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**How can a teacher of students with SEMHD unhide
moral value?**

(A Wittgenstein-influenced perspective)

by

Bernard Andrews

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

SOUTHAMPTON EDUCATION SCHOOL

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**HOW CAN A TEACHER OF STUDENTS WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND
MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES UNHIDE MORAL VALUE? (A WITTGENSTEIN-
INFLUENCED PERSPECTIVE)**

Bernard Andrews

This thesis proposes and exemplifies a philosophical method for untangling moral confusions faced by teachers, specifically of students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties [SEMHD].

D. Z. Phillips (1979), following the philosophical approach of Ludwig Wittgenstein, believed that teachers generally command a clear view of moral value in education; that is, in any given situation, it is normally clear, or obvious to us what *we ought to do*. He, again following the lead of Wittgenstein, suggests that what we consider to be ethical or philosophical problems are just confusions caused by our inability to see the situation clearly.

This thesis contends that such confusions arise because moral value has become *hidden* by a misplaced desire for foundational facts, or certainty. This desire is misplaced because moral value is absolute value, and this can only be *shown* and not *said*. Any belief that there are moral facts (in an absolute sense) is based on a philosophical illusion and results in various forms of dogmatism. Therefore, the recognition, or un hiding of moral value is a methodological issue, in that it requires us to develop a *way of looking* at problems that necessarily involves the virtues of being tentative, of recognising the incompleteness of our utterances, of humility. This methodological approach is best described by Simone Weil's (1951, 2005) notion of *paying attention*, and it is work that needs to be undergone on one's *self*. To respond to a situation correctly is to recognise (and accept) its contingency, and thus ascribe absolute (i.e. moral) value to all aspects of it. However, when we hide this contingency behind a veil of one's own expectations, of one's own dogma, we can only ascribe relative value to it. Thus, ethical confusions are like visual illusions that are solved by looking at them from different aspects.

In the first half of the thesis, this philosophical method is developed referencing relevant literature. In the second half, that method is demonstrated in an ethnographic study of one teacher-researcher's experiences teaching students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

CONTENTS

Contents	i
List of Tables	iii
List of Figures	iv
Declaration of authorship	v
Acknowledgements	vi
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Orientation	1
1.2 Concerning methodology.....	8
1.3 A justification of the research.....	13
1.4 Where this work fits in to theoretical research concerning the ethics of education....	16
2. The philosophical investigation and review of the literature	19
2.1 To respond to a situation correctly (to pay attention) is to recognise its contingency; and thus, ascribe absolute value to all aspects of it.....	19
2.2 ...But when we hide this contingency behind a veil of our own expectations, we can only ascribe relative value to it.....	38
2.3 Education is learning to pay attention: an ethics of responding	62
3. Methodology.....	76
3.1 Theoretical assumptions and observations from Chapter Two that are relevant to the methodology.....	77
3.2 The research design and techniques.....	80
3.3 Ethical and Practical Issues	84
3.4 How my research can be extrapolated to different contexts.....	87
4. Ethnography	91
4.1 Me	92
4.2 Matt	99
4.3 Marky	105
4.4 Lucia.....	112
4.5 Joan.....	120
5. Philosophical Analysis of the Ethnography.....	135
5.1 To respond to a situation correctly (to pay attention) is to recognise its contingency; and thus, ascribe absolute value to all aspects of it.....	135
5.2 ...But when we hide this contingency behind a veil of our own expectations, we can only ascribe relative value to it.....	145

5.3 *Education is learning to pay attention: an ethics of responding*163

6. Conclusions168

6.1 *The Myth of Sisyphus*168

6.2 *Further questions*170

6.3 *A final observation*172

References.....175

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Concerning the difference between ‘a relative sense’ and ‘an absolute sense’	32
Table 2: A truth-table concerning the logical relationship between the following propositions: ‘the child is dyslexic’ and ‘their work should be printed on yellow paper’	40
Table 3: A truth-table concerning the logical relationship between the following propositions: ‘the child is dyslexic’ and ‘their work should be printed on yellow paper’ and ‘the yellow paper might embarrass the child’	41
Table 4: Applying the moral virtues to teaching (Fallona 2000)	62
Table 5: A truth-table concerning the following propositions: ‘A student is in the IC’; and ‘they are naughty’	145
Table 6: A truth-table concerning the following propositions: ‘A student is in the IC’; ‘their behaviour has improved’; and ‘they are naughty’	146
Table 7: Concerning various implied aims of the IC	150
Table 8: Concerning examples of rule changes during the conversation with Marky	160

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The 'ambiguous cylinder' illusion (Sugihara 2016)	10
Figure 2 'It can be seen as a rabbit's head or a duck's' (Wittgenstein 1968, p.194).....	43
Figure 3: An example of how we taught the students to follow the language-games.....	97

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Bernard Andrews declare that the thesis entitled *How can a teacher of students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties unhide moral value? (A Wittgenstein-influenced perspective)* and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signed:

Date:

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1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis proposes and exemplifies a philosophical method for untangling moral confusions faced by teachers, specifically of students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties [SEMHD]. I argue that such confusions arise because moral value has become *hidden* because of a misplaced desire for foundational facts, or certainty. I argue that this desire is misplaced because moral value is absolute value, and this can only be *shown* and not *said*, *recognised* but not *pointed out*. Any belief that there are moral facts (in an absolute sense) is based on a philosophical illusion and results in various forms of dogmatism. Therefore, the recognition, or unhiding of moral value is a methodological one, in that it requires us to develop a particular *way of looking* at problems that necessarily involves the virtues of being tentative, of recognising the incompleteness of our utterances, of humility. I argue that this methodological approach is best described by Simone Weil's (2005) notion of *paying attention*, and it is work that needs to be undergone on one's *self*.

1.1 Orientation

I begin this chapter by setting out the problem, providing some preliminary definitions and providing the background for the thesis. The second section solely concerns where this research fits in methodologically. This is a crucial section given this thesis entirely concerns the development of a philosophical method. Here, I also explain my research question, and sub-questions. The third section is a justification of the research. The final section concerns where this work fits into theoretical research. This provides a neat segue into the next chapter.

1.11 Some preliminary definitions and the research question

I shall begin by discussing the definition of *Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Difficulties*, then I shall discuss the meaning of the phrase *moral value*; finally, I shall discuss the idea of *unhiding*. Given the philosophical nature of this thesis, the uses and meanings of these terms will obviously be discussed at length throughout, but it would seem useful to provide the reader with some preliminary definitions to get started.

Concerning the definition of SEMHD/BESD

The label *SEMHD* was adopted in the 2014 *Special Educational Needs and Disability [SEND] Code of Practice* (DfE and DoH, 2015) and replaced the term 'behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' [BESD]. Cole and Knowles (2011) and Visser (2002) preferred the ordering 'SEBD' to 'BESD' because they think it wiser to draw attention to *social, emotional* and, at times, *biological/genetic* factors before the behavioural ones (Knowles *et al.*, 2011), and perhaps the UK

2 Introduction

government's decision to drop the word 'behaviour' from their term reflects similar concerns. There has been much discussion over these difficulties and the usefulness of such labels (Upton 1978; Needs 1978; Smith & Thomas 1993; Cooper 1996). Cole (2015, p.7) sums up the current situation concisely:

Providing succinct definitions is difficult although the inter-connectedness of disruptive behaviour in schools and emotional and psychological issues has been seen for many decades. Educationalists often resist the 'medical' language (associated with 'deficits' and 'disease') of 'conduct disorder' or 'oppositional defiance disorder', preferring other terms such as, in the early 2000s, 'behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' [BESD]. However, there is agreement that children at risk of exclusion display a lack of SEBS [Social, emotional and behavioural skills] which place many within the categories of mental health disorders, as defined in ICD-10 and DSM-V. This situation is reflected in the new term for 'BESD'.

Thus, for the sake of argument, I shall use the current term SEMHD, but on occasion may use the term BESD if the use of the newer term appears anachronistic (i.e. if events being described were pre-2014) or if the research referred specifically to BESD. At this stage, I do not want to try to provide a strict operational definition of either term. This is partly because, as mentioned above, it is extremely difficult to do so; partly because the analysis of such concepts is central to my strategy for researching the question; partly because I am concerned about the 'medicalisation of naughtiness' (Macleod, 2010) (an issue I will discuss in the literature review); and partly because it seems contrary to my desire to concentrate on the 'particular' to give a generalised definition of the students I have taught, all of whom were very much individuals. At this stage, the main justification for using the terms is that the students I taught were all labelled with (what was then called) BESD (and what would now be called SEMHD) and in each case, this was cited as a reason for their being placed in the centre.

Concerning the definition of moral value

Much of this thesis hangs on how we define and identify moral value, so my definition here will only be brief. The terms *moral*, *ethical*, and *virtuous* are indeterminate in their distinctions and frequently interchangeable, as are *moral value*, *ethical value*, and *virtue*. I do not want to impose any falsely strict definitions at this stage, but I shall take as my starting point, Wittgenstein's (1993) *lecture on ethics*. Wittgenstein (1993) began with Moore's (2004) definition of ethics and expanded upon it:

Now instead of saying "Ethics is the enquiry into what is good" I could have said, Ethics is the enquiry into what is valuable, or, into what is really important, or I could have said Ethics is the enquiry into the meaning of life, or into what makes life worth living, or into the right way of living. I believe if you look at all these phrases you will get a rough idea as to what it is that Ethics is concerned with.

This is my starting point for my definition of moral value: that which is valuable; really (or most) important; the meaning of life. In the second chapter I shall explore this definition in detail.

Concerning the definition of *unhide*

In this thesis, I have a quite specific meaning in mind when I use the word *unhide*, but in order to explain that, I first need to provide an introduction to what I mean by the word *hidden*. When I talk to other teachers about philosophy, I am often confronted with a slightly mocking attitude. According to those with this attitude, philosophy consists of asking a series of stupid questions. They imagine a philosopher is the kind of person, who when asked to lend a pen, replies, ‘but what *is* a pen?’ or ‘how do you *really* know it is a pen?’ According to those with this attitude, philosophy largely consists in exaggerating one’s intonation of the words ‘*is*’ and ‘*really*’. Unfortunately, this description of philosophy is often very accurate. Consider the following remark by Wittgenstein (1977, §467):

I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again “I know that that’s a tree”, pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: “This fellow isn’t insane. We are only doing philosophy.”

If, in *everyday life*, someone were to ask me, I would reply, ‘of course it’s a pen! Don’t be daft!’ Someone less irritable than myself may offer some form of rudimentary response, ‘if it writes, then it’s a pen’. The problem with this is our pretend philosopher, our *sophist*, then has the person in their trap, and can provide counter-examples to their definitions and drag the conversation on and on. We feel as if we ought to be able to answer the sophist by digging down and pulling out the *essence* of a pen, but any definition we offer can be shown to be wrong in some way. Similarly, we feel as if we ought to be able to *prove* we know it’s a pen, but are stumped when the sophist throws philosophical scepticism at us. The answers to the sophist’s questions appear, in a peculiar way, *hidden* from view.

For they see in the essence, not something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies beneath the surface. Something that lies within, which we see when we look into the thing, and which an analysis digs out.

‘*The essence is hidden from us*’: this is the form our problem now assumes. We ask: “What is language?”, “What is a proposition?” And the answer to these questions is to be given once for all; and independently of any future experience. (Wittgenstein, 1967, §92)

In this situation, if I were then pressed on the matter - ‘yes but how do you *know* it *really* is a pen?’ - I would probably feel somewhat frustrated. If I had the patience, I would ask them why they are asking the question. My reason for asking them this question would be to establish their motivations. If I felt the questioner was just trying to be clever, the ‘don’t be daft!’ response, if said with enough good humour, would normally be enough. If it were one of my school students, I might take the question seriously if I felt they were genuinely puzzled by the issue. And this is the real question here: why might someone *genuinely* be puzzled by these issues? How might it have come about that someone *genuinely* does not know whether they know a pen is really a pen? I do not think that, in reality, many philosophers entertain any such doubts about the existence of pens in *real life*. However,

4 Introduction

when it comes to matters of ethics, it often seems perfectly acceptable to doubt whatsoever one likes. Why is this the case?

One reason for this doubt must be the fact that there are occasions when we ask ourselves, ‘What ought I to do?’ Pring (2001, p.250) describes the response to this question as being characterised as ‘Moral deliberation... (where the ‘ought’ refers to an ethically significant situation rather than to a merely practical one)’. He argues that situations requiring such moral deliberation do not often arise because ‘For most of our lives, our daily actions and relationships spring from the sort of people we are, the forms of life to which we belong with all its built-in norms and values’ (p.250). Pring (2001, p.250) argues that moral deliberation is required ‘when underlying norms and values (previously only implicit) are challenged or eroded in the very social foundations of one’s practice ... One then asks the question “What ought I to do?”, seeking genuine reasons.’ However, D. Z. Phillips (1979) frames it in a subtly different way. Following the philosophical approach of Ludwig Wittgenstein, he believed teachers generally command a clear view of moral values in education; in any given situation, it is normally clear, or obvious to us what *we ought to do*. He, again following the lead of Wittgenstein, suggests that what we consider to be ethical or philosophical problems are just *confusions* caused by our inability to see the situation clearly. These confusions lead to the feeling that moral value is in some way *hidden* from educators (and the students). However, if moral values are hidden from us, we cannot blame the world for covering them up. It is *we* that are doing the hiding:

It is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off. (Wittgenstein, 1967, §103)

Thus, by using the word *unhide*, I am suggesting that this is work that needs to be done *on ourselves*.

