSP (as is common to both Stenhouse Applied Research in Education and Lesson Study). To work, SSP cannot be reduced to a soundbite but would act as an overarching and unavoidable question, becomes embedded holistically, risks change and invites vulnerability and transformation. Whilst this might sound over ambitious in the current 'economic' climate there is one statement extracted from Ofsted's new Framework (2019) that gives this initiative some hope. The Framework reads 'leaders take on or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners…the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.' One is to hope that Ofsted are true to their word.

An important point of confluence between Lesson Study and SSP is therefore that action research becomes an integral, local and cyclical part of the institutional agenda. What Lewis, Perry and Murata termed the iterative cycle implies that any exploration into ontos and telos would not be effective if delivered as a singular CPD, considered an optional extra or interpreted by teachers as a fad. Effective transformation on the other hand would best be reached if the school embark on a cultural challenge over the long haul and this would mean writing the exploration into the timetable and overarching vision in what would be introduced to the teachers as ‘communities of re-thought'.

8.3. Phase 2: Planning and researching the normative narratives of self that currently underpin policy, practice and dialogue

The aim of phase 2 would be for teachers to plan which aspect of the curriculum (policy, practice or dialogue) they will investigate. They would then carry out some research into the current narratives of self that determine these aspects of curriculum. The teachers would then identify and reflect upon the effects of these narratives of self upon those on the frontline of school life.

In Stenhousian terms this occasions the beginning of the process of ‘information feeding analysis’ (1975, p. 92). The information would here refer to the narratives of self to be unearthed and the effects of these narratives upon wellbeing; the analysis here refers to the teachers’ reflections upon these uncovered realities. This would be followed in phase 3 by the proposal and application of counter-narratives to policy, practice and dialogue.

8.3.1. Modelling the plan for research

Lewis, Perry and Murata suggest that models should be laid out that explain the features and expectations of Lesson Study clearly (2006, p. 11). The need to model expectations is proper too for SSP. With this in mind, teachers would be given first a number of different examples of policy, practice and dialogue in which research could be carried out. Examples of policy include: policies for behaviour, department vision, performance related pay, quality first teaching, leadership trails, character education, teacher appraisals. In regards to practice: teaching and learning ideas and ideals, mark book scrutiny, marked work, lesson objectives, motivations for a lesson or scheme of work. In planning research into dialogue, teachers might begin by considering for instance: a lesson observation, a parent evening conversation, a faculty meeting discussion or a formal dialogue with leadership.

Modelled examples would be narrow. Take, say, the narrative of self in a dialogue between a teacher and student in the classroom, ‘if you don’t get this homework in tomorrow then you will be in trouble’. Alternatively, the options would be broader such as, ‘the narrative of self engrained within the rewards policy’. The point is that these and many other examples would be introduced to model, highlight and stimulate potential areas of research.

Teachers would also be introduced to the prompts used during the interview process to help centre the narrative of self as the object of study. The hope is also to improve confidence when naming aspects of human being. There were almost one hundred prompts to the question ‘what is the self’ given to the participants during interview. The list below provides some examples of what would be provided, however the teachers would be given all the prompts and given proper time to discuss and reflect upon this pivotal question:

A self who makes choices,
A self who has his/her own will and desires
A self who is the result of all their individual experiences
A self who is the result of background and upbringing
A biological being/animal self
A blank canvas

A history

A story

A relational self

An economic self

Modelling good research practice would also involve the introduction of the Action Research Form to be used during the research (see Table 1) and an example of what this might look like when completed (see Table 1a). The Action Research Form has been designed to promote habitual reflection and allow for simple collection and collation of data. Modelling these Action Research Forms during the planning of research would also help again to centre the object of research and demonstrate more clearly the expectations of teacher-led research in SSP.

Table 1: Action Research Form

Option and Object of Study:	*i)**Policy*** – e.g. the appraisal policy. *ii)**Classroom Practice*** – e.g. my personal objective in this lesson. *iii)**Dialogue*** – e.g. formal observation of language used during department meeting.
The Study of Self:	What aspects of human being were uncovered during the research? What **narrative of self** was discovered?
The Study of Purpose:	What **notion of purpose** was uncovered during the research?
The Effects:	What were the **effects** of these notions of self and purpose upon teacher and student? (both positive and negative)

Table 1a: An Example of a Completed Action Research Form:

Option and Object of Study:	Option iii) **Dialogue**: Observing the dialogue during the annual performance appraisal of a teacher.
The Study of Self:	What aspects of human being were uncovered during the research? What **narrative of self** was discovered? The teacher to be appraised was seen as a valued individual. The assumption was that this individual was motivated to developing their performance by improving residual data and by meeting specific measurable targets. We might call this narrative 'a valued economic self'.
The Study of Purpose:	What **notion of purpose** was uncovered during the research? The purpose of the appraisal dialogue was to monitor and improve the grades of the classes taught by the teacher with respect to measurable data.
The Effects:	What were the **effects** of these notions of self and purpose upon teacher and student? (both positive and negative) Following a collaborative evaluation between appraiser, the teacher being appraised and the observer, the following observations were made: On the one hand, all collaborating teachers indicated that they understood why the appraisal system was

	in place; to ensure that all teachers were kept on track and kept working hard. On the other hand, the teacher being appraised was frustrated and concerned that after 25 years of teaching that they were seemingly still not doing a good enough job and that things could always be better. This teacher also suggested that it was unfair to expect the data to be improved every year because the children were not the same every year. They were also concerned that students were being reduced to data. This caused anger, anxiety and worry.

By modelling these forms, teachers would be introduced to the expectations more concisely and by implication might begin therefore the process of thinking about their own favoured areas of research more confidently and what aspects of human being they were uncovering. It would not be expected however for all teachers to be able to easily identify narratives of self or aspects of human being. The confidence and ability to name aspects of being human is something that would hopefully grow over time. This modelling would play an important part in this process but during the phases of SSP, teachers would be given time to discuss the ontological question, variation theory would be employed to support these reflections and the insights of the *complex relational* self would be drawn upon to help develop confidence through comparison and evaluation. The most important necessity of all however would be that SSP become embedded in school culture and habit. Without this time, it would be difficult to sharpen the confidence of the teachers.

8.3.2. Teacher research

Following the modelling and discussion, teachers would then be encouraged to begin collaborative research. This would involve uncovering the (hidden) ontological and teleological hegemonies in either school policy, classroom practice or dialogue. They may also explore the effects of these ontological and teleological hegemonies on teacher and student wellbeing - both positive and negative - as previously modelled (Table 1).

In line with Lesson Study, this research would not be undertaken alone but in collaboration with other teachers. For example, in researching ITE and the mentor and student-teacher relationship, Cajklet and Wood explored a way in which Lesson Study could be used as an effective tool to improve student learning during the crucial and forming experience of teacher training. Wishing to move ITE beyond the meeting of standards and the acquisition of technical skills towards co-operative discernment and evaluation, the authors hoped to develop the richness and depth of collaborative study. This was achieved through the partnership of the mentor and the student teacher and their shared reflections of classroom experience (2016, p. 85). Cajkler and Wood compared this collaborative approach with a more traditional one-sided practice in which a student-teacher would likely model the mentor, listen to their advice and experiences and learn how to teach from this. They concluded that collaborative study was richer; developing the observation skills, teaching literacy and educational discernment of both the student-teacher and the mentor.

This collective ideal is analogous to the method proposed for SSP and Cajkler and Wood's paper and I would introduce this to the teachers to justify this approach. The principle is that current policy, practice or dialogue would be studied and reflected upon by collaborating teachers, with the final goal of proposing and enacting transformations to pedagogy. Any research would be undertaken with a self-critical approach, not aspiring to any pre-supposed utopian ends but instead with an openness to challenge habits and illusions through collaborative testing, dialogue and analysis in line with Stenhouse's

thesis (1975, pp. 157-158). With Stenhouse and Cajkler & Wood, it is suggested here that sensitive teacher-led collaboration is a fecund aspect of action research.

In this light, four aspects of Lesson Study that would be refined in SSP have been identified. In the introduction to Lesson Study it was noted that (1) a triad or more of teachers would decide upon a particular focus of a lesson. (2) The focus of the lesson would depend upon the specific aims of the researchers. (3) A teacher would be observed teaching this. (4) Following the lesson, the teachers would collaborate, feedback and evaluate the observed lesson. SSP would embrace and cultivate this model in the fields of policy, practice and dialogue. Teachers would use the form modelled above (Table 1) to enact this research. The redesigned study would work as follows:

For teachers who wish to research the narratives of self in policy:
(1) A triad or more of teachers decide upon a particular policy to uncover the (hidden) ontological and teleological realities. (2) The option depends upon the shared wishes of the teachers. (3) All teachers read the policy, complete the research form alone (as modelled above). (4) Teachers then collaborate and discuss the findings. The collaborating teachers, articulating the uncovered notions of self and purpose and the perceived effects upon teachers and students then complete a second form together that summarised the shared observations. All my colleagues could then discuss and consider this particular research.

For teachers who wish to research the narratives of self in classroom practice:
(1) A triad or more of teachers decide upon a particular aspect of classroom practice to uncover the (hidden) ontological and teleological realities. (2) This depends upon the shared wishes of the teachers. (3) One teacher teaches the lesson and the aspect of classroom practice would be observed by the others. (4) Following the lesson, the teachers collaborate, feedback and evaluate the observed lesson. The collaborating teachers, articulating the uncovered notions of self and purpose and the perceived effects upon teachers and students then complete a research form together that summarised the shared observations. All my colleagues could then discuss and consider this particular research.

For teachers who wish to research the narratives of self in dialogue:
(1) A triad or more of teachers decide upon a particular aspect of dialogue to uncover the (hidden) ontological and teleological realities. (2) This depends upon the shared wishes of the teachers. (3) One teacher has their language observed. (4) Following the event, the teachers collaborate, feedback and evaluate the dialogue. The collaborating teachers, articulating the uncovered notions of self and purpose and the perceived effects upon teachers and students then complete a research form together that summarised the shared observations. All my colleagues could then discuss and consider this particular research.

Having been collated and discerned for any overarching trends, points of interest or potential areas for further research the teachers would now be aware of the various narratives of self uncovered during the research and the effects of these narratives upon teacher and student wellbeing. It is this teacher-led research data and the subsequent feedback that would act as the catalyst for inspiring the re-imagining and applying of counter-narratives of self in policy, practice and dialogue as proposed in phase 3 of SSP.

8.4. Phase 3: Re-imagining an ontological preference and applying this counter-narrative of self to policy, practice and dialogue

The aim of phase 3 would be for teachers to articulate and test a favoured narrative of self. They would also explore how transformations to school curriculum might be enacted through the application of these re-imagined narratives of self. In Stenhousian terms, phase 3 would therefore involve 'listening and discernment', 'locating the teacher as a resource rather than an authority', 'question-posing' and the 'reflection of experience' (1975, p. 92).

Phase 3 is premised upon the supposition that schools cannot be anything other than places of formation. Students and teachers (persons) cannot avoid the overarching ontological and teleological narratives that drive day-to-day pedagogy. It is these narratives that will, in part at least, form these persons.

Hence, there is arguably a moral obligation for schools to refine a suitable narrative and local trajectory as they see fit. This is only to reiterate three common themes written into the hypotheses; that any idea of neutrality is mythic, that the ontological and teleological question cannot ever be negated, and that our narratives of self and purpose will affect the people who work in school.

Lo and Marton write in their analysis that 'Learning is mostly a matter of reconstituting the already constituted world' (2012, p. 11). The proposed object of learning here would be the narrative of self. The hope is that my colleagues by now would be suitably persuaded that it is worth the effort to reconstitute the contemporary narrative. Such reconstituted views would be central to phase 3 in which the re-imagination, proposal and application of counter-narratives of self would be at the forefront of research.

A triad or more of teachers (the same groups who completed the research) would be given again the vast array of prompts used in the interview process. They would be asked to explore for themselves a preferred narrative of 'self' or aspects of human being that they find favourable and to explore what the 'purpose of education' might look like in this light. Significant time would have to be given over to teachers to contemplate these pivotal (and essentially unavoidable) questions. Disagreement and difference would necessarily be part of these conversations and again any difference would not be sidestepped or ignored but welcomed as part of the process.

At this point of the process, the *complex relational* self of the contemplatives would be re-introduced. This notion would be offered as an important object of reflection in the process of posing counter-narratives. Teachers would therefore be asked to explore their own concepts of self in the light of those aspects of human being highlighted by the theological conception. Again, this use of variation theory would be introduced to define expectations, raise awareness of the centrality of narratives of self and ensure that this object of study remains central. It would also test the hypothesis that theology has the propensity to offer a narrative that is rich, rational and potentially enriching. It is important

however that after a period of time and reflection, all the teachers would be able to articulate - albeit provisionally – a narrative of self, for it is this that would feed into the next phase of SSP, which is the proposal.

Having first articulated a narrative of self, this re-imagined notion would then be applied to the same area of study researched in phase 2. So, for example, if the research in phase 2 had been into the uncovering of the (hidden) ontological hegemonies in performance related pay then these newly re-imagined and proposed narratives of self would then be creatively and hypothetically applied to this same area of policy. Whatever the aspect of culture the teachers had researched in phase 2, whether policy, practice or dialogue, the same approach would apply. The teachers will thus begin the process of re-imagining and proposing a different foundation to policy, practice or dialogue as situated upon their collaborative examination and explication of ontological belief. Using a Proposal Form (Table 2) similar to the Action Research Form, the teachers would be asked to write a proposal for action research.

Table 2: Proposal Form

Option and Object of Study:	*i)**Policy*** – e.g. the appraisal policy. *ii)**Classroom Practice*** – e.g. my personal objective in this lesson. *iii)**Dialogue*** – e.g. formal observation of language during department meeting.
Narrative of Self:	What aspects of human being would you want to include in revising this policy, practice or dialogue. Which **narrative of self** would you like to see adopted?