The research question

Phillips (1979) writes that the teaching of, what he calls ‘problem children’ (which, given the jarring and outdated nature of the term, even for 1979, I shall translate as ‘students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties’ [SEMHD]) *can* pose philosophical confusions for teachers. Given I have spent much of my teaching career, working with students with SEMHD, this became my focus. The research question therefore is, ‘How might the teacher of students with SEMHD *unhide* moral value?’

1.12 Background and setting

My reasons for undertaking this research are based on my experiences as a teacher. I have been teaching for fourteen years, seven of which have been with students on the margins, those either in danger of permanent exclusion or already permanently excluded. In that time, I have heard a great number of moral justifications given for all sorts of initiatives, methods, approaches, punishments, and uses of authority, and I never could decide what made a justification correct or not. I have also

provided moral justifications for a great number of actions, punishments and approaches, and then later changed my mind. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of being a teacher of students on the margins is that one is constantly telling the students to do things they do not want to do, and so one cannot help but question oneself. After all these years, I feel less sure about my decisions than when I first started.

As aforementioned, the aim of this research is to produce a philosophical method to approach and *solve* the philosophical problems surrounding ethical dilemmas in education. Thus, this entire thesis is, in one sense, a methodology. To explain the logic governing the methodology and theoretical basis of this research, I need to further explain the nature of the problems to which I was trying to find a solution. I also need to confess the perambulatory nature of what lead to what I perceive as being the method to solve such problems.

A political problem concerning social justice?

I began teaching in Southampton and from the outset, wanted to do something about what I saw as the obvious inequalities in society. Thus, I worked in schools in poorer areas, and after a few years learning the trade, I sought out roles working with the more disenfranchised students. After running various citywide projects for students in danger of exclusion, I was asked to go to work at the local Pupil Referral Unit¹ (PRU). It was whilst working at the PRU that the problem which spawned this thesis first came to light: here, in front of me, were the children in the toughest situations, the ones I had sought out to help, but I felt I was doing nothing of any note to support them. I did not know what *I ought to be doing*. The desire to find a solution to this problem was the motivation for me studying for the PhD. Then, I saw the problem as a political one: I blamed the government and the education system for these children being in these situations; I blamed the psychologists and the doctors for having no solutions to the many difficulties the children faced; but most of all I blamed myself for not knowing what to do about it. My original thesis was purely focused on social justice, and I was hoping to find some small thing I could be *sure* ought to be done. But despite intense research, I found nothing for which I felt passionate, or confident enough to argue.

The setting for the data collection

Personal circumstances and a good job offer gave me the opportunity to move back to London. I became the manager of what was known as the ‘Intervention Centre’, which was attached to a secondary school. This was where my data collection took place. The centre was set up for students who were in danger of being permanently excluded from school. My understanding of the situation

¹ A Pupil Referral Unit is an educational establishment specifically tasked with fulfilling a local council’s obligation to provide education for those who cannot attend mainstream schools either because they have been excluded, they are too sick or otherwise unable.

6 Introduction

was that the school, having recently been taken over by an academy group², wanted to reduce their high exclusion rates, and therefore needed a place for those students who would otherwise have been excluded. Ostensibly the aim was to return as many as possible to the mainstream, and though we returned most, unfortunately some remained with us for the rest of their school career. The mainstream school itself was relatively small; about two thirds of the students were white British, with a third from diverse minority ethnic backgrounds. According to the Ofsted reports³ of that time, there were a high proportion of students for whom English was an additional language, and the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals was much higher than the national average. Ofsted stated that the number of students with statements of special educational needs was high, and most of those were identified as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Ofsted did not judge the school to be performing well. The centre which I ran comprised, at most, fifteen students at any one time. For most of the three years I ran it, there was just myself and one other working there. I was responsible for every aspect of the young people's education, the teaching of all their subjects, and all their pastoral support, except where we could enlist (for free) the support of outside agencies.

An issue concerning the techniques of teaching students with BESD?

With the new head of centre position, I believed I might now be able to do something worthwhile. After some difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff, we eventually employed Jonny to help. Jonny was a teaching assistant, who had initially worked with us on a temporary and part-time contract before leaving for a job in sales. After a year, he gave up this (much more lucrative) career to return to the centre on a full-time basis. The three years we worked together were a period of constant experimentation, and trial and error. There were a few occasions in which we felt like we had, what might be called, success, but mostly we felt like it was utter failure. I visited other PRUs and organisations that had been cited as being successful, but I just found places which were good at fudging the figures. The realities felt more or less the same as at our centre: we were at the mercy of the children; we could only help if they decided they wanted our assistance, and in that sense, we were offering nothing more than regular schools. The ideas I was reading about for my thesis had changed from being about the political situation, to being more about technical matters of teaching students with BESD, but I still felt the enormous sense of dissatisfaction. My anxiety about not knowing what I ought to be doing seemed to get worse the more I read. Eventually, I decided to collect some data anyway, so I arranged to film the conversations that form part of the data for this thesis. At this stage I was still unhappy with my research question, so I decided to conduct the conversations simply as

² An organisation that is independent of local government control and can run more than one school.

³ Ofsted are the national inspection agency in the UK. They produce publicly available reports of their inspection visits.

research conversations rather than interviews. I did not know what it was I wanted to know. I did a little pilot and filmed a conversation with one of the students, and I read a bit more, and I thought about the things the student had said. Even though I had only spoken to one student for half an hour, the content of that conversation was fascinating. It was not so much that we were chatting about anything in particular, and it was not that it was a particularly special conversation. Jonny and I spent every day with these students, so we chatted to them all the time about all kinds of things. What was fascinating was simply listening more carefully than normal to what had been said. Whilst transcribing it, I listened over and over, thinking about it, and placing it in the context of everything I knew about the student. I kept looking for answers in the conversations, but every time I thought I had found something, I realised I had merely imposed something upon the words I had transcribed.

A philosophical issue

Although I was no clearer about how these conversations would solve my anxiety about not knowing what I ought to be doing, I was somewhat buoyed by this initial effort. Towards the end of the summer term, 2013, I arranged to film some more conversations upon my return from the half-term holiday. During that holiday, I was sitting on a beach, and despite it being 30 degrees, and despite my having nothing to do, nor any way of doing anything even if there had been something I wanted to do, I was plagued by worries about the young people I taught: ‘What am I going to do about *A*? She doesn’t listen to what anyone says. What will she possibly do next year when she leaves school? She’s been kicked off every course she’s ever joined! I hope *B* cheers up. He seems permanently unhappy. Is *C* likely to try to kill herself again? Should I try and check up on her? Is there anything I can do about it? Is *D* going to end up in prison?’ Again, I felt as if I had no idea what I was doing in my job, what I was trying to achieve, and whether I was getting it all wrong. I stared out at the sea.

In the city, London especially, it is not uncommon to believe oneself omnipotent. You cannot see the horizon. But there on the beach, I could feel the dome of the sky arching above me. I felt impossibly small and insignificant. I felt existentially terrified, but along with that terror was an incredible sense of freedom. I was insignificant – no amount of shouting, cajoling, data-analysis, or implementation-of-strategies was going to change that. It was a strange feeling, and was somehow the solution to my anxiety. When I got back, I filmed the conversations, but with the accompanying memory of a wonderful sense of my own insignificance. The conversations were rambling, and often purposeless, but they seemed to capture the students as they were, and though I did not know why, that seemed enough. I still could not quite put my finger on what it was that had changed. When I felt anxious, I knew it was because I was not seeing the situation clearly. When I felt free from my anxiety I knew it had something to do with my sense of insignificance, and something to do with the children. Previously, being at the mercy of the children seemed to be a problem, but now it seemed to be the whole point. It was the very thing that made the job wonderful.

My role at the school in London came to an end, and I moved to Spain for a year, and read more, and listened to the conversations repeatedly. Gradually my thoughts crystallised. I returned from Spain and then grappled with various ways of communicating these thoughts, until I arrived at the form of this current work. I remembered reading the article by D. Z. Phillips (1979) and realised that the germ of the idea lay in there.

1.2 Concerning methodology

If methodology concerns the ‘use of various philosophical tools to help clarify the process of inquiry and provide insight into the assumptions on which it conceptually rests’ (Kincheloe & Berry 2004, p.8) then methodology is an accurate representation of this thesis. In this section, I shall briefly describe the approach taken here. Jackson (2013) describes the crucial aspects of methodology as being *positionality* and *relationality*, *ontology*, and *epistemology*. If I briefly describe what I mean by a *Wittgenstein-influenced methodology*, hopefully the reader will be able to see how each of these aspects will be covered.

1.21 What do I mean by Wittgenstein-influenced?

There has been a huge amount of scholarship influenced by Wittgenstein. Within Wittgenstein scholarship itself, there have also been many different (and loose) groups – the initial students of Wittgenstein – G. E. M. Anscombe, Norman Malcolm, M. O’Connor Drury; the Swansea school of Rush Rhees, Peter Winch, D. Z. Phillips, H. O. Mounce; the ‘New Wittgensteinians’ of Stanley Cavell, James Conant, Cora Diamond; and that is not to mention the famous commentators on Wittgenstein not belonging to such a ‘group’ P. M. S. Hacker, G. P. Baker, Anthony Kenny and Marie McGinn. Of all these people, the only ones I shall not draw upon frequently are the ‘New Wittgensteinians’ on the grounds that I do find their interpretation of Wittgenstein’s work appealing (see McGinn 2001; Hacker 2000; Hacker 2003 for examples of disagreements). Within the philosophy of education specifically, there has been a surprisingly large amount written which is specifically influenced by Wittgenstein, for example by Paul Smeyers who has also written with Paul Standish. I inevitably cite these writers. Wittgenstein’s influence has also been felt strongly in psychological, psychotherapeutic and psychiatric circles, in the work of Len Bowers, John M. Heaton, and M. O’Connor Drury. Given the SEMHD angle of my research, I shall look to these writers for Wittgensteinian solutions to confusions I encounter. Perhaps the best way of describing what I mean by ‘Wittgenstein-influenced’ is in terms of the genealogical reproduction of ideas – Wittgensteinian ‘memes’ as it were.

There are several different methods of research used in the investigation of teacher ethics. Campbell (2008) identifies three broadly distinct forms: Philosophical works that investigate concepts (Sockett, 1990; Carr, 2000; Hansen, 2001; Pring, 2001a); empirical studies that investigate how philosophical questions are illuminated by the moral practice of teachers (Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1993; Richardson and Fenstermacher, 2001; Buzzelli, 2002; Campbell, 2003a); and thirdly, there are casebooks, the aim of which is to provoke discussion and challenge for the reader (Hostetler, 1997; Hare and Portelli, 2003; Strike and Soltis, 2015).

Wittgenstein (1967) saw philosophy itself as a kind of method: ‘There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies’ (§133) Again, he said, ‘The philosopher’s treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness’ (§255). What I am looking for in this thesis is the correct ‘treatment’ for ethical dilemmas, or one’s *not knowing what one ought to do*. What this amounts to is simply demonstrating a series of connections that enable us to see the issue clearly; I believe the solution to a philosophical problem lies in making statements that are so boringly obvious that the real difficulty is in reconstructing the problem in the first place.

1.22 The method described in this thesis

The method I employ to illuminate the nature of moral values in education is described by the following quotation from Wittgenstein (1967, §122):

122. A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words. —Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in ‘seeing connexions’. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*.

The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a ‘Weltanschauung’?)

My aim is to provide a ‘perspicuous representation’ by investigating the way in which words are *used*, (and how perhaps they ought not to be used). To get a clear view of the uses of words, I shall seek out and invent ‘intermediate cases’ – examples, research, case studies, analogies and thought experiments, which bring to light different connections. All these different connections then provide us with a ‘weltanschauung’, a world-view, which hopefully should be clearer than the confused view with which I started.

This *Wittgenstein-influenced*⁴ method in this thesis is analogous to solving a visual illusion. The *problem* lies in seeing two apparently contradictory, or mutually exclusive things at the same time. The question is then, *how can both be true?* Take the ‘ambiguous cylinder’ illusion below by Kokichi Sugihara (2016) (Figure 1). The illusion appears to show shapes which are cuboid when viewed directly, but the mirror image of which appear to be cylindrical.

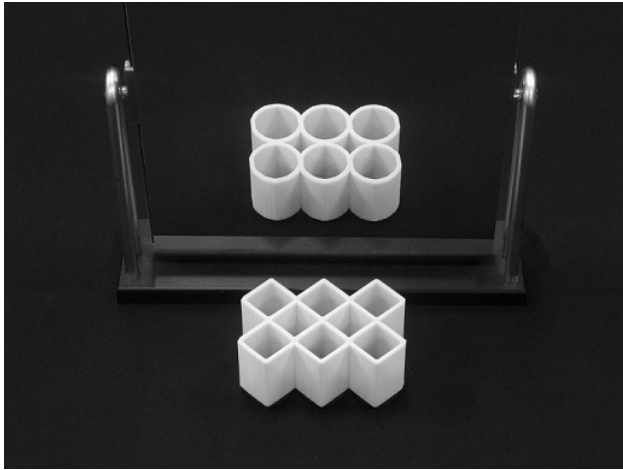


Figure 1: The ‘ambiguous cylinder’ illusion (Sugihara, 2016)

Because the viewer’s gaze is fixed, s/he is unable to ascertain the *true* shape of the object. One can only solve the problem by viewing the shape from different angles. The same is true of philosophical problems, and in the cases which I am studying, problems concerning moral values. How, for example, can it be true that on the one hand the consequences of an action appear to be morally relevant, but on the other hand, we cannot know what the consequences will be and so cannot be held responsible for them? How can events be causally determined, yet we have free will? How can we search for objective truth, and yet the inner minds of others be hidden from us? How can we feel so certain that something is wrong (or right) and yet be unable to convince others of our position by appealing to facts? The answer to each of these problems is to change the way one looks at the problem, to see the problem from a different *aspect*. Once we can do that, we can then see the reasons for the apparent contradictions.

The refusal or unwillingness to change the way one is looking is the conceit alluded to in the thesis title. I am not interested in assigning any blame; as shall be shown, I am as guilty as anyone. The hope is simply to bring some aspects of these confusions to light. Thus, the method of my thesis simply consists in my careful looking at the object of my investigation. This careful looking, is informed by Simone Weil’s (2005) notion of *attention*:

⁴ I would not want to be arrogant enough to simply call it a *Wittgensteinian* method, as I am certain I am incapable of such a thing.

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by the object. It means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him, without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object which is to penetrate it. (p.232)

From this careful looking, this *paying attention*, I make twenty-two observations relating to the ethics of teaching students with SEMHD. Individually, most of these observations are so obvious that a reader can be forgiven for wondering what the point of them is. This is, in my view, a virtue of philosophical work. However, together, these twenty-two observations amount to a clear picture of the object being discussed, and thus the illusions that bothered us will no longer do so. The conclusion of this method is that moral values are only hidden, when we fail to pay attention to our students and the language-games that they are playing.

Positionality and relationality, ontology, and epistemology

Hopefully, it should be a little clearer to the reader how positionality and relationality, and ontology and epistemology are intrinsically relevant to the study to be undertaken. The whole process concerns moving around the object of study, to see it from different angles, and considering one's own *position* in *relation* to that which is being studied. In doing so, one is also considering the nature of educational reality and different perceptions of it. And on a more fundamental level, the question of what one *ought to be doing*, and the justifications for one's answers are epistemological— what is the epistemological basis for one's moral knowledge and understanding? These concerns also informed the way in which I chose to break down my research question sub-questions.

1.23 The research sub-questions and the structure of the thesis

The research sub-questions

My thesis is arranged in two halves. The first-half (chapters 1 and 2) is the philosophical investigation in which I establish my twenty-two observations (numbered from A to V). In the second-half (chapters 3, 4 and 5), these observations are exemplified in the context of my work as a manager of a centre for students who were in danger of being permanently excluded from school. This exemplification takes place as an ethnography (chapter 3 is the methodology, 4 the ethnography itself). Chapters 2 and 5 follow a parallel structure: there are twenty-two remarks divided into three sections, each section devoted to a sub-question.

1. What is moral value?

To unhide moral value, it seems reasonable enough to establish what moral value is. Thus, my starting point is Meno's paradox. This was chosen because it leads us perfectly into the kind of philosophical illusion that results in value becoming hidden. In the dialogue, Meno asks Socrates whether virtue can be taught, and Socrates replies that since he does not know what virtue is, he is unable to answer the question. I show how this paradox is a philosophical illusion and thus a distraction. I conclude that to respond to a situation correctly is to *pay attention* (Weil, 1951), to recognise (and accept) its contingency, and thus ascribe absolute (i.e. moral) value to all aspects of it. In this section, I explicitly discuss and disentangle the notion of the teacher's *self*. This section is the most explicit treatment of *positionality* and *relationality*.

2. How does moral value become hidden?

Once I have established the nature of moral value, I can then describe further ways in which we falsely designate necessity, and in doing so, throw a veil of expectations over the contingency of the world, and thus moral value. In this section, I discuss four archetypal dogmas: authoritarianism, causation, logical-positivism and emotivism. I show how the necessity that each of these dogmas relies upon can be disputed, and how each dogma can lead to injustice because it prevents us from all the different *aspects* (Wittgenstein 1967) of a situation.

3. How do we unhide moral value?

Finally, I return to the question posed to Socrates, *can we learn to be virtuous?* I describe the nature of the ethical *spirit* that we *show* when we recognise the contingent nature of the world.

The second-half: the ethnography and analysis

As described above, the philosophy research and the ethnographic research described in the second-half did not occur at separate times. Were I not producing this work for a PhD, it probably would have made more sense to combine the exemplifications with the philosophical investigations; they are making the same points but in different ways (rather than the examples being *proof* of the philosophy, or vice versa). Where the first-half of the thesis is *philosophical*, the second-half is *demonstrative*. However, to ensure I fulfil the academic requirements, I have separated the two so that the philosophical investigation might also act more clearly as my review of the literature.

The reader could be forgiven for seeing the second-half as something of an unnecessary add-on to the philosophy, but that would be to misconstrue the purpose of the thesis. The point of my research was to find out how to become a better teacher, a better person, by uncovering the moral values that had been hidden from me; the philosophy was the means to an end. This spirit of philosophical engagement is described by Wittgenstein in a letter he wrote to his friend Norman Malcolm in November of 1944 (Malcolm, 1958):

What is the use of studying philosophy if all that does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse question of logic, etc., if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious than any ... journalist in the use of the *dangerous* phrases such people use for their own ends? You see, I know that it's difficult to think *well* about 'certainty', 'probability', 'perception', etc. But it is, if possible, still more difficult to think, or *try* to think about your life & other people's lives. And the trouble is that thinking about these things it not *thrilling*, but often downright nasty. And when it's nasty then it's *most* important. (p.39)

The ethnography itself could be described in various ways, and I shall discuss these in the methodology that precedes it. For the moment, it shall suffice to call it a *Philosophical Ethnography*. Feinberg (2006) describes such a work thus:

Philosophical ethnography acknowledges with conventional ethnography that traditional norms serve to anchor people's lives and that understanding such norms requires an understanding of the ways in which they work in context. However, it also allows, with applied philosophy, that norms are revisable in light of critical reflection. (p.10)

Whilst I would not entirely agree with his formulation (I would replace each use of the word 'norms' with 'interpretations of the norms', for reasons that will become clear later), his description does serve to legitimise this approach in terms of defining a clear role for philosophy alongside ethnography. The purpose of the ethnography is the same as for the philosophical investigation of the literature: my aim is to provide a clear picture of moral values in the education of students with SEMHD, but making observations from a variety of perspectives. The difference, however, is that in the philosophical part I am paying attention to the ideas of academics, and in the ethnography, I am paying attention to the students I taught. Following on from the Ethnography, I provide an analysis of the experiences under the same headings as in the philosophical first half.

1.3 A justification of the research

Here I shall provide the reason why I believe that this research is necessary, indicating where I think the gap in the research is, and why it needed to be filled.

1.31 Indicating a gap

There are four main reasons why I believe there to be a gap in the research concerning my research question and methodology.

Firstly, there is no work that looks at teacher ethics from a 'Wittgensteinian' perspective - though there is work that deals with related questions. (See Smeyers & Marshall 1995 and Standish et al. 2006 for a general Wittgensteinian perspective on a variety of related educational topics).

Secondly, this thesis deals with the ‘justification problem’ of the virtue theory approach, and other than Sockett (2012) there appears to be no work within the educational research community that specifically does this. There is much dealing with Virtue Theory (Fenstermacher, 1990, 2001, Sockett, 1990, 1993; Carr and Steutel, 1999; Carr, 2000; Hytten, 2015). While there is a little discussion of the virtue epistemology solution, none is from a Wittgensteinian perspective (Sockett does not consider Wittgenstein’s philosophy in his approach), and no work on Virtue Theory in the classroom specifically applied to students with ‘SEMHD’.

Thirdly, there has been research outside of education on the question a moral justifications (Nussbaum, 1988; Hursthouse, 1991; Slote, 2001; Swanton, 2003) but this has not been applied to classroom practice and has not been done from the perspective of the particular (as opposed to the universal).

Fourthly, Macleod *et al.* (2012) have also identified a gap in empirical research on the topic of teachers’ authority, which is one of the key concepts targeted in this thesis. They argue that ‘Such research might be used to substantiate the case for a broader conceptualisation of authority relations’ (Macleod *et al.* 2012, p. 1). Furthermore, Pace & Hemmings (2007) argue that ‘more research focused on classroom authority as a social construction is needed to address critical educational concerns for contemporary practitioners, policy makers, and researchers’ (p.4) because ‘The problems that plague public education will never be resolved until theorists, ideologues, and researchers acknowledge the fact that a good education simply is not possible without classroom authority relations that promote learning’ (p.22). Whilst I may not explicitly be researching ‘authority as a social construction’, I do believe that my work will have something to contribute to this discussion. Campbell (2013) also writes that there has been a huge body of scholarship since the nineties concerning ethics and teaching, much of it concerning social justice, or the moral education of the students, however...

Among others, Kenneth Strike, Hugh Sockett and Pamela LePage, and Gunnel Colnerud have separately criticized an absence of a rich moral or ethical language in the discourse on teaching and teacher education. Professional ethics, if addressed at all, is often discussed at a superficial and narrow level concerned with codes of teacher conduct and other formalized and legal requirements. ... a sound exploration and appreciation of the moral agency and ethical identity of the teacher, as these are reflected in the nuances of practice, should be fostered and honed.’ (pp. 414-415)

Fifthly, Yoda (2014, p.195) explicitly stated that further research concerning the connections between Wittgenstein (specifically Wittgenstein’s notion of grammar) and Weil would be beneficial to understanding Weil’s thesis of educational purpose. That is essentially what I hope to do here.

1.32 The value of the research – an example of a particular manner of investigation

As I have shown, this thesis entirely concerns method. Thus, I would argue that its contribution to knowledge is primarily methodological. It describes a particular way of approaching questions concerning moral value and removing the confusions from them. I believe that the philosophical method described herein can be applied to many different confusions that a teacher might face, and thus, could be enormously useful.

The value of a methodology concerning virtue is intrinsic. Firstly, it concerns an ethical question. If the issue is, as Phillips (1979) suggests, that the values or virtues according to which we ought to act are ‘hidden’, then it is important that they ought to be unhidden, and the reasons for them becoming hidden be made clear. If Pring (2001) is correct, removing the moral dimension from teaching will have, or already has had, dire consequences. Secondly, the methodological aspect is crucial. Pring (2000, p.89) writes that ‘without the explicit formulation of the philosophical background – with implications for verification, explanation, knowledge of reality – researchers may remain innocently unaware of the deeper meaning and commitments of what they say or how they conduct their research’.

Instrumentally speaking, for me, and therefore I suspect for others, confidence is a crucial element for managing behaviour. It is very difficult to have confidence in what one is doing if questions remain unanswered. If one stands in the classroom confused as to what one is doing, one is unable to be transparent in one’s communications and behaviour will suffer (Visser 2002) one’s integrity will be damaged (Macfarlane, 2004), and ultimately one will be a less effective educator.

Aside from the value of answering the question, I am in an enviable position to approach this question in the sense that I have worked with students with SEMHD for seven years, and I also have a philosophy background and therefore training and understanding across the various fields. The question is a philosophical one but it requires one to have a deep practical understanding of the nature and realities of the education of those with SEMHD.

I believe that the work of Wittgenstein has a great deal of applicability for this area. Although Wittgenstein never wrote anything explicitly about teacher ethics (and one could even argue that, according to his biography, he was a ‘bad example’ of teacher ethics [Monk 2012]) many of his ideas about what philosophy is, and how it could be done, are of the utmost importance here. The work concerning teacher ethics is disparate and multifarious. I thus believe it would be useful to be able to find an approach to the question which could combine the various areas, and make work translatable among them.

1.33 Limitations

This is not a study about *how* to get students to be moral; nor is it directly about *why* I should try to get them to be moral; in fact, in one sense, it is not about *their* behaviour at all. This study concerns how I identify and express moral value, and thus is primarily about how teachers might do so. Of course, any conclusions will have a bearing on these other questions but it is important at the outset to be clear.