These proposal documents would then be collated, analysed and discussed by all my colleagues. Ultimately, they would be in charge of making the decision whether to accept, reject or amend each particular proposal for cultural

transformation. If accepted and/or amended these hypothetical proposals would then be trialled in school. This will not be an easy task. It will involve the transformation of cultural axioms that have become normalised. Nevertheless, these proposals for action research do have the potential to allow narratives of self to transform pedagogy and to improve the wellbeing of the teachers and the students. The risk is therefore justified.

(1) A triad or more of teachers decide upon a particular aspect of policy, classroom practice or dialogue to apply the new ontological and teleological imaginings. (2) This depends upon the shared wishes of the teachers. (3) One teacher has their classroom or dialogue observed or new policy implemented. (4) Following the event or policy implementation, the teachers collaborate, feedback and evaluate the policy, classroom practice or dialogue. An Application Action Form (Table 3) is then written by the teachers articulating the newly applied narrative of self and purpose and the perceived effects upon teachers and students.

Table 3: Application Action Form

Option and Object of Study:	*i)**Policy*** – e.g. the appraisal policy. *ii)**Classroom Practice*** – e.g. my personal objective in this lesson. *iii)**Dialogue*** – e.g. formal observation of language during department meeting.
Narrative of Self:	What aspects of human being would you want to include in revising this policy, practice or dialogue. Which **narrative of self** would you like to see adopted?
Purpose:	Has the **purpose** of policy, practice and dialogue changed as a consequence of applying this narrative of self?

The Effects:	What were the **effects** of these revised notions of self and purpose upon teachers and student? (both positive and negative)

These forms would then be handed in for collation and the discernment of any trends, points of interest or potential areas for further research. Although in one sense these attempts to evaluate changes to policy, practice and dialogue would mark the end of the first cycle of study, in another sense it marks the beginning of the iterative process. This is because my colleagues would then be in a position to reflect upon the research findings and continue this process at particular times in the school year. It should therefore be noted that initial implementation would almost certainly expose limitations, unforeseen difficulties and raise further questions. To enact long-term cultural change would as such entail the necessity of action research in communities of re-thought. The iterative process is a prerogative. Through this method however, the ontological and teleological notions of these teachers would drive the vision of the school going forward in continuous iterative cycles of collaborative teacher-led research. The final aim/consequence would be the improved wellbeing of teachers and students.

8.5. The application and comparison of SSP methodology in different types of school

The following brief section describes the emergence of a new possibility for using the methodology of SSP beyond the context of the school of the participants; beyond the context of an unambiguously state-controlled school. More precisely, it is to envisage a comparison of case studies between the state school and state funded/sponsored Church schools. Thus, even where SSP yields worthwhile findings in the school of the participants other interesting avenues of

research could be opened up through forging this comparison. The idea that the state funded/sponsored Church school might provide a healthy environment in which to implement a serious iterative SSP would need to be tested through further case study and action research but the aim here is simpler. The aim is to justify the claim that this type of school affords itself towards the methodology of SSP and why it might pertain to a useful comparison with the unambiguously state-controlled school.

Where a Church school might differ from the school of the participants is not only in its foundational and insistent imagination of what is means to be a self in the light of Christ, but also significantly in its absolute commitment to follow this 'self'. We can reason therefore that there *should* exist an unyielding desire within a Church school to question its own ontological and teleological values as part of its mission and witness; to unearth to what degree it has remained faithful to the *relational* Christ or slipped perhaps towards a different (hidden) narrative of self. SSP should as such be welcomed by those whose primary and fundamental concern is to work towards the all-encompassing Christian narrative, hinged as it is upon relationship.

As has been alluded to in the chapters on the contemplative tradition and RO, the application of the *complex relational* self in education inspires a transformation of school culture. That the person of Christ and the promise (telos) of Christ is so different from the *atomistic economic* prejudice is certainly a reason for the Church school to risk investing time, effort and resources into uncovering where it is now and where it wishes to be. It is reasonable that the risks involved would be welcomed therefore and the desire for analysis and transformation celebrated within institutions for which relationship is thought the ground of all being. Put more precisely, any Church school committing to SSP would welcome collaborative investigation in communities of re-thought because the relational Christ would be central to this commitment. That we might call this a moral, academic and prayerful pursuit is to suggest that a Church school might be both inspired and required to contemplate its ontological basics as part of its divine telos.

As stated in previous chapters, the negation of control and mastery as a school enters the muddy waters of dialogue and collaborative research is seen as a fecund opportunity. And the Church school has reason to be confident here too for it is the Christian contemplative tradition that actually inspires this risky but fruitful endeavour and as such lends force to the claim that these schools are a suitable institution to introduce SSP. Rightly considered, the commitment to attend to the voiceless, unknown, inter-dependent, intrinsically valuable other is a necessarily Christian pursuit. The Christian tradition thus substantiates both the risk of the SSP adventure and its methods and purpose. The Church school is clearly well placed to adopt SSP due to the inescapable desire for a learning environment predicated upon the narrative of the relational Christ. It is a desire that is surely intrinsic to its very fabric and identity and if this claim is reasonable then the Church school lends itself towards a useful comparison with schools with a different identity.

In summary, it is the person of Christ as God's question to the world, who justifies ontological exploration, discussion, evaluation, application and risk. It is the person of Christ who demands from those who can hear a commitment and desire for love over and above all else. What better place could there be therefore, to sow this seed of nurture and care, than the school whose sole inspiration *is* the self of the relational Christ? Perhaps therefore, it is the Church School that might act as the forbearer, model and inspiration of what reformed educational policy, practice and dialogue might actually look like were it to be grown in the pouring out of relationship. The fruits of employing SSP in the Church school and comparing the effects with the unambiguously state-controlled school could therefore be developed into fascinating action research.

8.6. Concluding remarks

Within this chapter, the proposals for action research in the school of the participants have been introduced (SSP). This three phase teacher-led iterative study is concerned first with teachers awareness of narratives of self and the justification for SSP, secondly with the planning and research of these narratives and thirdly with the re-imagination of counter-narratives and the application of these to policy, classroom and dialogue. The proposal is that school culture might be driven by these new reflections of self and purpose as elucidated by the teachers and potentially also by the *complex relational* self of theology.

Having lent upon the wisdom and methodology of Stenhouse and Lesson Study I hope to have written a more coherent rationale for this action research practice. The design-based research cycles envisioned by Stenhouse evince continual dialogue or what has been called a 'community of re-thought' and this process is vital if SSP is to be realised in any meaningful way. This is echoed in the notion of professional capital articulated in the paper by Cajkler and Wood where transformations were founded upon cycles of dialect and reflection (2016, p. 85). Lesson Study therefore brings 'to the process different perspectives, different beliefs, and different levels of prior knowledge, experience and understanding, thus developing their pedagogic skills in different ways' (2016, p. 96). It is in mind of these perspectives, beliefs, knowledge and experiences that SSP could also provide a framework to support and sustain a community of re-thought in school. It is through the collaborative uncovering of the (hidden) ontological realties in school that teachers begin the process of meaningful awareness. It is through the shared exploration of narratives of self that cultural norms might come to reflect more the beliefs and perspectives of the teachers in school. It is by instituting a cyclical reflective culture that the teacher-led collaborative research might drive school curriculum.

My overall hope is that the leadership team are able to give this action research proposal some time and consideration. It is a proposal founded not only upon the research into the language of Ofsted but also upon the reflections of the

participants of this school and the enriching language of theology and as such brings together first hand resources, the voices of the often voiceless and more particular theoretical expertise. The claim therefore is that SSP has the potential to challenge and transform policy, practice and dialogue in school and therefore warrants this deliberation.

The need for us to be gently accountable for and with each other is to foster a healthy community. One of the deepest and potentially hardest facets for the contemplative tradition is the negation of control and mastery. This learnt necessity was applied earlier in the thesis to the leadership team who, if adopting such a stance, put themselves in the unusual position of leading by listening and attempting to transform through the discernment of ordinarily silent voices. Yet this is also required of teachers too. To question our suppositions, previous policies, dialect and classroom practice is to leave us in a certain sense open and vulnerable.

Leading and teaching by listening and negation needs of course to be balanced with the necessity of expertise and immediate decision making and this balance is not an easy one to find. Nonetheless, Lesson Study does evidence why the negation of control and mastery can work as a valuable tool in transfiguring practice in an institution. The point is not that all the experiences and expertise of teachers are somehow sidestepped but that the possibilities for enlivening culture are opened up more fully through the bravery of collaborative study and purposeful listening by all the teachers involved in SSP.

It is hard to imagine anything other than initial uncertainty should a collaborative study of narratives of self be entertained in school. Many teachers will have worked, perhaps unawares, with a normalised philosophy of self and purpose for many years. The *atomistic economic* ethos, in other words, will have become axiomatic and culturally embedded. To begin to question these norms, challenge them, undo, observe, critique and theorise them in deliberate communities of re-thought is to imagine a quite different institution in which initial uncertainty must be anticipated. This is exactly why the implementation of a new narrative

of self is no easy task, and why communities of re-thought are so important to change the process.

In borrowing from Stenhouse and Lesson Study however, the hope is to help inculcate a more cogent SSP and encourage teachers to participate more auspiciously through reference to the wisdom born of this methodology. It will be necessary nonetheless for all to be aware that in uncovering (hidden) ontological and teleological realities and in reimagining different visions that some will feel vulnerable and exposed – which is, of course, part of the *complexity* of the self. Moreover, it is part of this thesis that we have a deep need of each other and a shared inter-dependence – the *relational* self. The very method and praxis of SSP, in other words, is predicated upon a theological narrative of self: a supposition that the self (the teacher) is both *complex* – vulnerable - yet ultimately and essentially *relational* and perhaps, when all is finally said and done, this thesis, hypotheses and proposal for action research simply boils down to the testing and applying of the *complex relational* self.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions, limits and contributions

9.0. Conclusions

To question the purpose of education is relatively common but to question what it means to be human (in education) is not; this is both the concern and the opportunity. The claim made in this thesis is that ontos and telos can never be divorced (section 0.1.) and that narratives of self permeate, saturate and sustain the curriculum (section 1.2.3.). Abjuration is fallacy, repudiation is contradictory, ignorance is ironic. We simply cannot negate ontic value. This study suggests therefore that the question of 'who we are' should drive educational reform because the adoption of a narrative of self is not only unavoidable but will have a palpable - and currently negative - effect upon those on the frontline.

We always have failed and always will fail to neutralise being which is exactly why an exploration into ontological reason in pedagogy is so important. It is upon this premise that the interpretative review of Ofsted's language was motivated. What was uncovered during this review was paradoxical. The language at once assumed neutrality whilst at the same time betraying a more defined ontological prejudice. The investigation into terms such as 'tolerance' (section 1.2.1.) and 'morality' (section 1.2.2.) clearly demonstrated that Ofsted's supposition of neutrality was fallacious. Tolerance, for instance, was shown to be bound to issues of power and privileged knowledge, morality to British values and the civil law. It was in this light that an interpretation of the purpose of 'achievement' (section 1.2.3.) was warranted as a means of unearthing Ofsted's implicit ontological prejudice – for where we discover human purpose there we also discover a narrative of self. This interpretative review revealed an *atomistic economic* self. That is to say, that contemporary educational telos and ontos can be located, for example, in measurable comparative data, acute accountability,

competition and employability. The reader is reminded however that identifying this purpose and narrative of self was not only achieved through this review but also through an analysis of participant data (chapters five and six), a reading of the critiques of performativity (section 1.1.) and through the application of Cavanaugh's thesis on economic life (section 5.2.). It was thus a notion that was deepened and refined over the six years of study.

A reluctance for Ofsted to address the ontological question or make transparent their suppositions in documentation also became obvious. There is no clearly demarcated notion of what is meant by the word 'pupil', which is indicative again of Ofsted's assumption of ontic neutrality (section 1.2.). A problem here lies in the fact that a fundamentally crucial player in education – the pupil – portends to be a reality 'without weight'. It has been argued that it because of this assumed weightlessness and perceived neutrality that a more hidden ontological narrative/hegemony has become embedded – the *atomistic economic* self (section 1.2.). This is has led to my claim that Ofsted have a responsibility to be more exacting in their language and more open in public discussions. It seems unlikely that Ofsted are aware of any ontological prejudice given an absence of obvious ontological and teleological reflection in the documentation. This study has therefore highlighted this finding (sections 1.2. and 7.2.) and I will await response.

The ten participants who took the time to be interviewed hold a central place in this thesis. It was argued that this case study should be seen akin to a piece of art– one instance of universal significance (section 4.1.). I was grateful and moved by their contributions that were often emotional, deeply concerned with the economic narrative (sections 5.1.1.. 5.2.1., 5.2.2. and 5.2.3.) and steadfast in what they saw as potential for change (sections 5.2.2., 5.2.3., 6.1., 6.2.1. and 6.2.2.). That they substantiated and motivated the narrative of the *economic* self has been said already (section 5.1.1.) and it was significant that Cavanaugh's analysis of misplaced economic life added to the texture of this narrative (section 5.2.). That it was possible to map an analogous account of disconnection (5.2.1.), dissatisfaction (5.2.2.) and unfulfillment (5.2.3.) onto the experiences of the participants is reason for concern. Other negative effects of this ontological

narrative upon wellbeing have also been well documented (sections 6.1. and 6.2.). For the teachers the high levels of acute accountability were a burden. They also expressed concern that students were being reduced to data and that the purpose of education was far too narrow and damaging to wellbeing. The persistent "organised creation of dissatisfaction"[1] and pervasive pressure to improve grades was also seen as detrimental to mental health. It was a picture of school life mirrored by the students who also spoke with emotion about these pressures and the consequences to wellbeing of the student body (sections 5.2.1., 6.1. and 6.2.). Further accounts of the participant's interviews can be found in appendices 5, 6 and 8 as a means to test the validity of these key themes.

There is, of course, much more dialogue about mental health in schools today, but where this thesis can contribute to this dialogue is through an insistence that we anchor our attention upon our narratives of self. Should we focus our attention upon this most primordial ontological question then the debate would be enlivened and the educational reality for teachers and students enriched. Where we ignore the ontological question we can be sure that another (hidden) notion will be embedded in mental health policy and this is deeply worrying if this narrative of self is pernicious.

The proposal for action research in the school of the participants was offered to engage the teachers in narratives of self (sections 8.2., 8.3. and 8.4.). 'The Study of Self and Purpose' (SSP) is an iterative programme of action research in which the intention is one of developing the ontological awareness of teachers and school leaders in order to re-imagine radically different educational hinterlands. Underscored by the action research methodology of Stenhouse and Lesson Study, SSP is written to encourage the school to research existing hegemonies, formulate counter-narratives and reform the organisational culture, curriculum and pedagogy in the light of these reflections. It is an ambitious project and would require huge amounts of effort and risk should it be adopted in the school of the participants. The goal however is to listen to the voices of those on the frontline and improve the wellbeing of all.

[1] Quoted by Cavanaugh in Larson, E. (1992) *The Naked Consumer: How Our Private Lives Become Pubic Commodities*, New York: Henry Holt and Company.

It has been argued throughout this thesis that the Christian theologies of the contemplative tradition and Radical Orthodoxy (RO) have the potential to enrich SSP if presented in a rational, peaceful and dialogical spirit. The genealogical theses of RO add to the explanations for the current normative ontological realities in school (sections 2.3., 2.3.1. and 2.3.2.). That our contemporary notions are neither neutral nor default is a crucial part of developing an ontological awareness and RO in tracing our normative values through historical events and persons such as Locke and Rousseau deepen this necessary attentiveness. This sensibility thus contributes to the explanation of why we discover an *atomistic economic* ontological prejudice in education today.

RO also provide reasons for Ofsted's reluctance to name the self. More precisely, their well-reasoned nihilistic thesis (section 7.2.2.) and their challenge to neutral reason (section 7.2.1.) provide plausible explanations for this reticence. The nihilistic thesis suggests that all secular narratives of self are drawn essentially from a void and this results in a reticence to develop awareness or critique. Neutral reason suggests an assumption of universal understanding of ontological language and thus why there would be little reason for exploring narratives of self. Both arguments are cohesive and it would be expedient for Ofsted to reply to these challenges and widen the discussion. In situating a Eucharistic ontology as a counter-narrative, RO also provide a resource for developing this conversation with the policy makers (section 2.2.).

The inclusion of the univocity of being (section 2.3.1.) – a vitally important event for RO - is justified in this thesis as an event that partially explains why theology has lost its voice in the public domain and how the secular event became possible. That the notion of God changed from a transcendent being who is existence itself, the source of all being, hooked to the immanent universe to a contingent agent whose being is of the same type as all other contingent realities is quite obviously a huge shift in thought. For RO it is a shift in thought that eventuated in all modern heresies including those of modern theology (section 2.3.4.). Whether or not the reader is convinced by the argument is not for me to say, but it is reasonable to state that any deliberation upon the being

and language of God is crucial for widening the dialogue between the theologian and other academics and addressing the impasse that sometimes exists. This is especially true where theological thought is deemed unreasonable predicated upon the belief that there is no evidence of God's being – as if God's being could be evidenced in precisely the same way as all other contingent realities are evidenced in the natural sciences.

Where this thesis is distanced from RO's work is in their sectarian approach to academic work; in the placing of theology as the queen of the sciences (sections 2.2. and 2.3.1.). On the contrary, this study is situated as an enterprise akin to the auspicious relational visions of Williams, Lash, Graham and Ford who posit theology as a rich, rational but non-violent offering to public debate (section 3.5.2.).

The prayerful contemplative tradition has been introduced in this thesis not only to justify this non-violent approach (section 3.5.1.) but also to offer a wisdom to inspire reform at school. The *complex relational* self, born of this wisdom and mirrored in the Eucharistic event, is a key proponent of this study (section 2.1.). It is this narrative of self that has inspired speculations about developing a robust and enlightening curriculum; a curriculum that might be founded upon the unknowable yet always and inescapably relational self. Such reforms to curriculum included a behaviour policy that was centred upon virtue (section 7.3.7.), engraining a desire to listen to the normally voiceless unknown other (section 7.3.1.) and a transformed idea of achievement as shared gift (section 7.3.2.). Further potential changes involved the challenge to move away from achievement as *atomistic economic* due to the stress afforded to students and teachers (section 7.3.5.) and the inculcation of a different teaching ethos in which worldly exploration, wonder and participation become a guiding principle (section 6.2.2.). Challenges were also made to performance related pay (section 6.2.1.) and the false assimilation of identity with success/failure (7.3.2.). Concurrently, the willed adoption of humility and inter-dependence was advocated as a precursor to improved wellbeing (6.2.). That these suggestions for transformation are offered in the spirit of theological non-violence and should

be considered provisional is also a necessary precursor to any discussion going forward.

9.1. Limits

Naturally, there are limits to this thesis as a cohesive piece of academic work. There has been a struggle for the entire six years of study to organise the themes into strictly managed chapters. There is, for example, a degree of analysis in the review of Ofsted's literature in chapter one. There is also the introduction of new literature (Lesson Study and Stenhousian methodology) in my proposals for future action research in chapter eight. Within chapter two, RO's genealogy has been outlined not only to explain Ofsted's ontological prejudice but also to justify theological reasoning in the public square and these two very different aims have been convoluted. The same could be said of chapters six and seven in which a theological analysis has led on to a speculative application of theological reason to policy, practice and dialogue. It is difficult to regret the decision to employ the various lines of reasoning chosen because they have equal importance in my estimation. Nevertheless, it is appreciated that a reader may have wished for a more streamlined and simple approach at times. It is also true that important issues such as the event of secularism, the explanation of theology's integrity yet declining influence and the genealogical account of current ontological norms have only been given limited space. A reader wishing to engage in a more comprehensive vision would be advised to read the works of Milbank (1990), Taylor (2007), Bentley-Hart (2009) and MacIntyre (1981).

9.2. Contributions

During my probationary review, it was put to me that presumably I did not expect Ofsted to state their ontological assumptions. At the time, I agreed. I was also asked to explain my own favoured narrative of self to which I fumbled around for words with an embarrassing awareness that I had little to submit.

Four and a half years later, I have become convinced that the study and classification of who we are should play a central role in all educational thought and that this is the responsibility not just for the philosopher or theologian but is a prerogative too for Ofsted, teachers, and pedagogical expert. This, to my mind, is one of two primary contributions that this thesis can make to education. I stand by this claim for four chief reasons:

Firstly and most pointedly because the question of self cannot be negated. Whether we are aware of it or not, an ontological prejudice will always be evident within policy, practice and dialogue. It is simply impossible to imagine educational purpose in an institution created for humans without also imagining what it means to be human (even when this occurs without awareness). Ontological and teleological concerns cannot be divorced. To think differently is to imagine a false dualism.

Secondly, because where policy makers and teachers do negate the opportunity to deliberate narratives of self, a (hidden) hegemony or narrative will be lived by those on the frontline.

Thirdly, if the narrative of the *atomistic economic* prejudice is currently dominant, then this suggests that an inappropriate and pernicious ontological narrative is at the heart of education and there is a requirement therefore to uncover and challenge this normalised narrative.

Fourthly, the process of teachers uncovering current norms and forming counter-narratives is thought an enriching experience and it is through this exercise that a curriculum could be developed - possibly with relationship as a founding principle.

The other significant contribution to the field of education is theological. Through the hypothetical application of theological reason in the school of the participants, a hint at how different a school's curriculum might look should it be grounded upon the notion of the *complex relational* self has been offered. This should be of interest to all those who wish for a more fulfilling less damaging

school environment. Of course, the decline of theological thought in the public domain remains an ambivalent issue. That we discover this ambivalence is no accident but neither should it be presumed anything more than a contingent event as the genealogical studies of RO exposed (sections 2.3.1 the univocity of being; 2.3.2. political enlightenment ontology; 2.3.3. the wars of religion; 2.3.4. the heresy of modern theology). And whilst the abundant and brilliant works of scholars such as Milbank, MacIntyre, Taylor, Bentley-Hart and Williams all substantiate the claim for the richness, rationality and relevance of the theological enterprise for matters public, I am aware of the prejudice against prejudice that remains; the reader is reminded for instance that Religious Studies is not a subject included in the EBacc (section 0.4.). This thesis is written to at least loosen the prejudice that may be still encountered by the theologian. The aim is to persuade by genealogy (section 2.3.), reason (sections 3.1.1., 3.1.2. and 3.1.3), experience (section 2.1.), polemic (sections 2.3.3. and 7.2.2.) and case study (sections 6.2.1., 6.2.2. and 7.3.) that theological reasoning is worthy of the academic high table. I remain convinced that theology does, at its best, bring back to our common imaginations and language the most basic and essential aspects of our very being: relationship, which is also to say, love.

I would like to suggest finally that ontological reflections of this kind are not limited to educationists only but are germane to other public institutions too. It would be interesting to gauge, for instance, just how different an experience of health care we might have, were the question of self be allowed to anchor the policy-making discussions and reforms. That said, I am not so naive as to imagine that my study will have anything like this kind of impact. In contrast, this thesis has been likened to a piece of art – a case study instance of universal significance – and like most artwork, it will likely receive a mixed reception. This contribution is therefore more modest. As I wrote in the introduction, this thesis is partly designed to inspire three particular audiences to read and respond (section 0.3.3.). Ofsted to reflect upon the narratives of self embedded in policy and the effects of this assumption upon those in the frontline, the expert to discuss the relevance of narratives of self in their particular fields and the school of the participants to entertain and possibly enact SSP. The hope is that there was enough of interest to instigate a reaction.

Simply put…

Narratives of self are embedded in our notions of purpose. Policy is written by others for others, practice is performed by others with others, dialogue continues by others of others - and these others are also us. Schooling is a human affair. There is no more important a question in education therefore, and no more crucial an answer to the most inescapable, deep, profound and even humorous mysteries: the question that reads, "***Who are we***?"

References

Aquinas, T. (1993) *Aquinas's Shorter Summa, St Thomas Aquinas's Own Concise Version of His Summ Theologica*, Manchester: Sophia Institute Press.

Aquinas, T. (2008) *Selected Philosophical Writings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Albert The Great. (2000) *On Union With God,* Exeter, Delian Bower Publishing.

Ball, S. (1994) *Education Reform,* London: Open University.

Ball, S. (2003) 'The Teacher's Soul and the Terrors of Performativity'. *Journal of Education Policy*. 18:2, 215-228.

Becker, H. (1971) *Social Class Variations in the Teacher-Pupil Relationship,* in Cosin, B. et al (ed) Education Structure and Society, London: Penguin.

Bell, D. (2001) *Liberation Theology After the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering*, London: Routledge.

Bentley-Hart, D. (2006) *Theology as Knowledge*. Available at: FirstThings.com. https://www.firstthings.com/article/2006/05/theology-as-knowledge. (Accessed: 21/07/2018).

Bentley Hart, D. (2009) *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Bentley Hart, D. (2013) *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Bernstein B. and Young D. (1967) '*Differences in Conceptions on the Use of Toys'.* Sociology, Vol 1, Issue 2, pp. 131 – 140.

Bereiter C. and Englemann S. (1966) *Teaching Disadvantaged Children in Pre-school,* New Jersey, Prentice Hall.

Biesta, G. (2009) 'Good education in an age of measurement: on the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education'. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability (formerly: Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education).* Vol 21, Issue 1. 33-46.

Blackstock, T. and Mortimore J. (1994) *Cultural Factors in Childrearing and Attitudes in Education,* in Moore, B. and Mayes A. (ed) Teaching and Learning in the Secondary School, London: Routledge.

Blau, P. and Duncan, O. (1978) *The American Occupational Structure,* New York: Free Press.

Blond, P. (1998) *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology*, London: Routledge.

Boaler, J. (1998) *Mathematical Enquiry,* In Epstein, D. et al (ed) Failing Boys, Open University.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* Ontario: RKP.

Bowker, G. (1968) *The Education of Coloured Immigrants,* London: Longman.

Bowles, S. and Gintis, H. (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America,* Ontario: RKP.

Bruner, J. (1966) *Towards a Theory of Instruction,* Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Bultmann, R. (1953) *Kerygma and Myth,* London: HarperCollins.

Bultmann, R. (1961) *New Testament and Mythology in Kerygma and Myth: a theological debate,* H.W. Bartsch (ed), New York: Harper & Row.

Bultmann, R. and Smith, L. (1969) *Faith and Understanding,* New York: Harper & Row.

Byrne, L. (1998) *The Life and Wisdom of Benedict,* London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Cajkler, W., and Wood, P. (2016) 'Mentors and Student-Teachers "Lesson Studying" in Initial Teaching Education'. *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies,* Vol. 5, Issue: 2, pp.84-98.

Cantwell Smith, W. (1962) *The Meaning and End of Religion,* New York: The Macmillan Company.

Cavanaugh, W. (2003) *Theopolitical Imagination*, London: T. & T. Clark Publishers.

Cavanaugh, W. (2008) *Being Consumed*, Cambridge, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Chua, J.SM. (2009) 'Saving the Teacher's Soul: exorcising the terrors of performativity'. London Review of Education. 7:2, 159-167.

Cicourel, A. and Kitsus, J. (1963) *The Education Decision-Makers,* Indianapolis: Bobbs Merill.

Coakley, S. (2013) *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity',* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Coard, B. (2005) *Why I Wrote The ESN Book,* The Guardian.

Colledge, E. and McGinn, B. (1996) *Everything as Divine: The Wisdom of Meister Eckhart*, New Jersey: Paulist Press.

Cunningham, C. (2002) *Genealogy of Nihilism*, London: Routledge.