1.4 Where this work fits in to theoretical research concerning the ethics of education

Within the area of research into teacher ethics, the discussions have been very wide ranging, especially within the last thirty years or so. Campbell (2008) picks out 1990 as a watershed moment for research into the ethics of teaching, saying that there was a notable increase in writing on the subject after that year. She highlights the publishing of *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching* (Goodlad, 1991) as a possible trigger. Stengel and Tom (2006) noted that, following the publication of this book, scholars rapidly developed an interest in the moral basis of teaching. Since that date the scholarship has been multifarious.

Broadly speaking, philosophy divides up moral thinking into three types (Hursthouse 1999, p.1):

1. *A* is morally valuable because it will lead to *B* (*Consequentialist/Teleological*)
2. *A* is morally valuable because it is virtuous (*Virtue Ethics*)
3. *A* is morally valuable because it is in accordance with rule *f* (*Deontological*)

Some have taken the consequentialist approach and begun by trying to outline the principle aims of teaching, or from what teaching is, and then worked backwards. Examples include Higgins (2011) who begins with ‘self-cultivation’ (loc302) as his springboard and then works from there, or Kohl (1984) who assumes teaching to be ‘fundamentally altruistic and represents a desire to share what you value and empower others’ (p.7). Within literature concerning social justice education, such a view is common. The realm of teacher ethics has a long history of politically radical research, in modern times stemming from Freire (2000) (but harking back much further) and some theorists have advanced models of ‘social justice’ education (Beyer 1991; 1997; Slattery & Rapp 2003). Adams & Zúñiga (2016, p.97) describe social justice education as being, ‘based on a vision of society organised upon principles of social justice, and draws on a theory of oppression to analyse the ways in which societies fall short of such a vision’. This definition of social justice is *teleological* in that it conceives of social justice as a *telos*, or purpose of education. There is, however, often a very fuzzy line between teleological justifications and those based in virtue ethics. Hursthouse’s (1991) formulation of virtue theory, for example, is as follows:

- P1. An action is right iff⁵ it is what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances.
 P1a. A virtuous agent is one who acts virtuously, that is, one who has and exercises the virtues.
 P2. A virtue is a character trait a human being needs to flourish or live well.
 (pp.225-226)

According to this interpretation, it is not simply a matter of an agent acting virtuously, but an agent acting with traits that enable them to *flourish*. The term *flourish* seems to act as an aim, and indeed Aristotle referred to the aim of ethics as being *Eudaimonia*. Within education, this *telos* has been interpreted in several ways. Dewey (1997) for example referred to the purposes of education in terms of *growth* (for example p.84) and others have built upon this idea (Hansen, 1998, 2001). Others have talked in terms of the purpose being *liberty*: Rousseau (2010), Kant (2007), Newman (2015) and Mill (2015). Dewey (1944) and Gramsci (1971) relate this emancipatory *telos* of education to democracy: ‘But democracy, by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every “citizen” can “govern” and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this’ (Gramsci, 1971). More recently, in the hands of Kitchen (2014), the future liberty of the students becomes the justification for the authority of the teacher: ‘The authority for which I argue here is a stepping-stone towards intellectual freedom and emancipation’ (loc.213). Pring (2005) discusses the tension between the liberal and vocational *aims* of education asking ‘Ought not education, liberally conceived, also include vocational relevance and preparation?’ (p.79)

These are not views that are held unanimously, however. Elizabeth Campbell (2013) for example, believes that teaching as a moral practice, and social justice, are ultimately distinct aims that ought not be merged, despite contemporary trends to the contrary; this merger complicates the situation for teachers and distracts them from engaging with the real ethical aspects of their jobs. Rather than conceiving of social justice as the *aim* or *telos* of a teacher, one could instead conceive of it as a *virtue* of a teacher. Novak & Adams (2015) for example, point out that the term *social justice* was popularised by Pope Pius XI as a virtue not as a description of a just society. The roots of the term are in Aristotle’s virtue of ‘general justice’. Noddings (2013) again blurs the lines between the different kinds of justifications by making *caring* the focus of her ethics of teaching. Whether caring counts as a virtue is ambiguous, but Noddings’ approach is distinct in that it emphasises the importance of the response to the agents’ acts rather than the agents’ acts themselves.

Many have written about teacher ethics using an explicit virtue ethics framework (Carr 2000; Fenstermacher 1990; Richardson & Fenstermacher 2001; Sockett 1990; 1993) in certain cases grounding their discussions in a particular virtue such as fairness, integrity or the *phronesis* (practical

⁵ In philosophy ‘iff’ is short-hand for ‘if and only if’.

wisdom) required by the professionalism of the job (Macmillan, 1993; Sockett, 1993; Coombs, 1998; Lovat, 1998; Reitz, 1998; Haynes, 2002).

Some have written about teacher ethics using a more deontological framework, using the language of rights, principles and duties (Strike 1995; 1999). There are also various ethical documents that could arguably be said to contain *rules* (e.g. The BERA document (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012)). One could argue that the *policies* that schools use as their go-to source of justification are disputably more deontological than virtue based or consequentialist.

Other than the three broad areas of moral justification outlined above, some scholars have approached the same task from the psycho-philosophical tradition of Piaget and Kohlberg (1981) and their theories of moral development (Oser, 1994; Rest and Narvaez, 1994). Nucci (2001) and Watson & Ecken (2003) have looked at the issue from a socio-psychological perspective.

The approach I will be taking is somewhat different. Rather than beginning with aims, visions or consequences of education, I shall begin by asking ‘what is moral value?’ and build my picture from there.

2. THE PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 To respond to a situation correctly (to pay attention) is to recognise its contingency; and thus, ascribe absolute value to all aspects of it.

My argument in this section can be summarised as follows: to respond to a situation correctly (to pay attention) is to recognise (and accept) its contingency, and thus the absolute (moral) value to all aspects of it. However, recognising the contingency of a situation is inherently difficult: we are continually and repeatedly dogged by the confusion between recognising the contingency of a situation, and believing all of our facts to be dubitable (global scepticism). Such scepticism repeatedly rears its head in different forms, threatening to knock us off course. I start the discussion from Plato's *Meno*, in which Socrates is asked how we acquire virtue. Firstly, I want to show how moral value becomes hidden from us because we become side-tracked by not being able to justify how we know what virtue is. Then, using Wittgenstein's philosophy, I want to show how we can get back on track. I then provide an account of moral value as *absolute* value, during which we will notice the sceptical concerns, that initially derailed our search, crop up again in a different guise and need to be dealt with.

2.11 How misplaced scepticism hides moral value

A. In trying to establish whether virtue can be learned, we become distracted by the question 'how do we know what virtue is?'⁶

In Plato's dialogue, *Meno* begins by asking Socrates whether virtue can be taught. Socrates tells him he does not know what virtue is and this is prohibitive to further investigation since...

...a man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he does not know? He cannot search for what he knows—since he knows it, there is no need to search—nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for. (Plato et al. 1997, p.880)

⁶ As aforementioned, the twenty-two observations are numbered A to V, of which this is the first.

In this section, I argue that whilst this paradox gives rise to important questions, I believe many philosophers have become fooled into trying to answer the wrong one. The way in which we formulate the paradox makes this clear. Traditionally, the paradox has been formulated as follows:

- There is an implicit premise: *Either you know X or you do not know X.*

And then the explicit premises:

1. If you know X, then you do not need to learn X
2. If you do not know X, then you do not know whether you have learnt X.
3. Therefore, either you do not need to learn X, or you do not know whether you have learnt X.

Although the dialogue begins by discussing the nature of *virtue*, this paradox has been applied to all knowledge. For example:

1. If I know when the battle of Hastings occurred, then I do not need to learn when the battle of Hastings occurred.
2. If I do not know when the battle of Hastings occurred, then I won't know whether I have learnt when the battle of Hastings has occurred.

Formulated like this, it appears what we're looking for is a criterion of *knowing*. If I do not have a criterion for whether I know something, then I cannot say whether I know it. This is an (if not *the*) archetypal *deep* philosophical question. But there is another class of questions however. If I am helping someone find their keys, the important question is not, *how do you know what 'your keys' are?* But *what do they look like?* (and then *where did you last have them?*) There is no paradox here because we have a criterion of knowing. These second and third questions are not, what one would call, 'deep'. They are *practical* questions.

The title of my thesis - *how can we unhide moral values?* - indicates I am more concerned with the *practical*, rather than the *deep* question. The assumption here is that we *already know* what moral value is, but we've managed to hide it from ourselves. Unfortunately, one of the main reasons why we need to answer the *practical* question is because of our misunderstanding of the *deep* one. My thesis is that much philosophy after Descartes has become obsessed with the confused version of the first question at the expense of the second (and third) and thus we have not even begun looking for our keys.

Such confusions about *how we know things* arise because of the belief that all facts are dubitable. Bernstein (1983) describes how this gives rise to 'Cartesian anxiety'. Descartes (1996) begins his meditations by arguing he has reason to doubt *all* of the information that comes to him through his senses. He provides three reasons: firstly, his senses frequently fool him; secondly, he could be dreaming; and thirdly, he might be being fooled by an evil demon - the modern-day equivalent would be the idea that we live in a virtual reality, akin to that in the film *The Matrix*. Descartes finds the only

thing he can be sure of is that he doubts, and if he does doubt, there must be a thinking thing that doubts. Even if he is being fooled by an evil demon (or living in a virtual reality) then there must be a mind that is being fooled. Thus, he concludes that he does exist. This leaves us with the *sceptical possibility* that any facts, beyond our own existence, are dubitable. Consider the following formulation of the problem:

1. If I cannot be certain I am not living in a virtual reality, then I do not know my hands are real.
2. I cannot be certain I am not living in a virtual reality.
3. Therefore, I do not know I have hands.

Moore's (1939) response to this was simply to shift the argument, turn it from a *modus ponens* into a *modus tollens* and assume I know I have hands:

1. If I cannot be certain I am not living in a virtual reality, then I do not know my hands are real.
2. I *know* my hands are real.
3. Therefore, I am *not* living in a virtual reality.

Moore side-steps the problem of *how we know we have hands*, and this is half-right. We can say we assume our hands are real, but this is not an epistemological move; it would not be true to say we *believe* our hands to be real, or that it is simply the best-hypothesis. There is no mystery here. It is true that one's hands might be a figment of one's imagination, but, as I shall further explore in the next section, the possibility of being wrong does not entail that it is reasonable to doubt.

B. We can escape philosophical confusions, if we view the meaning of a statement as *its use in language*. We can interpret this to mean that the intended meaning of a word is *what we expect to occur as a result of the word (or phrase) being uttered*. Equally, we can say that we have been understood when the listener recognises that expectation. The actual consequences that occur may or may not match these expectations. Often there are many possible meanings of a word, because there are many possible consequences of its use.

In the fourth section of *On Certainty*,⁷ Wittgenstein approaches global scepticism in a different manner by asking *what can 'I know my hands are real' possibly mean?* (In fact, he discusses the phrase 'I know that there is a tree' but the form of the argument is the same.) Wittgenstein's (1977) method involves looking for cases where such a sentence might be meaningful. However, none of these cases seems to be what Moore is getting at. Wittgenstein shows that perhaps the sentence does not have the meaning Moore thought it did. What would it *mean* for me to say, 'I know my hands are real'? Someone might be tempted to say, 'I mean that I am certain I have hands! They are real!' We feel as

⁷ Point about different sections and approaches of on certainty

if we know precisely what it means, but Wittgenstein is less sure we do. Wittgenstein (1967, §43) described the meaning of a sentence as (in most cases) its *use*:

43. For a large class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word “meaning” it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in language. And the meaning of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its bearer.

Wittgenstein makes the analogy of words and propositions as tools (1967, §11). We might use a hammer, to hit a nail until it becomes flush with the surface. This is the *use* of the hammer. This is not necessarily what will happen, of course, but it is what we will *expect* as a result of its use. We might then say that what we *intend to mean* by a word is what we *expect to occur as a result of our using it*. Wittgenstein likens an utterance to a move in a game (1967, §31). If I move my pawn forward two spaces to begin a game of chess, my opponent may respond in a variety of ways, all which are permissible. If I say, ‘hello!’ to someone, they might reply with a ‘hi!’, or ‘morning!’, or ‘y’alright?’ all which show they understood me.⁸ We can thus say there is a *set* of possible consequences. Within this set of possible consequences there would appear to be some form of continuum:

- a. That which one would, without thinking, expect to follow (as in the examples above)
- b. That which one would expect to follow, once certain facts have been brought to mind – these other facts acting as *heuristics* or *rules of thumb*. (For example, one might initially be surprised if someone responds with ‘hola!’, but then one remembers one is in Spain).
- c. That which one would not find inconceivable, but nonetheless *unexpected*. (For example, someone simply ignoring you.)⁹
- d. That which is inconceivable.