Cunningham, C. (2010) *Darwin's Pious Idea – Why The Ultra-Darwinists And Creationists Both Get It Wrong,* Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

David, M. (1993) *Parents, Gender and Education Reform,* Cambridge: Polity.

David, A. and Keller, C. and Stanley J. (Editors) (2010) "*God Is Dead" And I Don't Feel So Good Myself: Theological Engagements With The New Atheism,* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Davies, O. and Turner, D. (Editors) (2002) *Silence And The Word: Negative Theology And Incarnation,* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dawkins, R. (2006) *The God Delusion,* London: Bantam.

Dennett, D. (2006) *Breaking The Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon,* New York: Viking Penguin.

DeHart, P. (2012) *Aquinas And Radical Orthodoxy,* Oxford: Routledge.

Dewey, J. (1993) *The Political Writings,* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co.

Douglas, J. (1964) *The Home and the School,* London: Penguin.

Dudley, P. (2012) 'Lesson Study in England: from school networks to national policy'. *International Journal of Lesson and Learning Studies,* 1.1 pp85-100.

Dreeben, R. (1967) *On What Is Learned In School,* London: Addison-Wesley.

Eagleton, T. (2009) *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Elliott, J. (1987) 'Educational Theory, Practical Philosophy and Action Research'. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. XXXV, No. 2, pp. 149-169.

Elliot, J. and Lukeŝ, D. (2009) 'Epistemology as Ethics in Research and Policy: The Use of Case Studies', in: Bridges, D. and Smeyers, P. and Smith, R. (eds) *Evidence-Based Education Policy: What Evidence? What Basics? Whose Policy?,* New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.

Feinstein, L. (1998) '*Which Children Succeed and Why'.* New Economy Vol. 5: pp99–103

Fielding, M. (2001) *Taking Education Really Seriously,* London, RoutledgeFalmer.

Foucault, M. (1980) ‘Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews’, New York: Cornell University Press.

Foucault, M. (1990) *The History Of Sexuality: An introduction v. 1* (Penguin history). London: Penguin Books.

Ford, D. (2011) *The Future Of Christian Theology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Francis, B. (2001) *Boys, Girls and Achievement: Addressing the Classroom Issues,* Abingdon: Routledge.

Fukaya, K., Sarkar Arani M. and Lassegard, J. (2010) ‘Lesson Study as Professional Culture in Japanese Schools: An Historical Perspective on elementary classroom practices’. *Japan Review*, 22(1), pp. 171-200.

Gadamer, H. (1975) *Truth and Method*, New York: Sheed and Ward Stagbooks.

Gillborn, D. and Mirza, H.S. (2000) *Educational Inequality: Mapping Race, Gender and Class: A Synthesis of Research,* Ofsted.

Graham, E. (2013) *Between A Rock And A Hard Place*, London: SCM Press.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1999) *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, London: AldineTransaction.

Greene, S. and Hogdan, D. (2005) *Researching Children’s Experiences: Approaches and Methods,* London: SAGE publications.

Habermas, J. et al. (2010) *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*: Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hankey, W. (2005) *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric and Truth,* edited with Douglas Hedley: Ashgate Press.

Hankey, W. (2001) ‘Why Philosophy Abides For Aquinas’. *Heythrop Journal, 42:*3, pp. 329-348.

Hauerwas, S. (1981) *A Community of Character: Towards a Constructive Social Ethic,* Notre Dame: Unviersity of Notre Dame Press.

Hauerwas, S. and Willimon, W. (1989) *Resident Aliens: Life In A Christian Colony,* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Hauerwas. S. (1995) *Preaching As Though We Had Enemies,* Available at: https://www.firstthings.com/article/1995/05/preaching-as-though-we-had-enemies (Accessed at: 11 February 2020).

Hedley, D. (2000) 'Should Divinity Overcome Metaphysics? Reflections on John Milbank's Theology Beyond Secular Reason and Confessions of a Cambridge Platonist'. *Journal of Religion 80* (2), pp. 271–298.

Hemming, L. (2000) *Radical Orthodoxy? - A Catholic Enquiry*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Hilton, H. (1992) *The Scale of Perfection*, Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton.

Hirst, P. (1983) 'Educational Theory' in P.H. Hirst (ed.), *Educational Theory and Its Foundation Disciplines,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Hobbes, T. (1962) *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil,* New York: Collier Books.

Howard, M. et al (2001) *Poverty the Facts,* London: Child Poverty Action Group.

Howard-Snyder, D. and Moser, P. (2002) *Divine Hiddenness,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hyman, G. (2004) *Predicament of Postmodern Theology*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Jackson, P. (1968) *Life In Classrooms,* New York, Holt, Reinhart and Winston.

Jeffery, B. (2002) 'Performativity and Primary Teacher Relations'. *Journal of Education Policy.* 17:5, 531-546.

Jeffrey, B. and Troman, G. (2009) '*Creative and performativity practices in primary schools: a Foucauldian perspective'.* In: BERA Annual Conference 2009, 2-5 September 2009, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK. Available at http://oro.open.ac.uk/view/person/raj2.html. (Accessed: 14/10/2019).

Jones, G. (2016) 'A Future for Lesson Study: Challenges and limitations'. In: *World Association of Lesson Studies* (WALS) International Conference 2016. Available at: https://www.slideshare.net/GaryJones31/v5-wals-and-lesson-study-2016-65658506 (Accessed: 13/06/2018).

Kavanaugh, K. and Rodriguez, O. (Trans) (1991) *The Collected Works Of St John Of The Cross,* Washington: ICS Publications.

Kavanaugh, K. and Rodriguez, O. (Trans) (1976) *The Collected Works Of St Teresa of Avila, Volume One,* (1987 Ed.), Washington: ICS Publications.

Kelly, M. and Foucault, M. (1994) 'Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate', Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Kennedy, M. (1999) 'A Test of Some Common Contentions about Educational Research'. *American Educational Research Journal,* 36.3, pp. 511-541.

Khan, V. (1979) *Minority Families in Britain,* London: Macmillan.

Kierein, M. and Gold, M. (2000) 'Pygmalion in Work Organisations: A meta-analysis'. *Journal of Organisation Behaviour*, 21, pp. 913-928.

Kvale, S. (2006) 'Dominance Through Interviews and Dialogue'. *Qualitative Inquiry, Vol 12; No. 3; pp. 480-500.*

Labov, W. (1973) 'The Logic of Nonstandard English', in Keddie N (ed) *Tinker Tailor: The Myth of Cultural Deprivation,* London: Penguin.

Lakeland, P. (1997) *Postmodernity – Christian Identity In A Fragmented Age,* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.

Laird, M. (2006) *Into The Silent Land,* London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Lash, N. (1996) *The Beginning And The End Of Religion,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lash, N. (2008) *Theology for Pilgrims*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Lawrence, E. (1982) *The Sociology of Black Pathology,* in CCCS (ed) The Empire Strikes Back, London: Hutchinson.

Lewis, C., Perry, R., and Murata, A. (2006) 'How Should Research Contribute to Instructional Improvement? The Case of Lesson Study. *American Educational Research Association,* Vol. 35, No. 3, pp. 3-14.

Lewis, C. Perry, R. Friedkin, S. and Roth, J. (2012) 'Improving Teaching Does Improve Teachers: Evidence from Lesson Study'. *Journal of Teacher Education,* Vol 63, Issue 5, pp. 368 – 375.

Lieberson, S. (2000) 'Small N's and big conclusions: an examination of reasoning in comparative studies based on a small number of cases', in, R. Gomm, M. Hammersley, and P. Foster (eds), *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts.* London: SAGE publications.

Ling, L.M., and Marton, F. (2011) 'Towards a Science of the Art of Teaching: Using Variation Theory as a Guiding Principle of Pedagogical Design'. *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies,* Vol. 1, Issue: 1, pp. 7-22.

Locke, J. (1924) *Two Treatises of Government,* New York: Dutton.

Lossky, V. (1957) *The Mystical Theology Of The Eastern Church,* Cambridge: James Clarke and Co. Ltd.

Lossky, V. (1974) 'The Theological Notion of the Human Person' in *In the Image and Likeness of God'*, New York: St. Vladimir's Press.

Lossky, V. (2001) *In the Image and Likeness of God,* New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

Lupton, R. (2004) *Schools in Disadvantaged Areas,* London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion.

Lyotard, J. (1984) *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

MacDonald, B. and Walker, R. (1975) 'Case Study and the Social Philosophy of Educational Research'. *Cambridge Journal of Education.* Vol 5, Issue 1, pp. 2-11.

MacIntyre, A. (1981) *After Virtue – A Study In Moral Theory,* London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. 2nd Ed.

MacIntyre, A. (1990) *Three Rival Versions Of Moral Enquiry,* London: Gerald Duckworth & Co.

Martin, J. (1976) 'What Should We Do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One?' *Curriculum Inquiry,* Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 135-151.

Matthew, I. (1995) *The Impact Of God: Soundings From St John Of The Cross,* London: Hodder and Stoughton.

McIntosh, M. (1998) *Mystical Theology,* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

McVeigh, T. (2001) *Boys Lagging In Class For Years,* The Observer.

Merton, T. (1955) *No Man is an Island,* (1981 ed.), Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oats.

Merton, T. (1962) *New Seeds of Contemplation,* (1999 ed.), Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oats.

Merton, T. (1968) *Zen and the Birds of Appetite,* (21st Ed.), New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Milbank, J. (1990) *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason (Signposts in Theology Ser.)*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Milbank, J. (1997) *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Milbank, J. and Pickstock, C. and Ward, G. (1999) *Radical Orthodoxy*, London: Routledge.

Milbank, J. and Pickstock, C. (2001) *Truth in Aquinas (Radical Orthodoxy)*, London: Routledge.

Milbank, J. (2009) *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology*, London: SCM Press.

Milbank, J. (2013) *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People*, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.

Myers, B. (2012) *Christ The Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams*, London: T&T Clark International.

Neame, A. (1997) *The Hermitage Within: Spirituality of the Desert – By A Monk,* London: Darton, Longmann and Todd.

Nicholl, B. and McLellan, R. (2008) 'We're all in this game whether we like it or not to get a number of As to Cs.' Design and Technology teachers' struggles to implement creativity and performativity policies'. *British Educational Research Journal*. 34:5, 585-600.

NUT, 2016. *Ofsted*. [online] Available at: https://www.teachers.org.uk/news-events/conference-2016/ofsted. (Accessed: 20/04/2016).

Ofsted. (2014) *The Framework for School Inspection*, Reference no: 120100, Available at: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/17678/1/The%20framework%20for%20school%20inspection.pdf. (Accessed: 14/10/2019).

Ofsted. (2015) *The Framework for School Inspection,* Reference no: 150066, The publication was withdrawn on 2nd September 2019.

Ofsted. (2019) *Education Inspection Framework,* Reference no: 190015, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/801429/Education_inspection_framework.pdf. (Accessed: 18/02/20)

Parsons, T. (1961) *The School Class as a Social System,* in Halsey, A. et al (ed) Education, Economy and Society, New York: Free Press.

Pickstock, C. (1997) *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, New Jersey: Wiley.

Pickstock, C. (2001) 'Reply to David Ford and Guy Collins'. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 54, no. 3, pp. 405-422.

Polanyi, K. (2001) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Powney, J. and Watts, M. (1987) *Interviewing in Educational Research,* London: Routledge.

Pring, R. (2020) *Challenges For Religious Education: Is There a Disconnect Between Faith and Reason?*, London: Routledge.

Punch, K. and Oancea, A. (2009) *Introduction to Research Methods in Education,* California: SAGE publications Ltd.

Radcliffe, T. (2005) *What is the Point of Being a Christian*, London: Burns and Oates.

Rawls, J. (1985) 'Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical,' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 223-251.

Reay, D. (2017) *Miseducation. Inequality, Education and the Working Classes.* Bristol: Polity Press.

Rosenthal, R. (1966) *Experimenter Effects in Behavioural Research*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Rousseau, J. (1954) *The Social Contract,* Washington: Henry Regnery Company.

Sarup, M. (1993) *An Introductory Guide To Post-Structuralism And Postmodernism,* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Smith, J. (2004) *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy, Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*, Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press.

Shamin, F. and Qureshi, R. (2010) *Perils, Pitfalls and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research in Education*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Shklar, J. (1984) *Ordinary Vices,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Short, R. (2008) *Rowan's Rule,* London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Short, R. (2016) *God Is No Thing,* London: C. Hurst & Co.

Simons, H. (1996) 'The Paradox of Case Study'. *Cambridge Journal of Education.* 26.2, pp. 225-240.

Sonderegger, K. (2015) *Systematic Theology: Volume 1, The Doctrine of God*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press.

Stake, R. (1994) Case Studies, in: N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Newbury Park: CA, Publications.

Stenhouse, L. (1975) *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development,* London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

Stenhouse, L. (1978) 'Case Study and Case Records: towards a contemporary history of education'. *British Educational Research Journal.* Vol. 4, No. 2, 21-30.

Swann Report (1985) *Education For All,* HMSO, Available at http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/swann/swann1985.html. (Accessed: 14/10/19).

Swann, J. and Graddol, D. (1994) *Gender Inequalities In Classroom Talk,* in Graddol et al (eds) Researching Language and Literacy In Social Contexts, Clevedon: Publishing Today Ltd.

Taha, A. (2013) *Nietzsche's Coming God*, London: Arktos Media Ltd.

Takahashi, A. (2006) Characteristics of Japanese Mathematics Lessons. Tsukuba Journal of Educational Study in Mathematics, 27(3), pp. 37- 44

Tanner, E. et al (2003) *The Costs of Education,* London: Child Poverty Action Group.

Taylor, C. (1989) *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, C. (2007) *A Secular Age,* London: Harvard University Press.

Thompson, G. (2010) 'Acting, Accidents and Performativity: challenging the hegemonic good student in secondary schools'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 31:4, 413-430.

Toulmin, S. (1990) *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity,* Chicago: University of Chicago press.

Tryona, B and Williams J. (1986) *Racism, Education and the State,* London: Croom Helm.

Vallance, E. (1973) *Hiding the Hidden Curriculum: An Interpretation of the Language of Justification in Nineteenth-Century Educational Reform.* Curriculum Theory Network, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 5-21.

Vanier, J. (1979) *Community and Growth*, 3rd edition, London: Darton, Longmann and Todd.

Ward, G. (2001) *Cities of God,* London: Routledge.

Ward, G. (2003) *True Religion,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Ward, G. (2005) *Christ and culture*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Ward, G. (2009) *The Politics Of Discipleship – Becoming Postmaterial Citizens,* London: SCM Press.

Ward, K. (2008) *The Big Questions In Science And Religion*, West Conshohocken, Templeton Foundation Press.

White, J. and White, P. (1984) '*A Critical Response to Hirst'*. Presented at a seminar on Educational Theory and Practice at the London Institute of Education: Mimeo unpublished.

Williams, R. (1991) *Teresa of Avila,* (2000 Ed.), London: Continuum.

Williams, R. (1994) *Open to Judgement: Sermons and Addresses,* (1996 Ed.), London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.

Williams, R. (2000) *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark Ltd.

Williams, R. (2000) *On Christian Theology,* (2008 Ed.), Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Williams, R. (2000) *Christ On Trial,* (2002 Ed.), London: HarperCollins.

Williams, R. (2002) *Ponder These Things,* Norwich: Canterbury Press.

Williams, R. (2007) *Tokens of Trust,* Norwich: Canterbury Press.

Williams, R. and Elliott, L. (2010) *Crisis and Recovery: Ethics, Economics and Justice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Williams, R. (2012) *Faith in the Public Square*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Williams, R. (2019) *Being Human: Bodies, Minds, Persons,* London: SPCK.

Williams, T. (2002) *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wolters, C. (Trans) (1961) *The Cloud Of Unknowing,* Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd.

Wright, C. (1992) *Early Education,* in Gill, D. et al (ed) Racism in Education, California: Sage.

Zizec, S. and Milbank, J. (2009) *The Monstrosity of Christ*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

The Case Record

i) The desire to explore the complex self (Theme 1)

Daisy: Parent: Interview One: *The original prompts picked suggested something quite basic about the self. They are prompts that stood out on first reflection. However it is possible to thinker of a deeper idea of self. This is because the idea is not a simple one. The second prompts represent the more spiritual idea of self…The basic self is a more simple idea. Behaviour for instance is something that is learnt, particularly from parents. It is something about the self that is developed through relationships. The desire for basic necessities is likewise a very basic aspect of the self. Something that we perhaps take for granted but yet a very basic necessity that we all share… Behaviour is learnt not only through relationships with parents but also when you branch out into primary school, state school and beyond. Teachers are therefore part of the way in which behaviour is learnt… Relationships obviously have a very part in your behaviour. Parents clearly have an original role in this and this is put to the test during school. Upbringing effects the behaviour of us all. People are not born bad, but it is all quite complicated!*

Daisy: Parent: Interview Two: *No there is not a true concept of self – it is just too complicated. There are too many layers to us all. This does not matter. I do not like labels. It helps others if there are labels but me myself does not want a label because I know that I am complex. Sometimes it all seems to be a bit out of you control; life, school, work and it is hard to get your head around it sometimes. Whether a more back to basics system or a more questioning system would create more rounded students in the long run? I am a product of 70s education which was about getting students to work. It would nice to think that we have improved since then but we haven't. Perhaps we never will!*

Ned: Student: Interview One: *replacing the self with story made sense. The self is like a soul which can always change. Even though you might write a story with characters whose author determines the choices the characters make and can edit and change the story, this is different and impossible in the story of our life. The story of self is made up of aims, aspirations, emotions, decisions, how you feel…the root of these aims, decisions, emotions and decisions might be 'the heart' but doubted the biological validity of this claim. Perhaps it was more likely to be the brain and the emotional connections that you make with people over life – although in the*ory *we all start off as the same kind of thing… it is probably the way in which the brain is connected, a neurological account, a biological account. Each electro connection determines what the self is. Which*

means in essence that a scientist could create a self/story… The brain changes as a result of the choices that are made.

Logan: Student: Interview One: *it was impossible to put it down to one thing. I personally do not know what it is myself but it is a mixture of different things that come together to make one… we start from a blank canvas and continue to change. This also changes how you are seen by others and how you act. It might be that the true self is hidden from others who might not know what your inner self really is… The family play a big influence in your life, how you act and how you think. The self changes because of decisions that are made. If decisions are good or bad the self changes as a result of these changes. It is difficult to say what the self is because it is always changing from past history and social history. It will depend upon whether you are introverted or extroverted. Your self has a big influence on who you are as a person...*

The self is constructed in different ways. There are outside influences. These include biological influences, psychological and cognitive perceptions, and other things. The self continues to change because it is always being effected by these things. Even being asked to say who we are has made me delve deeper to try understand "who am I", which is a tough question to ask. You are the only one who knows yourself but you may not know yourself as much as think you do. People will see you differently to how you see yourself.

People do not want to be fully dependent. People want to make their own choices and create their own successes. However we also have a need of relationships whether with friends or family. If you were completely alone then you would struggle and mentally feel down. Everyone needs a bit of contact. This has got something to do with security. This is also why people do not push themselves. If you are alone then you lack security and you would suffer because you do not have those people there for you – it is really difficult! I think that the self is created not just by you but by other people as well. Even the group you are in and peer pressure will create you. But also it doesn't. You have different selves depending upon who you are with at the time whether you are aware of it or not. So you might be one person with friends, another with family.

Harriet: Student: Interview Two: *... it really boils down to the function of it and there would have to be big changes for this to happen. But many people do not contemplate the education system so it was doubtful whether change would occur.*

Grace: Student: Interview One: *Because we just sort of assume who we are. We see each other as parents, students or teachers but we do not think about who they actually are. We give labels and just assume that this is who we are. We do not actually know the definition of self. The role or label is not the full picture.*

A teacher is more than a job, a new mother is more than a mother. For instance all people are private. Only we know who we really are. People will never fully understand each other…We are also people of limits. Some people do not have the ability but other people doubt themselves and do not reach their potential – they should aim higher than they do. This includes not only students but adults too. In a work place there might be people who do not reach as high as they could. People may not think they have the ability. Some people lack confidence. Everyone has at least one insecurity and doubt themselves in some way.

Background and upbringing are important. If you live in a poor part of London then you might do less well than if you are living in a more affluent rural area. In the same way if you have parents that push you then you are more likely to do better than if you have parents that do not have high expectations of you. There is a big influence at a young age that effects how you see yourself. The self is also psychologically constructed. The way that we think people perceive us will likely to influence us too. This can work both ways – both positive and negative. Some people can ignore this. Some people can deal with things differently. It has something to the amount of confidence that you have. I think if you do not really understand who you are that has a large knock on affect and you probably start to believe what other people think you are. You cannot judge this very easily. Some people are quieter but are more confident, others are louder and more cocky to hide their own insecurities. I realise that I have just contradicted myself here.

Mike: Teacher: Interview Two: *The fact that 'self' is so complex means that there can be never be a system that suits everyone, but it is possible to offer a far broader curriculum than the one we do at present.*

Beth: Teacher: Interview One: t*here might be a perception at different times of your life but nothing stays the same… We are taught what is normal and our beliefs at a young age but begin to develop and amend these beliefs over time. This is a process of socialisation. There are outside influences such as parents who first instil beliefs and then we are influenced by peers and teachers and our beliefs are amended and changed. This is why we do not share exactly the same beliefs as our parents. We adjust our beliefs based upon individual experiences. We then make choices depending upon these different experiences. So we take certain bits from friends, parents, teachers, others and cultures and then make our own choices from these influences.*

The self is thus the culmination of infinite amounts of experiences and influences from which we make our own choices. Adjustments to the self are made as we experience different things and are changed or influenced by different relationships. This is the personality that we become, the person who you are. I think we are all quite complex beings, it's quite hard to explain one way or

another why you are the way you are. There is no theory that can explain fully who we are. So the students who we teach all have an infinite amount of different experiences and influences from which they make choices. These people are thinkers to a relative degree and are hard to predict.

Rachel: Teacher: Interview One: *It was different, it's complex, it's changeable, it's evolving… could have easily have chosen more prompts and although intuitively some felt right when she had picked them up they no longer seemed right… one row had to do with characteristics that were developed particularly at a young age. These tended to be more ordered. Others were more abstract – such as 'a story' and became less ordered…perhaps we lose track of where we are going after a while!*

Some of the prompts were connected – they had to do with personality, the mental side of the self. Others prompts had to do with the self as influenced by other people and the world around us and how such reactions and influences then affect our desires…whilst some of the prompts were clearly connected others were more arbitrary… a person was not just one holistic thing but that a person had different parts. So, for example, a mind is a part of a person. This mind can be influenced from what or who is around you. Stories continue to influence this ever changing mind. It is almost like a blank canvas that is then added to throughout your life.

The personality was something that is almost taught. Although it is within us and can be natural to us it is also the result of influence and experience. For instance there are people who are naturally emotional but if say there is an angry person then although they might be naturally emotional there must also be something that is making them angry or volatile too. So the self is both biological and environmental. Thus 'a self with strengths and weaknesses is someone who might have a natural gift for drawing but that this strength is only recognisable because it has been pointed out by someone else.

People become dependent upon others as a learnt behaviour and over time – but naturally we have to depend upon others ie a baby depending upon a mother. In keeping with the biological (we called this nature) and the environmental (which we called nurture) theme… Acceptance is more a nurture aspect and food more a nature… The self is very complex and very difficult to measure. The mind is complex, the society that influences the mind is complex, nurture is very complex, a psychological construction is very complex, the upbringing can be complex- so yes it (the self) is not a simple kind of uniform thing. It has lots of inter-linking sections

Patel: Teacher: Interview One: *that history and upbringing were very important factors in making pupils who they were. For instance the link between deviant*

behaviour and family stability was of paramount importance I cannot name a (problematic) student at this school who does not have an; a) balanced home life and/or b) supportive parents… the link between *history and a self who has a natural desire for a good job… all students began their schooling with a desire to do well and an excitement about school. This was only changed later on during their school lives whether the fault of the school or home. When students try and fail enough times this becomes part of their history. As a result of their history they then stop trying. This might be because at home someone is telling them that they are 'thick'… There is also a link between history and characteristics and personality. For instance children mirror what they hear at home. This is particularly true of issues like racism.*

The question of self was a complex one and 'hugely difficult to define'. Students are so varied and different and they are all here for different reasons and with different values. Even trying to define 'myself' would change day by day depending upon a number of different factors. The whole idea of defining the self is massively complex… student 'z'. This is a person who is unrecognisable from the person that she presented publicly only a couple of months ago. This was wholly due to her radical change in personal circumstance.

ii) Evidence of the *atomistic economic* self (Theme 2)

Daisy: Parent: Interview One: *So perhaps it depends upon the individual – you either thrive or you do not.*

Ned: Student: Interview One: *we are definitely directed towards one way or another in school…we are pointed towards a direction… Education points towards exams; Sats, the 11+, GCSE's, A-Levels, Degree, there are always exams or tests/assessments. In high school it is about memory – the exact words that you have to remember and copy down in the exam and these will give you the best opportunities in life and make you happy…. Yes, if you ask most people…what the purpose of education was they would probably say exams or to go further and say a good job… we are definitely programmed as a class as a school as a year to think about exams constantly and the next exam coming up.*

Ned: Student: Interview Two: *To work towards that job or to get those grades in order to get to University – this is the purpose at the moment. People might like to get different things out of it and each individual is different so perhaps everyone has a slightly different idea about what the purpose is. There is a definite concept but this depends upon each individual.*

Grace: Student: Interview One: *I feel like it's all things we need to learn. Ultimately it is preparing us for work. What has been ingrained in us from the very beginning of high school is that you go through high school, do well and get good grades and that's either to go on to university, further education or get a job. So the final purpose of education is to get a job. It is also clear what kind of job someone should get. Those who achieve high grades are pushed harder to get further. Whereas the middle students are seen as people who are more likely to… and you know what place you are in because you are put in a certain set and judged accordingly. We may not talk about this but everyone that it is true. It can be that some people are intelligent but just not in particular lessons and they will know this too. This will prepare you for future employment you are working towards money and most people want a lot of money but only the smartest people can get there. But just because you do not do well at school does not mean that you are not an intelligent person. But because you do not do well at school this can have a massive affect upon the rest of your life.*

I feel as though this system is needed. Most people do go to work in order to provide for yourself and your family and it is good that you are getting prepare for work. Although this does not prepare you for life – taxes or houses. It does get you into routines and rules but not how to live on your own.

Logan: Student: Interview One: *There are many different things that can be gained from education. Firstly it is about becoming more intelligent and knowledgeable about things that are going on around you in the world. These enable you to get good grades which then provide you to go on past education or the first part of education into the real world, the world of opportunity… Opportunities are also found within education which enable you to go on and be successful. There are parts of education which prepare you for getting a job… So education prepares you for paid work – writing, communicating or numerical skills. Education prepares you for success in whatever kind of job you wish to do… Education also offers people the opportunity to grow themselves... it was really about the best grades - all the knowledge that you need in order to get the best out of an exam paper and those with the best grades will then have the best opportunities. They will then be best qualified to do a job. Personally I don't think that is the way it should be. The aim is to get as many people as possible the best grades possible because without good grades it is more difficult to be successful. The aim of school is therefore to get students the best grades, best opportunities and most success.*

Patel: Teacher: Interview One:. *It also worked as a benchmark for potential employers to judge potential employees. It works to ensure standardisation. It is deeply flawed but I don't think there is a better system. The hope was that my*

own sons were not solely judged upon these naked grades however useful they are to employees. This type of negative judgement has been experienced

Beth: Teacher: Interview One: *But the whole culture is not just about this. This has been a switch too in parental roles. It used to be that the parents would blame their children for poor results but now there is now more accountability held for the teachers. For me it should be more balanced. We both need to try hard to do well for the students to help them reach their potential. It is difficult to know why there has been this shift in responsibility. But all the paper trail and all the accountability that I have to demonstrate does imply that I have a much greater deal of responsibility than the students do. The students do not need to prove or justify themselves like there is for the teacher.*

This has been a shock this year. But this has become normal… We would have to meet again after the grades came in! I feel as though I am doing everything that I can to help the students – so why do I have to write it down on a piece of paper? I don't believe that any teacher would do any half job. Teachers do not give up on students and always wish them to do well. There should be more trust. We should and we do try hard to do our very best for our students and this should be recognised. You would not get into this profession if you did not want to help the students. Therefore the culture of accountability will not make any difference. Accountability does not motivate me because I am doing these things anyway and I would like to think that most teachers are like that, if not all!