So, when someone says, ‘I know my hands are real’, what are they expecting to occur as a result? For example, if we try to consider real cases when one might feel the need to say, ‘I know my hands are real’, we might imagine a patient suffering from *phantom limb syndrome*. Someone has had their hands amputated but refuses to believe it, and still feels the sensations of having hands. However, it is clear this is not the same kind of *global sceptical possibility* Descartes and Moore are getting at. The

⁸ There are overlaps between my task here and semiotics and more specifically *social semiotics*. However, there are also differences. Van Leeuwen (2005, p.3) states that semioticians do three things: Collect, document and systematically catalogue semiotic resources – including their history; investigate how these resources are used in specific historical, cultural and institutional contexts and how people talk about them in these contexts – plan them, teach them, justify them, critique them, etc.; Contribute to the discovery and development of new semiotic resources and new uses of existing semiotic resources. In this thesis, I am searching for the *limits* to sense, and language. My approach concerns not what *can* be communicated and how, so much as what *cannot*. In a similar vein, I am not in search of what *is* constructed, or co-constructed so much as trying to establish whether there is anything that is *not*.

⁹ Some scholars may believe me to be taking undue freedom here with Wittgenstein’s ideas, and that is a fair criticism; I would not dare to say this is what he meant by *use*. However, as I hope to show, the concept of *expectation* can throw light on many different confusions concerning moral values and I believe the light shone coheres with what Wittgenstein wrote.

problem is something quite different because in this case, the patient clearly does not actually have hands. It is this particular context which gives the situation sense. These possibilities are defined, or limited, by the language-game, or context of which the word forms a part. (What we *expect* is the possibility that strikes us most strongly ((a) in the continuum above). There are manoeuvres in the language-game which are discordant (b and c). There are manoeuvres in the language-game that are inconceivable (d).) We cannot generalise from this case that we can *never* be certain we have hands because all the other factors that make the utterance make sense do not exist – e.g. our hands have not been amputated. Any discussion of certainty, *presupposes* the possibility of doubt. Without doubt, certainty is logically excluded (see Hacker 2005). If we have no reason to doubt, certainty does not enter into the discussion. Thus, other than unusual situations like this, the only occasion when we might question whether or not our hands are real is when we are doing philosophy. It only makes sense to talk about certainty when there can be doubt. How could I live as if it were true that I doubted the existence of my hands? How would people react? If I said such a thing, people would say I was insane, or delusional, and my loved ones would insist I see a doctor. When we discuss philosophical matters, there is a tendency to remove our language from everyday life, and forget that what *counts* as an answer in everyday life is also an answer in philosophy. The key to dispelling this tendency to look for a catch-all solution is to keep returning to examples and allowing the confusion to dispel of its own accord.

So, to bring the discussion back to this thesis: if someone is to help me find my keys, I would start giving a description and explaining where I last had them and we would work from there. Similarly, to find moral value, I shall start with a description, and then we will discover that it is right under our noses.

2.12 What moral value looks like

C. Moral value is *absolute* value, when things are viewed as valuable in themselves. This is as opposed to *relative* value, when things are valuable for the sake of something else.

Perhaps the defining feature of moral value, as oppose to other kinds of values is that it is *the most valuable* value, the ultimate value to which all other values are subordinate. In his lecture on ethics, Wittgenstein (1993) makes a distinction between *ethical* or *absolute* uses of language and *relative* uses. A description is used relatively when it is described in relation to a certain goal:

Every judgment of relative value is a mere statement of facts and can therefore be put in such a form that it loses all the appearance of a judgment of value: Instead of saying “This is the right way to Granchester,” I could equally well have said, “This is the right way you have to go if you want to get to Granchester in the shortest time”; “This man is a good runner” simply means that he runs a certain number of miles in a certain number of minutes, etc. (p.39)

Whereas an absolute use is something quite different:

Now let us see what we could possibly mean by the expression, “*the* absolutely right road.” I think it would be the road which *everybody* on seeing it would, with *logical necessity*, have to go, or be ashamed for not going. And similarly, the *absolute* good, if it is a describable state-of-affairs, would be one which everybody, independent of his tastes and inclinations, would *necessarily* bring about or feel guilty for not bringing about. (p.40)

Similarly, he gives the following example:

Supposing that I could play tennis and one of you saw me playing and said “Well, you play pretty badly” and suppose I answered “I know, I’m playing badly but I don’t want to play any better,” all the other man could say would be “Ah then that’s all right.” But suppose I had told one of you a preposterous lie and he came up to me and said “You’re behaving like a beast” and then I were to say “I know I behave badly, but then I don’t want to behave any better,” could he then say “Ah, then that’s all right”? Certainly not; he would say “Well, you *ought* to want to behave better.” Here you have an absolute judgment of value, whereas the first instance was one of a relative judgment. (pp.38-39)

At this stage, there appears to be a choice to make: when we talk about *moral value* are we, for example, talking about *A) a principle or rule according to which somebody acts, or aspires to act?*; or perhaps *B) a judgement of what is important in life?* I am going to put aside definition (A) because I believe it is something of a red-herring, for reasons that will become clear. Instead, I will focus on the state of recognising something as of moral or absolute value. Wittgenstein (1993) describes this state thus:

I believe the best way of describing it is to say that when I have it *I wonder at the existence of the world*. And I am then inclined to use such phrases as “how extraordinary that anything should exist” or “how extraordinary that the world should exist.” (p.41)

He then offers a further example:

...it is, what one might call, the experience of feeling absolutely safe. I mean the state of mind in which one is inclined to say “I am safe, nothing can injure me whatever happens.” (p.41)

Wittgenstein (2001, §6.44) is hinting at something similar when he states, ‘It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists’ It is clear that none of these descriptions of moral value are propositions of science; they are expressions of an experience, but that does not render the experience less *real*.

We can get an insight into this way of looking at things if we ask, *what makes an object more valuable?* It is often, especially economically, *rarity* that makes something valuable. One would value something that is *one-of-a-kind* over something mass-produced. So, to appreciate *absolute* value, is to recognise the rarity, of one’s experience, to recognise that one will not always be able to obtain it. Take Nietzsche’s (2001, §278) picture of how the thoughts of death quell the concerns that cheat us out of this life:

The Thought of Death. It gives me a melancholy happiness to live in the midst of this confusion of streets, of necessities, of voices: how much enjoyment, impatience and desire, how much thirsty life and drunkenness of life comes to light here every moment! And yet it will soon be so still for all these shouting, lively, life-loving people! How everyone's shadow, his gloomy travelling companion stands behind him! It is always as in the last moment before the departure of an emigrant-ship: people have more than ever to say to one another, the hour presses, the ocean with its lonely silence waits impatiently behind all the noise-so greedy, so certain of its prey!

Or as Riesman (1954, p.485) puts it: 'The imminence of death serves to sweep away the inessential preoccupations for those who do not flee from the thought of death into triviality.' In the film *Troy* (Peterson, 2004) Achilles makes a similar point to Breseis, enlightening her as to why her comforting certainty in the gods robs her of the aesthetic and triumphant reality:

I'll tell you a secret. Something they don't teach you in your temple. The Gods envy us. They envy us because we're mortal, because any moment might be our last. Everything is more beautiful because we're doomed. You will never be lovelier than you are now. We will never be here again. (Peterson, 2004)

If such rarity is valuable, then nothing is as valuable as a one-off. And *all* of our experiences are *one-offs*, never to be repeated. Unfortunately, we often hide this fact from ourselves.

As can be seen in the descriptions above, there is something existentially terrifying associated with the notion of absolute value, not only is it most easily recognised in the context of one's own death, but the notion of all our experiences being *one-offs* also renders us somewhat powerless. Our ability to predict, and therefore control our lives, depends upon things according with rules and patterns, upon us being *certain* about things, upon things and experiences being *the same* and not *different*. To recognise the absolute or moral value of our experiences is to recognise their contingency. 'But how are we to cope with uncertainty, with the unknown?' Were I in an argument in the pub, I could imagine making a good case for this being *the* question that defines the human condition. The most ancient epics from around the world have this as their central theme. What is interesting about so many of the ancient stories is that they offer no comfort in this regard. Whilst the cosmology of Genesis, for example, describes chaos as overcome by God and that everything has its place, the story of Job describes God berating the central character for believing that he could understand the mind of God. The gods of ancient Greece also often appear capricious and unpredictable. But this represents the reality of our lives. We do not know the mind of God, for all we know he does play dice.

To combat the discomfort of living in a chaotic and contingent world, other writers have conceived of God as *omnibenevolent*. This is not without problems. The most obvious, yet less serious issue is that this seems to contradict our experience of an unjust world. And whilst much of the religious language has fallen out of everyday use, this superficially comforting belief that the world is necessary and ordered rather than contingent and chaotic is at the base of many peoples' cosmological outlooks. Einstein said, in the quotation alluded to above, that 'God doesn't play dice with the world'

(Hermanns 1983, p.58). And compare the chaotic vision of unpredictable gods using the world as their plaything with this by Jean-Pierre Laplace (1902):

We ought then to regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its anterior state and as the cause of the one which is to follow. Given for one instant an intelligence which could comprehend all the forces by which nature is animated and the respective situation of the beings who compose it—an intelligence sufficiently vast to submit these data to analysis—it would embrace in the same formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the lightest atom; for it, nothing would be uncertain and the future, as the past, would be present to its eyes. (p.4)

This kind of vision is mistaken. The world is fundamentally chaotic. We have no access to rules that describe how it all works. There is no such certainty. But more importantly, it is this very fact that allows us to see the moral or absolute value in the world.

Tejedor (2011) argues that this is what Wittgenstein was driving at in the *Tractatus*. She suggests that it was the realisation that there was no necessity, has, *in and of itself*, a fundamental ethical dimension for Wittgenstein: ‘...for to recognise the essential contingency of reality and of ourselves as facts *is* to undergo a profound ethical transformation’ (p.102). When we view nature as acting in an orderly fashion, according to laws and principles, we then adopt an instrumental attitude towards reality: ‘it emerges when we come to regard facts as means to be used to achieve our particular ends’ (p.102). Or again, she writes:

... the idea that is possible to use facts as means to satisfy our ends involves the illusory belief that we can exert genuine control over reality. This instrumental attitude to reality results from a lack of clarity as to its essentially contingent status: it arises from the misguided sense that we can (necessarily) cause the world to be different. (p.103)

D. Although the *self* as a metaphysical notion appears to have a privileged ethical place, this is a conceptual confusion.

Thus, the *aim* of ethical action cannot be to effect change in the world. One might therefore be tempted to conclude that the ethical *aim* is to produce change in oneself, in one’s thoughts and ideas. One might be tempted to adopt a Platonic view where the body is seen as the prison of the soul, something from which we need to escape. However, according to Wittgenstein, this contingency is not merely limited to facts *outside our own minds*. As he states in the *Lecture on Ethics*: ‘A state of mind, so far as we mean by that, a fact which we can describe, is in no ethical sense good or bad.’ Just as no fact about the external world is any more valuable than any other, neither is any fact about our minds – any desire we have, any thought or feeling is all of equal value. Tejedor (2011) explains that ‘This sense of wonder arises in connection to *all* facts: physical facts... but also mental facts... desires, beliefs, wishes, and, more broadly minds...’ (p.103)

Some may be unduly disheartened by this notion, and conclude that, given that we can have no necessary control over either our world nor our mind, that there is no *point* to anything and we may as

well just give up. But to think this is a misunderstanding. Firstly, if the facts about one's states of mind are also contingent, then one has no choice as to whether one gives up on life anyway, but more importantly, to believe that one can conclude that a lack of control renders life depressingly meaningless is itself the result of believing in a necessity that is not there. There is no necessary connection between feeling a sense of control and feeling that life is meaningful. The sentence 'life has no meaning' seems to suggest to us that, if life does have a meaning, we ought to be able to identify what that meaning is. It sounds like a *lack* of something, and therefore we go about in search of something that completes it. However, we could equally view a sense of meaninglessness as something *additional* - i.e. 'I wish my despair would go away'. To feel that life is meaningful is simply to not question whether life is meaningful - i.e. to be absorbed in life. If we are viewing life clearly and recognising the contingency of the facts that make it up, even this sense of despair takes on an absolute value.

The tendency to separate the mind from the body (or the physical world) like this stems from another misunderstanding that arises as a result of Cartesian scepticism. Descartes' (1996) and other such sceptical arguments effectively draw a line between the mind and the external world. In ordinary life, we assume what we perceive to be real; we assume that our *idea* of the world (what we perceive) is the same as the *actual* or *real* world. However, sceptical arguments call this into question. For example, if we put a pencil in water, we may *perceive* it as bent; if we are on drugs, we might hallucinate and see all kinds of things that are not there (*as defended in Ayer 1940*); from a particular angle, a table might look trapezoid, whereas we know that it is *really* rectangular; when we look at the moon, we know that there is a time-lag between the light leaving the moon and arriving at our eyes, thus, we do not perceive the moon directly (*as defended in Russell 1997*). Thus, we have an apparent contradiction between *what we perceive* (the ideas in our mind), and *what is real* (the external world). All sceptical arguments have a similar form (where *p* is something that has been perceived):

1. According to my mind *p*
2. According to the external world not-*p*
3. 1 and 2 contradict each other, so both 1 and 2 cannot be true - there is doubt.