Daniel: Teacher: Interview One: *Education should be more about nurture and the anecdotal and almost immeasurable concepts such as virtue. But education is now a business and examination results are what we are judged on. There is no place for nurture when you have to continually push them towards exams but this is not the reason for getting up in the morning or wishing to become a teacher. I would prefer it if we had more time to know a little bit more about background, upbringing, where they are coming from rather than looking forward to exam grades of thirty students. At the moment I would say that my job is more interesting than it has been in the last thirty years. Even though it is impossible to come in in September and show how this student has gone from C to B or B to A, the real satisfaction is seeing the student in school – just being here, talking to adults, looking out from behind long locks of hair, overcoming eating disorders or self harm issue. As these things diminish students do become more ready to improve academically. But there is an expectation that examination results is top of the list because ultimately that is where the rest of the country see our school – that is how we are judged like a business, stuff in and stuff out.*

Even the increasing size of the school has been detrimental to nurture. The school is now so big that it is impossible, as it once was, to know all of the students. Although the results look great I am not sure that the people are any more equipped for the modern world… or virtuous or considerate, or even less so - which is a sadness.

Technology might be of some teaching use but the emersion of the children in technology has been detrimental to determination, virtue and consideration. It diminishes skills in conversation, reflective thinking, debate and questioning. So results are getting better and better but to what cost?

iii) Effects of the *atomistic economic* self (Theme 3)

Daisy: Parent: Interview One: *It has only made my children more determined and able to think for themselves and be independent, they don't rely on teachers to drip feed them. One child was let down, decided to teach himself and ended up doing well. It is how you deal with it that is important. It is the same in education. So yes the system is letting them down but you can turn it into a positive if you want to. As a parent you feel as though your hands are tied, you don't want to rock the boat… This is definitely the role of the parent to ensure that all children are valued through success or failure but this is different for teachers. The teachers role is to pass on specialised knowledge and I wouldn't expect teachers to play that role.*

Daisy: Parent: Interview Two: *It would be interesting to see what other countries do. Norway for instance seem to have a different system and it is worth exploring this. Perhaps in these countries there is not the problem of low self-esteem that we find in our society. It is a massive ask to change the system… No. I don't think we should* (be satisfied with the current system). *But again I do not know what the answer is but it is worth searching for. I do not know what education system would have been better for my middle of the range children but I would want people searching and exploring what options there might be. There are teachers out there who are trying to explore and search – it is a battle that will carry on.*

Ned: Student: Interview One: *had under-achieved at school at GCSE and other people struggle with motivation but some schools think not only about exams but also about the students involved and how they can get the best out of them. This was not just about getting targets met. This was the story of my sister who quit primary school teaching after a year due to the continual pressure to meet targets rather than work with the students themselves as people. This system has been developed that is so exam driven that educators are now making the best of what they have. This is very difficult if students are not academically minded*

which seems to be what our whole system is about. School should not be just about academia but about, say, mechanics and motoring. This is still a place where you learn – it is still a school. What you learn is what your aims are. This is different from person to person. If you force someone to do something, they are not necessarily going to want to do it. This can cause rebellion and everything becomes more difficult. Ned was not happy with this type of schooling. *Most people seem to think that the way it is at the moment is wrong but no one seems to be coming up with any better system.*

Grace: Student: Interview One: *those who are not high achievers do not have a voice and cannot speak out… they can't really shout out because no one is going to listen to them.*

Grace: Student: Interview Two: *If for instance one student is acting up teachers should be aware of possible home circumstances or the reasons for the behaviour.*

Logan: Student: Interview One: (on accountability) *which has a negative effect on how things are seen… there must be a better way of getting people out of the education system with the grades that they deserve.*

It is not a good enough system yet, I believe… a lack of fairness in the system. A person may remember more during the exam itself but this did not mean necessarily that they had the best knowledge. A second student could know more but remember less in an exam. This does not reflect the world of work. There will be many people who have the same knowledge as other people but whose knowledge is not reflected in their grades.

Logan: Student: Interview Two: *many of the most successful or well off people at the moment do not have a degree and that this should also call into question the purpose of education as it stands at the moment. It is not about the grades but the skills set and the mind-set.*

Harriet: Student: Interview One: *the self that is always changing and socially constructed. There are two parts to the self. The person who you really want to be and your aspirations and the reality of a self that is socially constructed. But the person who you really want to be is usually restricted by the role we play. The real inner me is recognisable because it is often in conflict with the self who is playing a role. The real inner self is more a return to nature and a desire to be free but that does not fit in with the way that society is constructed. There is a free self but it is trapped by society and role. This was avoidable in theory but not in practice because you cannot avoid education and you cannot avoid societies structures.*

restrictive and programmed into us which was separate from the real inner person in which happiness came about not because we had been told how to find happiness – ie through good grades. Sadly there is no room in education for these kinds of things, for imagination and being an individual. There is not much personal identity in education we are all labelled as grades and numbers, in short as data, not the real person that we are… The education system is not what it should be. There are other options but in practice it is hard to make another option work. Although the system is flawed it does work in order to get people jobs – as a function – but freedom is lost. It is difficult to imagine another way because we are conditioned to think in a certain way. But another option 'to explore' is possible. An option in which independence and freedom are more obvious. At the moment there does not seem to be any real purpose.

Daniel: Teacher: Interview Two: *This is a worry. We are getting further and further away from this and what the students leave with that they can then pass down to their own families is questionable*

Patel: Teacher: Interview One: *This is not necessarily the best way but is the current way… the judgement of schools on these grades and the league tables that are bound up with this judgement. This was because these grades do not define a school at all. Sometimes the cost of doing better is that all the other stuff is gone… This would filter down from the leadership team, to teachers and their anxieties of accountability and students wouldn't feel a failure because we would not be hammering them to get them to this magical C grade. A better way would be to make exam grades a broad reflection of ability rather than fixating upon them. A further flaw to the education system is that those students who leave without good exam grades should leave with success in another aspect of education, something that does not happen in contemporary education… the sad reality is that loads of students (not at this school but in general) leave the education system thinking that they are failures having put in five years of effort rather than pushing them through something that they fail at, let's find them something that they can do and will leave will… a better system, even one that offered different types of qualification, would be one in which schools were not judged on the basis of exam results only.*

Mike: Teacher: Interview Two: *Whether they be school leaders, heads of department or teacher leading a class. "Yes" people are desired because they are easier and the job is already tough enough without asking difficult questions.*

Mike: Teacher: Interview One: *teachers are ensnared in this system and therefore have to teach in such a narrow way... this is bleak.* T*he underpinning values of education run into direct conflict with what had been said about the self. I have to question, as an educator, the purpose of just collecting data and thinking of the individual as data. Also under question was the manner of*

assessment and why there was not more trust in teacher led assessment. Further to … a broader more complex system of assessment including, for instance, how hard the students work. This criteria matters because although some excel in exams, another's work ethic might be more or equally commendable. Another example of the contemporary problem with assessment had to do with the arbitrary manner of levelling or grading… how it was fair that one assessment could effect negatively the class that a student went into at secondary school – especially when such marking can be open to interpretation and was only an assessment on a given day in a given moment – it's a blinkered, narrow-minded way of seeing education.

Only today I have been listening to an article in which head teachers, unions and others were talking over the implications of assessing 4 and 5 year olds as a benchmark for their future – I just know it's not necessary… [we need] *a more nurturing system in which the self was given to exploring, being creative, working out for themselves the parameters of thought and creativity and value.*

The current system was not even close to be as fulfilling to our students as these experiences known by my daughters. We are educators, we should be finding more experiences that are valuable for them, not just pieces of data. Education should be far more than which University they are capable of getting into. In regards to the new GCSE in English, with the 1-9 assessment, some of our students will make no progress. Some might be a level 1 all the way through knowing that there are 9 levels above them – what on earth is that going to do with their self-esteem? What is that going to do to their children's self-esteem? How is that going to encourage them to take risks? Could we not rather talk about qualities rather than grades? This person has these qualities - qualities that could be documented by what they have actually done during school as opposed to a piece of data.

Unfortunately, the present government held a very traditional and conservative view of education which was quite disconcerting. So yes, bleak days in terms of education… it underpins where education is right now. W*hat actually makes this country great is a celebration of difference; culture and tradition – something that the exam boards do not consider at all… the fact that teachers are expected to teach British Values was worrying. Why is a British Value only one thing? – who is deciding what British values are? Why do we not question ourselves in education?*

Mike: Teacher: Interview Two: *School leaders and teachers are shackled by league tables and data and this negates the risks that are needed. Teachers may come in as idealists, romantics even to the profession, but the system perhaps grinds [them] down. So pedagogy and teachers become hardened and end up fitting the system in the same we in which students are. It can be done differently*

when some of the ties to curriculum or league tables are loosened. A difficult culture can be born with greater freedom and flexibility. It is then possible to challenge the ways that we do things whether this means the way we read or creativity in the classroom.

The irony of this country is that on the one hand we cherish culture, art and academic creativity – in fact it is our major export – and on the other hand we have a narrowing in our curriculum of subjects that involve creative thinking, subjects that allow time for thought rather than simply exam based criteria. Yet teachers are ensnared in this system and therefore have to teach in such a narrow way.

Beth: Teacher: Interview One: *I would like to think that most teachers are like that* (trustworthy – able to do their job without the acute levels of accountability), *if not all… I think that if we were not writing down what we were doing for students then we would have more time for students*

I don't believe that any teacher would do any half job. Teachers do not give up on students and always wish them to do well. There should be more trust. We should and we do try hard to do our very best for our students and this should be recognised... Accountability does not motivate me because I am doing these things anyway and I would like to think that most teachers are like that, if not all

I am learning that defining success is very difficult and different for in different situations. The whole education system needs to recognise that, it is not all about exam results at the end of it. But with such an emphasis on exam grades and league tables this gets forgotten in education. This is a real shame and we should be more willing to celebrate the successes that the students think that they make rather than our idea of success. This is really hard to do in practice because it is very difficult to measure individual successes. Ofsted would not be able to grade schools because it is impossible to measure these kinds of successes. The government works by having standards that can be measured and governed. We have league tables and comparable exam grades and these are the measures that can be compared between schools. We do need these kinds of measures but it can be that individual successes can be hidden by the examination results - which is a shame.

The reason why there are different ideas about success is because of the self described in part one; the self who makes autonomous choices about what they want to be successful in. Some are very career driven others wish for more practical skills.

iv) Responses to the question "To what degree do you think that policy makers, school leaders and teachers should consider and explore the concept of 'self'?"

Daisy: Parent: *They certainly should consider but how they would implement it I do not know. Whether it is added as an additional subject or an add on. But is does need to be considered. Policy makers should also be considering this question. These policy makers need to be experienced educators in order to make good decisions.*

Logan: Student: *They should all consider it in one way or another. This is especially true for teachers who tend to teach classes using one method rather than thinking about the individual needs of the students in the class. Because each 'self' is different there is a need for teachers to be aware of this. In order to get the best out of each individual there is a need to use a variety of techniques that connect to each student. Each teacher needs to consider individuals more than they currently do. The self is made of different experiences and therefore each individual will have different needs and there is a need for teachers to consider this in their teaching.*

Ned: Student: *They should consider it more but not let it over power the teaching of individual subjects. It is an important concept to explore and consider. Perhaps it would be possible to incorporate the exploration of harder questions into the subjects themselves for instance RE, Psychology*

Grace: Student: *It is quite important. Mainly because of the students. Each student has a different story and so a student body should not be judged as a whole. If for instance one student is acting up teachers should be aware of possible home circumstances or the reasons for the behaviour. It is also important for people to be aware of who they are because we are not just the roles that we play – say a biology teacher – but that we are also something else outside of school. I think that you connect to more people at school if you can connect to them on a personal level… if a teacher speaks to you about themselves and who they are, I think you can know them better and that helps your learning as well.*

Harriet: Student: *Yes, they should be exploring the question of self. Through personal experience education systems are not focused on the self and everything is generalised. Everyone is seen as one thing. I asked whether because 'self's' are different that there needed to be a broader exploration of what that entailed. There is not a unique definition of the self so any generalisations of this concept were difficult to make.*

Patel: Teacher: *These questions were hard. If these students are what we discussed during interview one; private/public, vulnerable, coming with different histories then absolutely we need to explore. This does not detract from a purpose of education which is to allow industry to differentiate between student ability. Policy makers, school leaders and teachers do need to be aware of the*

need to assess and measure academic success but also needs to be aware that students are lots of different things and that therefore school in a way meets those variables.

Mike: Teacher: *I think that they like to think that they the self is at the heart of what we are doing here. We hear educational policy makers sayings things like "every child matters, inclusion"... which always seem to have come from a good place… but it is actually like a factory…this was really about serving the policy makers rather than the individuals within education. They should certainly consider the question more than they do and it baffles me as to why they don't.*

School leaders and teachers are shackled by league tables and data and this negates the risks that are needed. Teachers may come in as idealists, romantics even to the profession, but the system perhaps grinds [them] down. So pedagogy and teachers become hardened and end up fitting the system in the same we in which students are. It can be done differently when some of the ties to curriculum or league tables are loosened. A difficult culture can be born with greater freedom and flexibility. It is then possible to challenge the ways that we do things whether this means the way we read or creativity in the classroom.