This argument is then generalised from that particular case: if it is true in this case that I might be on drugs, how am I to know that I am not on drugs in all other cases? The global scepticism of Descartes seems to suggest something mystical about *minds* - something unknown and hidden, almost something sacred. However, this dichotomy is clearly not applicable in all cases: firstly, why should there be a general rule that we can apply to *all* cases? Just because I am unsure about what is *real* in one situation, does not imply any necessity for me to doubt in another. Secondly, even if there is a contradiction, why must it be solved? Why should the facts of my mind not contradict the facts of the world? Why need there be any kind of connection here? It is enough to simply say that a pencil *appears* bent when it is in water. There is no mystery here at all. It is also enough to say, 'I genuinely thought you were a dragon, but it was just the drugs I'd taken.' This dichotomy is an illusion. To view the world clearly,

and recognise its contingency requires that we do not give notions of one's *self* any more value than any other facts, but we are fooled by our false assumptions. One such false assumption is that a noun must denote a thing - so to what does the first-person pronoun 'I' refer?

We don't use ['I'] because we recognise a particular person by his bodily characteristics; and this creates the illusion that we use this word to refer to something bodiless, which, however, has its seat in our body. In fact *this* seems to be the real ego, the one of which it was said, 'Cogito, ergo sum'. - 'Is there then no mind but only a body?' Answer: The word 'mind' has meaning, i.e. it has a use in our language; but saying this doesn't yet say what kind of use we make of it. (Wittgenstein 1991b, p.69)

When we say, 'I have a toothache', we do not mean 'my mind has a toothache'. The similarity between sentences like, 'I have a pain' and 'I have a bag' makes it appear as if, in each sentence, there are two objects connected in some way. But you cannot borrow my pain. Similarly, we frequently fail to notice, what Hacker (2007, p.5) calls, the *asymmetry* inherent in our psychological language:

Psychological predicates typically display first/third-person asymmetry. The characteristic first-person present tense use ... does not rest on introspection conceived as inner sense; nor does it rest on observation of one's own behaviour. It is groundless. The third-person use, by contrast, rests on what the subject says and does.

Bellucci (2013) compares the sentences, 'I am in pain', with 'he is in pain'. Obviously both have very similar *surface* grammar, but when we look at how the sentences are used, we can see a clear difference: 'The third-person statement that "he is in pain" derives from the indirect observation of his behaviour, whereas the first- person statement that "I am in pain" does not. The latter does not describe; it rather expresses my sensation.' (p.9). Or again, consider the following:

- A. 'I am lying when I say I'm incapable of writing well; I just can't be bothered to try.'
- B. 'He is lying when he says he is incapable of writing well; he just can't be bothered to try'

The two sentences mean entirely different things. The first one is an admission, the second is, at best, a summary of some observations, and as such it ought to be possible to back it up with details; at worst, it is an assignation of blame. Sentence A cannot be an *observation*. An observation implies a description, that there is a thing to be described. Similarly, we can often end up wrongly reifying the object of such sentences. Consider how it is perfectly reasonable to say, 'he is unconscious', but 'I am unconscious' has no use, except perhaps as a joke. But 'if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of "object and designation" the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.' (Wittgenstein 1968, §293). What appeared to be an *observation* becomes like a signpost to a city that is impossible to get to, and to which no-one has ever been. It points *in a* direction, but not the direction *of* something; that to which it points is irrelevant. This is the difference between an observation, or a description, and an *expression*.

In his early notebooks and in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein frequently discusses the *self*, *will* or *I* as referencing a very particular kind of concept, because often they do not refer to anything at all *in the world*:

5.632 The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world.
 5.633 Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found?
 You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do *not* see the eye.
 And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.
 (Wittgenstein 2001, §§5.632-5.633)

In his notebooks he writes, ‘The I is not an object’ (1998, p.80). Wittgenstein’s understanding of ‘the world’ here was that which *limits the meaning of* the propositions we use. The self, in the sense used here, cannot be part of this world since it is that which is limited *by* the world. Take for example the phrase ‘I know what I think’. If we are simply expressing our incredulity that someone is questioning us, then this sentence is perfectly meaningful, but if we believe we are in some way an observer of our own thoughts, we have been bewitched by language. I cannot be both the observer and the observed. Such sentences give rise to dualism. Equally, ‘I am in pain’ – cannot mean ‘there is a subject, *I*, to which the pain is occurring’; the purpose of the sentence is not to identify the subject, as if we are in doubt as to whose pain it is! It is simply an assertion concerning *me*. Our self is manifest in our use of language; it is not pointed to *by* language.

Thus there really is a sense in which philosophy can acknowledge the self in a non-psychological way.
 What brings the self into philosophy is the fact that ‘the world is my world’.
 (§5.641)

And again:

The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that it is in language alone that I reach understanding. (§5.62)

2.13 How we express our recognition of moral value

E. Recognition of absolute value cannot be *said* it can only be *shown*. In this way, there is no distinction between understanding and responding.

We can equate this state of recognising the contingency and thus the absolute value of all of our experiences with Weil’s (1951, pp.111-2) notion of *paying attention*:

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by the object. It means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him, without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not

seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object which is to penetrate it.

One may be tempted to conceive of *paying attention* as merely the prelude to acting ethically, to perceive that there are a number of steps involved:

1. We pay attention to the world and view it clearly.
2. We receive the correct information about the world
3. We process this information and make a decision about how best to act
4. We act.

However, again, as Yoda (2017) points out, this causal picture *again* implies some kind of mind-body dualism. The ethical *act* and the ethical *perspective* are one and the same thing. Paying attention is active not a passive. Yoda elucidates this using Weil's notion of *Reading*. He uses the following quotation from Weil (1990) to illustrate:

Two women each receive a letter, announcing to each that her son is dead. The first, upon just glancing at the paper, faints, and until her death, her eyes, her mouth, her movements will never again be as they were. The second woman remains the same: her expression, her attitude does not change; she cannot read.... It is not the sensation but the meaning which has grabbed hold of the first woman, reaching directly, brutally, into her mind, without her participation, as sensations grab hold of us. Everything happens as if the pain resided in the letter and sprang up from it into the reader's face. As for the sensations themselves, such as the colour of the paper or of the ink, they don't even appear. What is presented to the sight is the pain itself. (p.297-298)

If we *read* something and we understand it, then we also respond to it. 'If I hate someone, there is not him on one side, my hatred on the other; when he approaches me something hateful approaches me.' (Weil 1990, p.299) One might be tempted to separate the understanding and the response because one imagines cases where one pauses for a moment before acting, but if I pause in response to a question, that pause is part of my response, part of how I paid attention. To recognise this, one only needs to imagine how disconcerting it might be if one asks one's boy/girlfriend to marry them and received a pause before their 'yes'. 'In Weil's picture, we read and respond with our entire being' (Yoda 2017, p.7).

Thus, since the understanding and the response are one and the same thing, the initial distinction between moral value as *A) a principle or rule according to which somebody acts, or aspires to act* and *B) a judgement of what is important in life* was a bit misleading. If we recognise the absolute value of the world, then we also recognise our obligations. There are no *steps* here. Imagine being handed a vase and told that it is thousands of years old. One does not have to *work out* how to behave with it. If one understands the phrase, 'it is thousands of years old', then one immediately recognises how one has to behave with it. If one hands it to a child and says, 'be careful! It is thousands of years old!' It is perhaps more the case that one is defining *thousands of years old* in terms of *care* than justifying the use of the imperative. However, there is a difference here between understanding the meaning of a word in the sense of its dictionary definition, and understanding the *use* of a sentence. Even if one

understands the dictionary definition of a sentence, one will not know how to respond unless someone understands how they are being *used*. Since moving to Spain, I have found an unusual difficulty in understanding certain people. I frequently panic and do not understand the most basic things that they say. However, I realised that the problem was not that I did not understand the *words* that they are saying, but I did not understand *why* they were saying them. The reality was that they are making a special effort to speak very simply to me, so they would say things like, ‘Look! There’s a white car!’ I would translate the words to myself, but assume that I must have got it wrong because I could not, for the life of me, understand why anyone would say something like that to me. I felt as if I were missing something, some fact of grammar that would suddenly illuminate the meaning, which was completely hidden from me. Once I understood that they were simply so keen to converse with me that they were saying incredibly simple things, i.e. once I understood what they were trying to do with the words, I was able to learn appropriate responses that showed I understood, and we have been able to move on. However, there is no calculation to be done, and nor does one have to consult with a rule. The obligation is imbedded in the situation; it is what is *seen*, what is understood.

However, one does not and cannot communicate the absolute value of something through sentences. I can communicate the relative value of the vase by discussing its age, the amount that it may be sold for, its relative rarity. However, I have no means of communicating the *absolute* value of something through words; it would be impossible to do such a thing because everything has precisely the same value:

If for instance ... we read the description of a murder with all its details physical and psychological, the mere description of these facts will contain nothing which we could call an *ethical* proposition. The murder will be on exactly the same level as any other event, for instance the falling of a stone. Certainly the reading of this description might cause us pain or rage or any other emotion, or we might read about the pain or rage caused by this murder in other people when they heard of it, but there will simply be facts, facts, and facts but no Ethics. (Wittgenstein et al. 1993, p.39-40)

Instead, absolute value can only be *shown*, demonstrated through our actions: ‘But an ethical sentence is a personal action. Not a statement of fact. Like an exclamation of admiration.’ (Wittgenstein, 2000, Tagebuch aus dem Koder 183, p.76, 31.05.06, translated in Christensen, 2004, p.125). We do not choose the ethical in the sense of picking one thing over another (since all facts are valued the same) but we betray our attitude towards the world in the manner in which we act. ‘Or rather, it is something that can only be chosen by actually acting in a way that expresses this particular ethical outlook’ (Christensen, 2004, p.125). McGinn (2001) suggests that throughout Wittgenstein’s work, there is an attempt to establish ‘an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not the order’ (Wittgenstein 1967, §132). That ‘order’, McGinn (2001, p.33) believes, consists in Wittgenstein tracing the boundaries of language, to express a particular way of looking at this distinction between *saying* and *showing*:

...distinction between the essential (a priori) and the accidental (a posteriori). What is a priori shows itself in the use of language, and what shows itself has to do not with something that we *know* (that is, not with something that is *true*) but with something that we *do*. What is shown is something that is grasped and lived rather than known.

This is supported by the following letter that Wittgenstein wrote to Bertrand Russell, concerning what he perceived to be Russell's misunderstanding to the *Tractatus*:

The main point is the theory of what can be expressed by propositions, i.e., by language ... and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown; which I believe is the cardinal problem of philosophy. (Wittgenstein writing to Russell, 1919, quoted in Edwards 1982, p.11)

I have created Table 3 to display the various ways of describing this vault between *what can be shown* and *what can be said*. In the first column of the table below, I have placed terms which, whilst not exact synonyms for the term 'relative', are phrases which have related uses. In the second column, I have placed the equivalent phrases for the term 'absolute'. I have collected these phrases from Wittgenstein's own work and discussions relating to Wittgenstein's work by D. Z. Phillips and Marie McGinn. I do not consider this to be an exhaustive list, and clearly there are distinctions and overlap between the various terms in each column. I accept that there are occasions within this table where a phrase might justifiably appear in the other column: For example, it may be *necessary* for a car's tank to have petrol in it for the car to work. What is important is what the phrases have in common within their column, and how they are distinct from the counterpart in their row.

This expression is used in...	
1. ...a relative sense...	...an absolute sense...
...in that it concerns	
2. ...something trivial	...something ethical
3. ...something contingent	...something necessary (for its own sake)
4. ...something possible	...something essential
5. ...something a posteriori	...something a priori
6. ...the arrangement of 'objects'	...the limits of those arrangements
7. ...what is (might be) the case	...something the opposite of which cannot be conceived
8. ...what is said in language	...what is shown in the actual use of expressions
9. ...something I can articulate	...something that makes itself manifest
10. ...something that is known theoretically	...something that it is grasped practically
11. ...what we know	...what we do
12. ...something justifiable	...something arbitrary, in the sense of unjustifiable
13. ...epistemic certainty concerning the acquisition and justification of this knowledge	...practical certainty concerning the use of this word
14. ...something that is true because of this or that fact	...something that is true because that's just the way it is. (The end of explanations)
15. ...something natural	...something supernatural/sublime/mystical/ineffable
16. ...a form of expression by means of language	...a form of expression by the existence of language
17. ...a matter of fact	...a matter of sense, (an expression which describes the grammar of language)
18. ...analytical sense	...analytical nonsense

Table 1: Concerning the difference between 'a relative sense' and 'an absolute sense'.