The irony of this country is that on the one hand we cherish culture, art and academic creativity – in fact it is our major export – and on the other hand we have a narrowing in our curriculum of subjects that involve creative thinking, subjects that allow time for thought rather than simply exam based criteria. Yet teachers are ensnared in this system and therefore have to teach in such a narrow way.

Beth: Teacher: *On a personal level you need to know who you are and your own concept of self. Because it is always changing it is difficult to speak with students about it although an awareness of a concept of self is important – we would be better suited to help them. Perhaps this is something to be explored in life skills lessons. To explore with the students in this way.*

Policy makers should also have a concept of self because over the generations the concept has changed. Policy makers need to keep abreast of student self-perception and their role within the education system. But also how teachers see themselves and their role. So policy makers need to be aware that we are doing more and more for our students and adjust the policies accordingly.

Rachel: Teacher: *All of them need to take some responsibility for this exploration. However it is the policy makers (Government) who should take the first responsibility and then feed it down to leadership and then to teachers. Teachers are at the bottom of this hierarchy and it should be the policy makers who explore this question of self first and see where the education system goes as a result of this exploration. School leaders can then use these explorations and adapt these to their particular students and particular environments. Teachers could adapt this within their own classes. It is not that teachers should be discouraged from thinking about this question but it should be recognised that the search for a universal answer will be hard.*

Daniel: Teacher: *To a high degree - but in a real world where expectations are different there is very little opportunity for policy makers, school leaders and particularly teachers who teach three lessons a day, five days a week it is almost totally forgotten, ignored or never thought about -all down to time and pressure. It only becomes important or possible the smaller numbers of students are taught. In fact for real knowledge of self to be explored this takes a one to one environment. Year co-ordinators and leadership will get these opportunities at times during mentoring. But to influence lesson planning or whole school vision – no! It's a big shame.*

Appendix 1:

Letter to the Head of High School to ask for Consent

Dear ,

Exploring Ontological Identity in Education: A Theological Critique

I am writing to you about the research I am conducting as part of my MPhil/PhD Thesis at the University of East Anglia (UEA). This letter is to ask you for your consent in allowing me to contact and interview a number of parents, students and teachers. My hope is that the interviews and the research will allow us, as a school community, to ask the questions that will help us grow and continue to nurture our students in the spirit already in evidence at .

The research has to do with how a sample of parents, students and teachers understand the concept of 'student'. For instance is a student 'a person who is competing with others to get the best results' and/or 'a person to engage with and stretch' and/or 'a vulnerable individual in need of nurture, support and challenge'. You will know that this is a really important question to ask because the way in which we understand the concept of 'student' will always affect our perceptions of the 'purpose of education'.

The idea is that a sample of parents, students and teachers will be interviewed by me individually in school for about 45 minutes. Interviews would be made at the participant's convenience. Although I only wish to interview sixth form students who are over 16, I will still be asking for parental consent in line with our school policy. All participants will need to opt in to the interviews to avoid any unnecessary pressure or coercion. I have included the letters that I hope to send to the participants for your information and approval.

All participants will be asked several questions about the concept of 'student' and the 'purpose of education' and will be given several possible answers to these questions which they will rank in order as they see fit. Interviews will be conducted in the light of their responses. All responses will be photographed and

the interview recorded on a digital recorder so that nothing is missed or forgotten. All participants will also be given post-it notes for them to add anything else if they wish. I will then ask them several further questions regarding the concept of 'student' and the 'purpose of education'. Immediately following the interview all participants will be given an opportunity to qualify anything they have said, to amend or add to it, or strike it off the record. At no stage during this interview will any views be judged or challenged and there is no need for them to prepare any answers for the interview unless they wish to do so.

All interviews will be conducted in the spirit of respect for the school and the persons who work at our school and the naming of individuals will not be encouraged or recorded.

Following the interview all views will be written up in a summary report. This report will be given to the participants and they will again be offered the opportunity to qualify anything they have said, to amend or add to it, or strike it off the record. This report will remain confidential until they have given permission for it to be included in the research project.

Data management will follow the 1988 Data Protection Act. I will not keep information about any participants that could identify them to someone else. All the names of the individuals taking part in the research and the school will be anonymised to preserve confidentiality. The data will be stored safely and will be destroyed when my project is completed. The data will only be used for my work and will only be seen by myself, my supervisor, and those who mark my work. All participants can withdraw at any time.

Please be assured that the research study will first need to be approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee before any action is taken.

I very much hope that this research will be of value to our school and also as a published thesis. It is written with the very best interests of our students at heart

and I hope that, with you consent, the project will lead to further fertile discussion and school improvement.

Thank you for considering this proposal.

Yours sincerely

Richard Noble

Appendix 2:

Opt In Participation Teacher Statement and Consent Form

Mr R Noble
Head of Religious Studies
[Insert date]

Exploring Ontos and Telos in Education:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

What does 'Exploring Ontos and Telos in Education' mean?

Exploring ontos means looking at what we mean by 'self' – the question is 'who are we?'
Exploring telos means looking at what the 'purpose' of education is.

What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in two interviews as part of a random sample of teachers. The interviews will allow you to explore two questions; 'who are we?' and 'what is the purpose of education?'

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:
Understand what you have read.
Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by Mr R Noble, Head of RE at [redacted].

I am conducting this study as the basis of a PhD at The University of East Anglia. This will take place under the supervision of Professor Alain Wolf and Professor John Elliot.

What will the study involve for me?

You will be asked to take part in five ways;

1. You will be given a list of different ideas about what it might mean when we use the word 'self'. This list will range from words such as 'vulnerable', 'complex', 'individual' to parts of sentences such as 'in need of relationship'. You will also be given a list about some different ideas about the 'purpose of education'. The list would include amongst others; 'a person who is competing with others to get the best results', 'a person to engage with and stretch', 'a vulnerable individual in need of nurture, support and challenge'. These lists are simply to help you in some initial thinking that you *may* wish to do prior to the first interview, although no preparation is necessary.

2. You will then be asked to participate in a first interview (interview 1) – This will be an interview with me in which you will be given an opportunity to explore the question of self and the purpose of education. The interview will last a maximum of one hour.

3. You will then be given a summary report of interview 1 and offered the opportunity to comment on it. At this time you will also be given several questions that you will be asked in interview 2. For example, you will be asked: 'To what degree do you think that policy makers, school leaders and teachers should consider and explore the concept of 'self? This is simply to help in some initial thinking that you *may* wish to do prior to the second interview, although no preparation is necessary.

4. You will then be asked to participate in a second interview (interview 2). This will be a second interview with me in which you will have the opportunity to answer the questions that were given to you with summary report 1. You will also have the chance to discuss the question of self and the purpose of education again if you have thought of anything you wish to add since interview 1. The interview will last a maximum of one hour.

5. You will then be given a summary report of interview 2 and offered the opportunity to comment on it. This will be another chance for you to add anything or amend anything that you wish.

Both the interviews will be conducted at school at a time convenient with you. The interviews will be recorded on an audio digital recorder so that nothing that you say will be lost or forgotten.

Immediately following the interviews you will be given an opportunity to qualify anything you have said, to amend or add to it, or strike it off the record. At no stage during this interview will your views be judged or challenged and there is

no need for you to prepare any answers for the interview unless you wish to do so.

I appreciate that all this will take time. The reason for this is because I want you to be given the space to really explore and explain your point of view over a period of time. In this way your views can be more fairly represented in the research.

All research will remain confidential until you have given permission for it to be included in the research project.

How much of my time will the study take?

The minimum amount of time involved; your participation in two interviews that will not exceed one hour each and the reading of the two summary reports following the interviews. You may also choose, if you wish, to do some initial thinking before each interview and you may also wish to comment upon the summary reports.

Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or [redacted] High School.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by contacting me by e-mail, letter or by phone.

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. If you decide at a later time to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from our study records and will not be included in the study results, up to the point that we have analysed and published the and this would include the submission of the dissertation for assessment purposes.

Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

As with any extended interview there is always a small psychological risk involved. You will be interviewed about the question of 'self' and this *may* prove to be a difficult subject to explore and talk about.

However, aside from giving up your time, I do not expect that there will be any further risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

I hope that you will find the interviews very rewarding. My wish is to help you explore these questions and to record your view points in a fair and meaningful way.

Your views will also be part of a much broader discussion in education, a discussion that I think is very necessary at the moment.

What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

You can withdraw the interview data at any time and it will be destroyed immediately.

I will not keep information about you that could identify you to someone else. Your name and the name of ██████ High School will be anonymised to preserve confidentiality. The interview questions and summary reports will only be placed 'on the record' for the purpose of my research with your written consent. Otherwise it will be destroyed.

All data will be stored safely on my private PC.

You can contact me at any time prior to the submission of the thesis if you wish to have access to any information that you have provided.

You can contact me at any time prior to the submission of the thesis if you wish to have access to any information that you have provided.

It is possible that this research may be used in other publications in the form of conference presentations and papers etc. Your name will of course remain anonymous.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 1998 Data Protection Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2013).

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, *I* will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact me by e-mail R.Noble@uea.ac.uk or by phone 01394 385720. You could also contact my supervisor, Professor Alain Wolf by e-mail A.Wolf@uea.ac.uk.

Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell me that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the appropriate box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of *a* one page summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in UK is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:
Mr R Noble
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
R.Noble@uea.ac.uk
If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor:
Professor Alain Wolf
A.Wolf@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Dr Nalini Boodhoo, at n.boodhoo@uea.ac.uk.

OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

You need to fill in one copy of the consent form and return this for my attention to High School. This could be either sent by post or your son/daughter could hand it in to the Humanities team room or to me directly. Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or [redacted] High School now or in the future.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

Audio-recording YES ☐ NO ☐

Reviewing summary reports YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: ____

____

☐ Email: ____

....

Signature

....

PRINT name

....

Date

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (2nd Copy to Participant)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or [redacted] High School now or in the future.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

Audio-recording YES ☐ NO ☐

Reviewing summary reports YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: ____

____

☐ Email: ____

....
Signature

....
PRINT name

....
Date

Appendix 3:

Opt In Parent Participation Statement and Consent Form

Mr R Noble
Head of Religious Studies
[Insert date]

Exploring Ontos and Telos in Education:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

What does 'Exploring Ontos and Telos in Education' mean?

Exploring ontos means looking at what we mean by 'self' – the question is 'who are we?'
Exploring telos means looking at what the 'purpose' of education is.

What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in two interviews as part of a random sample of parents. The interviews will allow you to explore two questions; 'who are we?' and 'what is the purpose of education?'

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:
Understand what you have read.
Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by Mr R Noble, Head of RE at [redacted].

I am conducting this study as the basis of a PhD at The University of East Anglia. This will take place under the supervision of Professor Alain Wolf and Professor John Elliot.

What will the study involve for me?

You will be asked to take part in five ways;

6. You will be given a list of different ideas about what it might mean when we use the word ‘self’. This list will range from words such as ‘vulnerable’, ‘complex’, ‘individual’ to parts of sentences such as ‘in need of relationship’. You will also be given a list about some different ideas about the ‘purpose of education’. The list would include amongst others; ‘a person who is competing with others to get the best results’, ‘a person to engage with and stretch’, ‘a vulnerable individual in need of nurture, support and challenge’. These lists are simply to help you in some initial thinking that you *may* wish to do prior to the first interview, although no preparation is necessary.

7. You will then be asked to participate in a first interview (interview 1) – This will be an interview with me in which you will be given an opportunity to explore the question of self and the purpose of education. The interview will last a maximum of one hour.

8. You will then be given a summary report of interview 1 and offered the opportunity to comment on it. At this time you will also be given several questions that you will be asked in interview 2. For example, you will be asked: ‘To what degree do you think that policy makers, school leaders and teachers should consider and explore the concept of ‘self? This is simply to help in some initial thinking that you *may* wish to do prior to the second interview, although no preparation is necessary.

9. You will then be asked to participate in a second interview (interview 2). This will be a second interview with me in which you will have the opportunity to answer the questions that were given to you with summary report 1. You will also have the chance to discuss the question of self and the purpose of education again if you have thought of anything you wish to add since interview 1. The interview will last a maximum of one hour.

10. You will then be given a summary report of interview 2 and offered the opportunity to comment on it. This will be another chance for you to add anything or amend anything that you wish.

Both the interviews will be conducted at school at a time convenient with you. The interviews will be recorded on an audio digital recorder so that nothing that you say will be lost or forgotten.

Immediately following the interviews you will be given an opportunity to qualify anything you have said, to amend or add to it, or strike it off the record. At no stage during this interview will your views be judged or challenged and there is

no need for you to prepare any answers for the interview unless you wish to do so.

I appreciate that all this will take time. The reason for this is because I want you to be given the space to really explore and explain your point of view over a period of time. In this way your views can be more fairly represented in the research.

All research will remain confidential until you have given permission for it to be included in the research project.

How much of my time will the study take?

The minimum amount of time involved; your participation in two interviews that will not exceed one hour each and the reading of the two summary reports following the interviews. You may also choose, if you wish, to do some initial thinking before each interview and you may also wish to comment upon the summary reports.

Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or [redacted] High School.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by contacting me by e-mail, letter or by phone.

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. If you decide at a later time to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from our study records and will not be included in the study results, up to the point that we have analysed and published the thesis and this would include the submission of the dissertation for assessment purposes.

Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

As with any extended interview there is always a small psychological risk involved. You will be interviewed about the question of 'self' and this *may* prove to be a difficult subject to explore and talk about.

However, aside from giving up your time, I do not expect that there will be any further risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

I hope that you will find the interviews very rewarding. My wish is to help you explore these questions and to record your view points in a fair and meaningful way.

Your views will also be part of a much broader discussion in education, a discussion that I think is very necessary at the moment.

What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

You can withdraw the interview data at any time and it will be destroyed immediately.