F. Moral value is expressed in recognising the obligations that one sees in the world.

How does one show that one recognises the contingency of the world? Some indication was provided in the discussion concerning living in the shadow of death. We might also say that one shows that one recognises absolute value when one lives with a sense of gratitude for life, and thus recognises a sense of obligation. Equally, we can also specify what it means to *not* live with a sense of moral value – namely, when we value things relatively. In this way, Hume (1985) was correct in saying that one cannot derive an *ought* from an *is*. One cannot derive an obligation from any facts, in the sense that no *calculation* can be made. One cannot argue, for example that one’s obligations can be derived from one’s own identity or the identity of another. There is a therefore an important difference between *obligation* and *rights*. Rights are built upon *identity*, they are afforded to us because of the group into which we fit, i.e. something *relative*. To fulfil an obligation is to do so much more than afford someone their rights. Similarly, I have great sympathy with the idea of education as an entitlement, but ‘entitlement’ is the language of demand, of law. Obligation is beyond intentioned, human laws, beyond plea-bargaining. It is not the language of ‘you owe me’, but of ‘I owe you’. It is the language of giving. It takes no interest in judging others, only ourselves. To fulfil an obligation is an act of love, and thus it makes no sense to talk of the obligations of others towards us. Simone Weil (2005) writes in *On Human Personality* how obligations come before entitlements or rights. The latter are subordinate to the former:

‘An obligation which goes unrecognised by anybody loses none of the full force of its existence. A right which goes unrecognised by anybody is not worth very much.’

Using identity to justify one’s decisions is inherently problematic. Imagine someone arguing the following:

- I ought to not physically harm my dog, because it is a sentient being.

But here we immediately walk into a difficult metaphysical discussion about the status of dogs (and we are led to Nagel’s (1974) question, ‘What is it like to be a bat?’). I am suggesting the logic works the other way around:

- My dog is a sentient being, because I ought to not physically harm my dog.

The status of the dog is not derived from a metaphysical fact about the dog but from how we think we ought to treat the dog; saying an animal is sentient is not a metaphysical statement about the dog’s relative value, but an expression of one’s moral obligations. Similarly, the labels we impose upon our students often have a similarly relative metaphysical feel: this student is an A* student, this student has ADHD, this student is on the Autistic Spectrum. I would argue that to derive our moral obligations from these labels is a mistake, but these labels may well be meaningful as expressions of our moral obligations. This is not to suggest that what we conceive of as our moral obligations cannot change, of course they can. Scientific research, for example, might bring to light a certain fact that entirely

changes how we perceive something. My suggestion is that moral obligations are embedded in what we see, so if what we see changes, so do our moral obligations. To educate is so much more than to ensure that someone has received something owed them, it is to give something in a particular *spirit*. A virtue is *adverbial*. It is not about the act, but the way we carry out the act. We do not *courage*, we act *courageously*. We do not *kind*, we act *kindly*. Thus, education cannot ever be reduced to a particular action or set thereof. To educate is to pay attention to every aspect of a student, it is to say to a student, 'I am interested in you'.

Similarly, one cannot derive one's obligations from any relative statement about one's own identity. Much of the scholarship concerning similar ethical dilemmas centres around the tension that teachers might feel between the different *spheres* of their life. Campbell (2003b) describes how, early in her career, she found herself having made a poor ethical decision. She believed this happened...

...not because I was a bad person with sadistic inclinations. It happened because, as a relatively novice teacher in a new school, I lacked ... the ethical knowledge needed to enable me to apply my own moral intuition to the context of my professional obligations in this situation. (Campbell 2003b, p.xv).

Campbell, who has written a great deal about the nature of ethical dilemmas in the classroom (1996; 1997a; 1997b; 2001; 2003a) describes three different pieces of information in the ethical decision making process: ethical knowledge, professional obligations/expectations and the application of that knowledge, or conscience/intuition. According to Campbell's formulations, 'ethical knowledge' is something that enables one's 'conscience' to make a judgement despite pressure from 'professional obligations'. Similarly, Colnerud (1997) concluded that some patterns in the teachers' uncertainty about ethical decisions could be discussed in terms of ambiguity within the field of teacher ethics, resulting from the collision of structural conditions and personal preferences. Shapira-Lishchinsky (2011) did a similar study and formed the following five tensions: 1. Caring climate versus formal climate; 2. Distributive justice versus school standards; 3. Confidentiality versus school rules; 4. Loyalty to colleagues versus school norms; 5. Family agenda versus educational standards. I am less sure of Shapira-Lishchinsky's formulations, as I would argue it is a mistake to ignore the personal/individual aspect as this is a central part of coping with ethical dilemmas. Tirri (1999) found that in the context of secondary schools in the USA, generally speaking, teachers preferred to make such decisions alone, and Joseph & Efron (2006, p.201) concluded it was 'teacher's individual moralities' that 'shape the choices they make and the conflicts that concern them as they function as moral educators'. I agree that a teacher plays a variety of different language-games connected to professional considerations, or personal ambitions and so on. But these other concerns are *relative* concerns, they are not *absolute* concerns. These other games might make things more difficult for us, but I believe, for example, that the distinction between what Colnerud (1997) calls 'general ethics' and 'professional tasks' is a bit misleading. Whether one recognises absolute moral value in the world has nothing uniquely to do with teaching or any other profession.

G. Moral value is expressed in recognising the incompleteness of one's judgments.

Perhaps the most important way in which we can show recognition of the contingency of the world is through our use of language. We must demonstrate that we understand that our sentences have limited uses, that our judgements are necessarily incomplete. However, it is also these very limitations that give our utterances sense. If we want to teach a child a piece of knowledge. We do not simply want the students to be able to repeat the sentence, we also want them to understand how this sentence might be *used*. However, being able to correctly use the proposition does not, on its own, provide us with enough reason to say the child understands the *meaning* of the proposition. The child must also learn the *limitations* of the use of the proposition, what it *cannot* be used to do. For example, '3+2=5' is not an answer to 'Why did Harold lose the battle of Hastings?' If there are no limitations, then there are no rules. Rules are a prerequisite for sense (or meaning). However, these rules are given by the situations; they exist *in* the language-games we play. I cannot use the phrase, 'that was never offside, ref!' outside the language-games of watching sport. H. O. Mounce (1973, p.349) explains that one of Wittgenstein's reasons for introducing the notion of a language game...

... was to free us from the idea that logic constitutes what he called 'the *a priori* order of the world', the idea that logic is, as it were, 'prior to all experience'. He wished us to see rather, that logic- the difference between sense and nonsense - is learnt, when, through taking part in a social life, we come to speak a language. Logic is to be found not 'outside' language but only within the various language games themselves.

Where an utterance breaks the rules of sense, it is tautologous to say we will not be able to understand it, although we might make certain assumptions about the context to accommodate it into a language-game. If someone in the street shouts, 'We should all punch elderly people!' at you, you might assume they are suffering from some form of mental disturbance, drunk, playing a game of dares with friends, or deceiving themselves. If we cannot accommodate the utterance with such an assumption then we will simply feel baffled, and not know how to engage with the utterance - we will not know how to play the game. This sense of bafflement, of inconceivability¹⁰ at the utterance having sense, is the experience of the limits of language; we have reached bedrock (perhaps albeit temporarily).

For the sake of clarity further on in this thesis, I shall refer to a fact, the opposite of which is inconceivable as a *brute fact*, a fact so obviously true that no logical justification is possible.¹¹ A fact's

¹⁰ Despite the similarities one might draw between this statements and Hume's (1985, p.32) conceivability principle, I would stress three differences in the way I will use it: firstly, I will not leave it ambiguous as to whether *inconceivability* implies *impossibility* - I am explicit that it does not; secondly, I am placing the notion of inconceivability within the context of language-games; thirdly, as I shall explain later, conceivability is a *logical* rather than an *empirical* description.

¹¹ I am aware that there has been much discussion concerning the nature of *brute facts*, but here I am using the phrase in a similar manner here to Anscombe (Anscombe, 1958a, 1958b)

status as ‘brute’ is not final, it hangs in the air only so long as one is not provided with a context which renders the opposite of the proposition conceivably sensible. If I cannot think of such a context, it remains inconceivable to me. I cannot say the opposite of the proposition is *necessarily* or *objectively* or *universally* or *eternally* nonsense, since I cannot possibly know whether any such context will come about. Were I to claim such a thing, I would therefore be deceiving myself.

Nothing makes claims to meaning true or false in the way that the fact that it is raining makes true the assertion that it is. F. R. Leavis said that the form of a critical judgment of a poem or novel is, ‘It is so, isn’t it?’ and that the form of the response to it is, ‘Yes, but...’ It’s a fine way of characterising the essentially conversational nature of judgments in the realm of meaning, their objectivity as well as their necessary incompleteness. Always, it is assumed, the text would be before the conversationalists, and the never-ending ‘Yes but...’ requires that one remain open to it, in a responsiveness that is both vital and disciplined by the critical concepts constitutive of thought in the realm of meaning. (Gaita 2002, p.92)

Thus, in this way, this sense of inconceivability is necessarily subjective, it is limited, but it is not *postmodern* or *relativist* in the sense that *anything goes* – anything goes only if the context exists which allows it to go – I can still be wrong! I may believe it is inconceivable I burn in the sun, but experience will prove me wrong. (Here I do not mean we need to *directly experience* something to develop and refine our sense of inconceivability: someone who has been blind from birth might still be surprised if someone told her the sky was green.)

To conclude this section I shall return to Meno’s paradox. Socrates’ (or Plato’s) solution was that learning is a *recollection* of something we somehow already knew. In one sense, this is very similar to my point above. However, Plato justified knowing by invoking his notion of the *world of the forms*. Writing in the tradition of Plato, Augustine (1995) framed his own version of this paradox: ‘When a sign is given to me, it can teach me nothing if it finds me ignorant of the thing of which it is the sign— but if I’m not ignorant, what do I learn through the sign?’ (p.135). Augustine argued learning occurred through an inner episode of *illumination*. Whilst Plato believed the source of knowledge was *the forms* illuminated by *logos*, Augustine describes the source of light as Jesus, quoting from Matthew 23:10 in support: ‘Nor are you to be called teachers, for you have one Teacher, the Messiah.’ Kitchen (2014), dismisses Plato’s (and presumably, therefore Augustine’s) solution on the grounds of the non-existence of his *world of the forms*. He mocks this *Platonic realm* as a ‘realm which exists outside of the material world’ (loc.1367) ‘in which all possible answers to all possible questions simply hang in limbo, awaiting our ethereal connection when we seek them out’ (loc.1364). He argues that if such a realm existed then everyone who ‘received the same teaching and learning experiences would provide the same answers to the same questions’ (loc.1369). But Kitchen misses what Plato and Augustine were getting at. With their mystical descriptions, Plato and Augustine were describing how knowledge is *given* to us. This is the sense in which moral value is *unhidden*. It is the world that decides whether we are correct, or whether our descriptions *work*, not us. There is no mystery. Think about how one might describe one’s keys to another. Whatever description one gives, there is no guarantee an object

matching that description will be *my keys*. A set of keys could be found that matches the description, *they have a blue fob, and there's one big key, and five smaller ones*, but it turns out they belong to someone else. All descriptions will be incomplete, but this does not mean that the describer of the keys does not know what it is he is describing.

2.2 ...But when we hide this contingency behind a veil of our own expectations, we can only ascribe relative value to it.

In the last section, I argued that all those things that we take to be *necessary* are nothing more than expectations. In this section, I show how we hide the absolute value of all facts by wrongly considering certain facts to be *necessarily true*, by insisting on some dogma or other. This results in moral theories that give a distorted picture of the world, e.g. authoritarianism, consequentialism, deontology, and emotivism. By denying the necessity suggested by these moral theories, this may suggest to some that I am endorsing some form of relativism where *anything goes*. I show how this is not the case.

By insisting on the truth of a dogma, we are ignoring the inherent incompleteness of our judgements and consequently we hide moral value from ourselves. The four dogmas are as follows:

1. You *must* accept the authority of another person or group
2. You *must* accept the truths of causation
3. You *must* accept that there exist *necessary* logical/rational truths
4. You *must* accept that a lack of foundations renders moral judgement merely a matter of emotion.

I shall take each of these in turn, dispute their necessity and describe how, in believing them as *necessary truths*, they throw a veil over moral value. It is worth noting that just as it would be foolish to affirm their necessity, to deny their truth entirely would simply be equivalent to affirming another necessity. Thus, I shall also try to elucidate the truths inherent in each position.