I will not keep information about you that could identify you to someone else. Your name and the name of [redacted] High School will be anonymised to preserve confidentiality. The interview questions and summary reports will only be placed 'on the record' for the purpose of my research with your written consent. Otherwise it will be destroyed.

All data will be stored safely on my private PC.

You can contact me at any time prior to the submission of the thesis if you wish to have access to any information that you have provided.

It is possible that this research may be used in other publications in the form of conference presentations and papers etc. Your name will of course remain anonymous.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 1998 Data Protection Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2013).

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, *I* will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact me by e-mail R.Noble@uea.ac.uk or by phone 01394 385720. You could also contact my supervisor, Professor Alain Wolf by e-mail A.Wolf@uea.ac.uk.

Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell me that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the appropriate box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of *a* one page summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in UK is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:
Mr R Noble
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
R.Noble@uea.ac.uk
If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor:
Professor Alain Wolf
A.Wolf@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Dr Nalini Boodhoo, at n.boodhoo@uea.ac.uk.

OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

You need to fill in one copy of the consent form and return this for my attention to [redacted] High School. This could be either sent by post or your son/daughter could hand it in to the Humanities team room or to me directly.

Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or ████████ High School now or in the future.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

Audio-recording YES ☐ NO ☐

Reviewing summary reports YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal:

____

____

☐ Email: ____

…………………………………………………………

Signature

………………………………………………

PRINT name

……………………………………………………………………

Date

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (2nd Copy to Participant)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or [redacted] High School now or in the future.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.

I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

Audio-recording YES ☐ NO ☐

Reviewing summary reports YES ☐ NO ☐

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: ____

____

☐ Email: ____

……………………………………………………………
Signature

…………………………………………………
PRINT name

……………………………………………………………………………
Date

Appendix 4:

Opt In Participation Student Statement and Consent Form

Mr R Noble
Head of Religious Studies
[Insert date]

Exploring Ontos and Telos in Education:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

What does 'Exploring Ontos and Telos in Education' mean?

Exploring ontos means looking at what we mean by 'self' – the question is 'who are we?'
Exploring telos means looking at what the 'purpose' of education is.

(1) What is this study about?

Your child is invited to take part in two interviews as part of a random sample of students at [redacted] High School. The interviews will allow your child to explore two questions; 'who are we?' and 'what is the purpose of education?'

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to let your child take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree for your child to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your child's personal information as described.

(2) Who is running the study?

This study is being carried out by Mr R Noble, Head of RE at [redacted].

I am conducting this study as the basis of a PhD at The University of East Anglia. This will take place under the supervision of Professor Alain Wolf and Professor John Elliot.

(3) What will the study involve?

Your child will be asked to take part in five ways;

1. Your child will be given a list of different ideas about what it might mean when we use the word 'self'. This list will range from words such as 'vulnerable', 'complex', 'individual' to parts of sentences such as 'in need of relationship'. You will also be given a list about some different ideas about the 'purpose of education'. The list would include amongst others; 'a person who is competing with others to get the best results', 'a person to engage with and stretch', 'a vulnerable individual in need of nurture, support and challenge'. These lists are simply to help you in some initial thinking that you *may* wish to do prior to the first interview, although no preparation is necessary.

2. Your child will then be asked to participate in a first interview (interview 1) – This will be an interview with me in which they will be given an opportunity to explore the question of self and the purpose of education. The interview will last a maximum of one hour.

3. Your child will then be given a summary report of interview 1 and offered the opportunity to comment on it. At this time they will also be given several questions that you will be asked in interview 2. For example, they will be asked: 'To what degree do you think that policy makers, school leaders and teachers should consider and explore the concept of 'self? This is simply to help in some initial thinking that your child *may* wish to do prior to the second interview, although no preparation is necessary.

4. Your child will then be asked to participate in a second interview (interview 2). This will be a second interview with me in which they will have the opportunity to answer the questions that were given to you with summary report 1. Your child will also have the chance to discuss the question of self and the purpose of education again if you have thought of anything you wish to add since interview 1. The interview will last a maximum of one hour.

5. Your child will then be given a summary report of interview 2 and offered the opportunity to comment on it. This will be another chance for them to add anything or amend anything that you wish.

Both the interviews will be conducted at school at a time convenient with you and your child. The interviews will be recorded on an audio digital recorder so that nothing that your child says will be lost or forgotten.

Immediately following the interviews they will be given an opportunity to qualify anything they have said, to amend or add to it, or strike it off the record. At no stage during this interview will your child's views be judged or challenged and there is no need for them to prepare any answers for the interview unless they wish to do so.

I appreciate that all this will take time. The reason for this is because I want your child to be given the space to really explore and explain their point of view over a period of time. In this way your child's views can be more fairly represented in the research.

All research will remain confidential until you have given permission for it to be included in the research project.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The minimum amount of time involved; your child's participation in two interviews that will not exceed one hour each and the reading of the two summary reports following the interviews. Your child may also choose, if they wish, to do some initial thinking before each interview and they may also wish to comment upon the summary reports.

(5) Does my child have to be in the study? Can they withdraw from the study once they've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and your child does not have to take part. Your decision whether to let them participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or [redacted] High School.

If you decide to let your child take part in the study and then change your mind later (or they no longer wish to take part), they are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by contacting me by e-mail, letter or by phone.

Your child is free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information your child has provided will not be included in the study results. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions that they do not wish to answer during the interview. If

you decide at a later time to withdraw your child from the study (or they no longer wish to take part) their information will be remove from our study records and will not be included in the study results, up to the point that we have analysed and published the results and this would include the submission of the dissertation for assessment purposes.

(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

As with any extended interview there is always a small psychological risk involved. Your child will be interviewed about the question of 'self' and this *may* prove to be a difficult subject to explore and talk about.

Should any safeguarding issues arise during the interview, these will be passed on to the relevant safeguarding team at [redacted] following the normal school procedure.

However, aside from giving up their time, I do not expect that there will be any further risks or costs associated with taking part in this study for your child.

(7) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

I hope that your child will find the interviews very rewarding. My wish is to help them explore these questions and to record thier view points in a fair and meaningful way.

Your child's views will also be part of a much broader discussion in education, a discussion that I think is very necessary at the moment.

(8) What will happen to information that is collected during the study?

You and your child can withdraw the interview data at any time and it will be destroyed immediately.

I will not keep information about your child that could identify you to someone else. Your child's name and the name of [redacted] High School will be anonymised to preserve confidentiality. The interview questions and summary reports will only be placed 'on the record' for the purpose of my research with your written consent. Otherwise it will be destroyed.

All data will be stored safely on my private PC.

You can contact me at any time prior to the submission of the thesis if you wish to have access to any information that you have provided.

It is possible that this research may be used in other publications in the form of conference presentations and papers etc. Your child's name will of course remain anonymous.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about your child for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 1998 Data Protection Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2013).

Your child's information will be stored securely and their identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but your child will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

(9) What if we would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, *I* will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact me by e-mail R.Noble@uea.ac.uk or by phone 01394 385720. You could also contact my supervisor, Professor Alain Wolf by e-mail A.Wolf@uea.ac.uk.

(10) Will I be told the results of the study?

You and your child have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of a one page lay summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(11) What if we have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in UK is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:

Mr R Noble
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
R.Noble@uea.ac.uk
If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor:
Professor Alain Wolf
A.Wolf@uea.ac.uk

If you (or your child) are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please

contact please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Dr Nalini Boodhoo, at n.boodhoo@uea.ac.uk.

(12) OK, I'm happy for my child to take part – what do I do next?

You need to fill in one copy of the consent form and return this for my attention to [redacted] High School. This could be either sent by post or your son/daughter could hand it in to the Humanities team room or to me directly. Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT PARENT'S/CARER'S NAME], consent to my child ……………………………………………………………………………….[PRINT CHILD'S NAME] participating in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what my child will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓ I have read the Information Statement and have been able to discuss my child's involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and my child does not have to take part. My decision whether to let them take part in the study will not affect our relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or [redacted] High School now or in the future.

✓ I understand that my child can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓ I understand that my child may stop the interview at any time if they do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that my child may refuse to answer any questions they don't wish to answer.

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording of my child** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Receiving summary reports** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?** YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: ____

____

☐ Email: ____

....
Signature of Parent

....
PRINT name

....
Date

PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM (2nd Copy to Parent/Carer)

I, ... [PRINT PARENT'S/CARER'S NAME], consent to my child ………………………………………………………………………………….[PRINT CHILD'S NAME] participating in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what my child will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓ I have read the Information Statement and have been able to discuss my child's involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and my child does not have to take part. My decision whether to let them take part in the study will not affect our relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or ██████ High School now or in the future.

✓ I understand that my child can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓ I understand that my child may stop the interview at any time if they do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that my child may refuse to answer any questions they don't wish to answer.

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording of my child** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Receiving summary reports** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?** YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: ____

____

☐ Email: ____

....
Signature

....
PRINT name

....
Date

Appendix 5:

Prompts to the question: what is meant by the self?

A self who makes choices
A self who stands over and against the subjects studied
A self who contemplates (participates) in the subjects studied
A self who is the result of all our prior choices
A self who thinks
A self who has his/her own will and desires
A self who is the real inner person
A self with faith
A self with beliefs
A self who is the result of all their individual experiences
A self who observes reality
A self with potential
A self with limits
A self with gifts
A self with weaknesses
A self with gifts and weaknesses
A self that is socially constructed
A self that is psychologically constructed
A self who is developed through relationships
A self who is the result of background and upbringing
A biological being/animal self
A self is whatever society says a self is
A self is whatever the teacher thinks a self is
A self who is the result of history
A self in need of others
A self that searches
A self who naturally searches for wisdom and truth
A self who naturally searches for information
A self that changes depending upon the role that they play
A self is a certain role
A self is always changing
A self is a personality
A self that is detached
A self is a set of emotions
A self is a cultural being
A self who has a natural desire to consume
A self who has a natural desire for basic necessities: food, warmth etc
A self who has a natural desire for wealth
A self who has a natural desire for status
A self who has a natural desire for a good job
A self who has a desire to consume
A self who has a desire for basic necessities: food, warmth etc
A self who has a desire for wealth
A self who has a desire for status
A self who has a desire for a good job
A self who is dependent upon others

A self who is the bearer of mental properties
A self who is the bearer of spiritual properties
A self who is the result of social and historical reality
A self that is expressed by the body
A self that is mirrored by the community
A self that is a reaction to the world
Imagination
Public
Private
Public and Private
Independent
Dependent
Elusive
Arbitrary
A solitary intellect
A solitary ego
Solitary
A nothing
Hidden
A body
Complex
A soul
A mind
Vulnerable
A body amongst other bodies
A spiritual being
Achievement
All a matter of luck
A blank canvas
Failure
Security
A history
A story
Relationship
Virtue
Characteristics/Personality
Behaviour
Nurture
Support
Autonomy
Targets
Judge
Opportunities
Community
I do not know
I have not considered this question before

Appendix 6:

Prompts to the question: what is the purpose of education?

I do not know
I have not really considered this question before
The pursuit of the setting and reaching of targets
The pursuit of the best grades and examination results
The pursuit of providence – giving the students information about the world
The pursuit of community - allowing students to explore aspects of the world together
The pursuit of preparation - preparing students for the world of paid employment
The pursuit of success - providing students with the best opportunities to be successful
The pursuit of nurture - the cherishing and care of young people
The pursuit of positive characteristics - the forming of virtuous and considerate young people
The pursuit of life skills – proving students with the skills to live a healthy life in the modern world
The pursuit of conversation - opening minds, debating, questioning and evaluating
The pursuit of competition – providing students the opportunity to compete with one another to be the most successful
The pursuit of opportunity - providing students with as many opportunities as possible
The pursuit of growth - providing students with the place and space to grow
The pursuit of self-awareness – providing students with the place and space to question who we are
The pursuit of our highest happiness
The pursuit of wisdom
The pursuit of facts
The pursuit of intelligence
The pursuit of truth
The pursuit of seeing
The pursuit of rational action
The pursuit of imagination
The pursuit of knowing and overcoming our vulnerability and ignorance
The pursuit of knowing our vulnerability and ignorance
The pursuit of union between the knower and the known – to participate in each subject - to contemplate the subject
The pursuit of separation between the knower and the known – to stand apart from each subject, to be detached from the subject
The pursuit of exploring the questions that our intelligence will never fully discover or exhaust
The pursuit of accountability – both of teacher and student
The pursuit of a good work ethic
The pursuit of praise and blame for work - rewards and punishment
The pursuit of correct answers
The pursuit of assessment – to assess what is known and is what it not known

The pursuit of memory – to provide students with the skills to help them remember facts
The pursuit of the right answers to exam questions
The pursuit of production – to provide the skills to help students be productive
The pursuit of technical skills
The pursuit of excellence
The pursuit of applying intelligence towards a common good
The pursuit of applying creativity towards a common good
The pursuit of applying knowledge towards a common good
The pursuit of engaging students in what to think
The pursuit of engaging students in how to think
The pursuit of reflective thinking
The pursuit of creating individual values
The pursuit of creating universal values
The pursuit of seeing, discovering or recognising individual values
The pursuit of seeing, discovering or recognising universal values

Appendix 7:

Questions for Interview 2

1. To what degree do you think that policy makers, school leaders and teachers should consider and explore the concept of ‘self?
2. To what degree do you think that policy makers, school leaders and teachers should consider and explore the ‘purpose of education?
3. To what degree do you think there is a link between the question of self and the purpose of education?
4. Do you think that policy makers, school leaders and teachers do explore these questions enough?
5. Do you think that there is a true or definite concept of ‘self?
6. To what degree does it matter if there is a true of definite concept of ‘self’?
7. Do you think that there is a true or definite concept of ‘the purpose of education’?
8. To what degree does it matter if there is a true of definite concept of ‘the purpose of education’?
9. On a personal basis, to what degree would you consider these interviews to be fruitful in your own thinking?