The injustice of such situations lies in the fact that any form of prejudice involves falsely accepting a necessity. If we look at someone and only see what we have projected, we will inevitably fail to truly see them; we will fail to see what they intend, what they mean. There is a Bantu word ‘Ubuntu’, which means something approximating the following: I am human because others confer humanity upon me. Similarly, I would say that my utterances are meaningful because others confer meaning upon them. One can compare this with the notion of *imputing intentionality* in *Intensive Interaction*, where the practitioner ‘credits the learner with thoughts, feelings and intentions. S/he attributes social meaning to actions and responds to behaviours as if they have intentional and communicative significance...’ (Hewett & Nind, 1998, p.3) And similarly, one can relate this to Weil’s notion of *reading*:

One reads, but also one is read by others. ... To force somebody to read himself as you read him (slavery). To force others to read you as you read yourself (conquest)... Justice. To be continually ready to admit that another person is something other than what we read when he is there (or when we think about him). Or rather: to read in him also (and continually) that he is certainly something other than what we read—perhaps something altogether different... Every being silently clamours to be read otherwise. Not to be deaf to such cries. (Weil 2004, p.43)

Unfortunately, we struggle to read people properly because we are held ‘captive’ by particular ‘pictures’ (Wittgenstein 1967, §115). By ‘picture’ Wittgenstein means the grammatical constructions, metaphors and similes that make up our language, and impress upon us certain necessary logical relationships that are not necessarily there. The temptations to believe in necessities are clear: We do not understand how things work, but if we could discover the underlying structure of things, we could understand them better. However, this approach is often a cause of the confusion, not a solution to it; through searching in this manner we *hide* what was previously unhidden. Perhaps the archetypal expression of this approach was given by the Vienna circle: in their manifesto, they wrote that they were engaged in a ‘search for a neutral system of formulae, for a symbolism freed from the slag of historical languages; and also, the search for a total system of concepts’ (Bergmann et al. 1929, p.5). However, the solutions may well be *in* the slag of historical languages, the very parts we wish to discard. The key is, as O’Connor Drury (1996, p.138) advises, not to become *dazzled by what we know*:

You are sitting in a room and it is dusk. Candles have been brought in that you may see to get on with the work in hand. Then you look up and try to see the garden that lies beyond. But all you see is the reflection of the candles in the window. To see the garden, the candles must be shaded. Now that is what philosophy does, it prevents us from being dazzled by what we know.

H. If we are to get a clear view of all the possibilities, we need to be able to find or invent, and see the significance of, *intermediate cases*. These cases bring to light how the narrative, and thus the expectations, can change as a result of a change in the state-of-affairs. They remind us of the incompleteness of our judgments.

We can recalibrate our view by disputing our judgements and returning to actual cases. Disputing oneself is an important method of reminding oneself of the incompleteness of one’s own judgements. Earlier in this chapter, I described how there was a continuum of what conceivably follows from a fact or state of affairs:

- (a) That which one would, without thinking, expect to follow
- (b) That which one would expect to follow, once certain facts have been brought to mind
- (c) That which one would not find inconceivable, but nonetheless *unexpected*.

In the normal course of events, if asked, ‘what follows from [fact P]?’ then our likely answer is to be of type (a), and we will not bring to mind cases of (b) or (c). We cannot, however, state that the following is a *brute fact*: *If P then (a)*, since one will be wilfully ignoring other possibilities and thus deceiving oneself and in conflict with the world. In order to free oneself from this conflict, one needs to free oneself from the fixation on facts of type (a) and think of reasons why one might be wrong – why *if P then (a)* is not true. Let us take the imaginary case of a teacher who prints the work on yellow paper for the dyslexic child. The logic of this justification might be as follows:

If the child is dyslexic, then their work should be printed on yellow paper.

The child is dyslexic.
Therefore, the work should be printed on yellow paper.

This is a *modus ponens* argument: If P, then Q; P; therefore Q, where we have:

- P: the child is dyslexic
- Q: their work should be printed on yellow paper

Let us imagine the teacher's printing the work on yellow paper in this manner has become habitual so she does so almost without thinking. Thus Q, is of type (a). Then one day, this teacher is challenged on this practice and justifies it with the argument above. Bearing in mind that with any two propositions (P and Q) there are four possible arrangements: 1. Both P and Q are true; 2. P is true and Q is not; 3. P is not true and Q is; 4. neither are true. For an *If P then Q* statement, it must be the case that it is inconceivable that P is true and Q is not.

We can show this position more clearly in the following table:

	P/ not-P	Q/not-Q	Does this seem conceivable?
1. Both P and Q are true	The child is dyslexic	and their work should be printed on yellow paper	Yes
2. P is true and Q is not	The child is dyslexic	and their work should not be printed on yellow paper	No
3. P is not true and Q is	The child is not dyslexic	and their work should be printed on yellow paper	Yes
4. Neither are true	The child is not dyslexic	and their work should not be printed on yellow paper	Yes

Table 2: A truth-table concerning the logical relationship between the following propositions: 'the child is dyslexic' and 'their work should be printed on yellow paper'.

Thus, if this teacher holds that *if P then Q* is a brute fact (rather than as a mere heuristic, or rule of thumb), then she is suggesting there are no circumstances when it would be conceivable to *not* print the work on yellow paper for a dyslexic child. However, a handful of cases immediately come to mind as to why this is not true - the yellow paper might embarrass the child; the child wants to learn to cope with white paper because they will not always be given things to read on yellow paper, etc.... These exceptions are examples of what we might call *intermediate cases*. Each intermediate case brings to light a different aspect of the situation, and gives us another method of representing it. Thus, the proposition, 'the child is dyslexic' on its own has no necessary logical relationship with the proposition, 'their work should be printed on yellow paper', because each of the four possible combinations of these two propositions are conceivable.

However, if we then add one of these intermediate cases to the truth-table we might get to Table 2:

P/ not-P	Intermediate Case (R/not-R)	Q/not-Q	Does this seem conceivable?
The child is dyslexic	And the yellow paper might embarrass the child	And their work should be printed on yellow paper.	No
The child is dyslexic	And the yellow paper might embarrass the child	And their work should not be printed on yellow paper.	Yes
The child is not dyslexic.	And the yellow paper might embarrass the child	And their work should be printed on yellow paper.	No
The child is not dyslexic.	And the yellow paper might embarrass the child	And their work should not be printed on yellow paper.	Yes
The child is dyslexic	And the yellow paper won't embarrass the child	And their work should be printed on yellow paper.	Yes
The child is dyslexic	And the yellow paper won't embarrass the child	And their work should not be printed on yellow paper.	No
The child is not dyslexic.	And the yellow paper won't embarrass the child	And their work should be printed on yellow paper.	Yes
The child is not dyslexic.	And the yellow paper won't embarrass the child	And their work should not be printed on yellow paper.	Yes

Table 3: A truth-table concerning the logical relationship between the following propositions: 'the child is dyslexic' and 'their work should be printed on yellow paper' and 'the yellow paper might embarrass the child'.

The logic of the situation has become more complex¹². Now the rule can be written as follows: If [P and not-R], then Q. Again, the next step would be to challenge those philosophical inconceivabilities with more intermediate cases. To be objective, one would have to say everything that can be said about a particular case, include *all* intermediate cases. Thus, we cannot be objective, only *more* objective.

I am not using truth-tables here in the manner they are used in formal logic. Instead, here I am employing them as a *tool* that we might use to question ourselves and come up with facts of types (b) and (c). Logical analysis is, in this way, a continuous form of nourishment for the soul. We make a declaration, in which we cannot help but be invested, but then subject ourselves to scrutiny and suffer the humiliation of being wrong. If we do not accept this humiliation then we are deceiving ourselves, just as if the teacher above refuses to see that her justification does not hold.

2.21 You *must* accept the authority of another human or group

Descartes (1996) method of doubt *appeared* to pose an exclusive disjunction concerning the mind and the body: either the world *as I perceive it* is true, or it is not. The most obvious solution to the contradiction is simply to pick a side: either our ideas are correct, or the fact that they contradict

¹² The number of iterations is equal to 2^n (where n is the number of propositions).

other facts about the external world is enough to jettison them entirely. The Immaterialist (or idealist) solution is to claim that the material world either does not exist, or exists as an artefact of the immaterial world (the world of ideas, the mental realm). Berkeley (1996) argued that we could neither directly experience the external world, nor infer it from our experience. However, he still required the existence of something outside himself against which he could measure his experiences, make them cohere and make sense. For this purpose, in a similar move to that made by Descartes, Berkeley invoked the existence of God. Thus, according to this view, the authority of the church, or the Bible, or the tenets of faith must ultimately be submitted to, and it is in such authority that we can find our certainty.

Many such mystical responses to the problems of scepticism have their roots back in Plato's original response to Meno's paradox. This authority, however, need not always be religious. For example, Kitchen (2014) in *Authority and the Teacher*, as aforementioned, dismisses Plato's solution, but simply replaces the mystical authority of the forms with the mystical authority of the teacher. In one sense this might appear obvious: a student will know whether they know something if the teacher informs them they know it! This might be communicated to the student in a variety of ways: a verbal affirmation, marks in their books, a test result etc... Thus, Kitchen argues, effectively, the students *ought* to submit to the authority of the teacher because the teacher is a *master* of their subject and the students are *novices*.

An analysis of the *necessity* of authoritarianism

Whilst this may be the practical reality in many classrooms, there is nothing logically necessary or true about Kitchen's position. Firstly, and most obviously, teachers are not infrequently wrong. Kitchen tries to side-step this by arguing that the teacher has this authority 'on the basis of a mandate issued by a community' (loc.1176). Again, however, communities can also be wrong. Secondly, what is the teacher's criteria for knowing? Simply because they have been taught it too? This appears to be an infinite regress. Equally, these same questions can be asked of those who place authority in religious works, for example in the Bible. One only has to notice the myriad interpretations of the Bible to realise that such writings are not sources of certainty. And, according to the view presented here, nor should they be.

One must, of course, stand up to authority that is based on force or coercion. Those who claim such authority are hypocrites. But there are other kinds of authority which are based on truth and it is a good foil for one's own arrogance to be guided and challenged by such sources. It would be equally arrogant and foolish to dismiss the virtue of trusting in others, especially those wiser and more experienced than oneself. I may trust the opinions of my superiors, and thus submit to their opinions. I have a friend who is a vet with a PhD in veterinary ethics; if I were concerned about whether I should euthanize a pet, I would not trust my ethical understanding and so would defer to him. This echoes the virtue epistemology espoused by Sockett (2012) who ascribes to the view of Ernst Sosa

(1991, p.277) that ‘knowledge is true belief out of intellectual virtue, belief that turns out right by reason of the virtue and not just by coincidence’. We believe somebody to be justified in their belief because we trust them – they exhibit the *virtues* of someone who is trustworthy. Finally, I am very wary that my remarks above may be construed as critical of the mystical aspect of the work of Plato (and Augustine, Averroes, Rumi, Avicenna, Philo, Aquinas for example). My concern is that the way in which such writings are misused for the sake of power, not in the mystical elements themselves.

I. When we force a particular aspect on an object we impose our *self* upon it. If we impose a particular aspect, then we necessarily ignore the aspects seen by other people, and sometimes miss the point entirely.

In the second half of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1967) devotes quite a few pages to discussing how one can see different *aspects* of the same thing, despite it not changing in itself: He writes, ‘I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience “noticing an aspect”.’ (1967, p.193) I can look at a pen and see a pen; or I can look at a pen and see it as a headscratcher. Wittgenstein uses the duck-rabbit picture (figure 2) to illustrate his point:

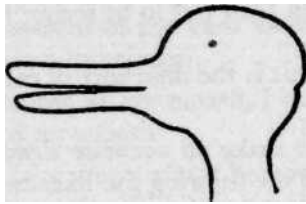


Figure 2 It can be seen as a rabbit's head or a duck's' (Wittgenstein 1968, p.194)

What concerns us here, is how this ability to see something as one thing, and then another, changes our expectations even if the thing itself does not change. If, for example, I see the picture as a duck, I might find it more likely it will move to the left rather than the right, and be surprised otherwise. These possibilities are *built-in* to the way in which I understand the image; they *are* the way in which I understand the image. To miss an aspect is to misunderstand what one is looking at. There is also an overtly moral sense to aspect-seeing: it is clearly wrong to wilfully ignore an aspect of something for the sake of expediency. The belief that there is some necessity in the world, is so charming, precisely because it is so wrong: it promises us power and control. Hayek (2012, vol.1, p.8) describes how it...

...gives us a sense of unlimited power to realize our wishes, while [evolutionary rationalism] leads to the insight that there are limitations to what we can deliberately bring about, and to the recognition that some of our present hopes are delusions.

In academic writing, the idea of enforcing upon someone, or a group of people a particular identity or method of representation has often been called *colonisation*, (e.g. Lynch & O'neill 1994, p.307) which is indicative of the power-struggles involved in classifying. Whilst the quasi-mechanical approach of

Bourdieu (1984) in *Distinction* doesn't necessarily fit with the philosophical outlook expressed here, his description of classification as a form of 'symbolic violence' (p.358) is very powerful. As is his description of what is at stake:

What is at stake in the struggles about the meaning of the social world is power over the classificatory schemes and systems which are the basis of the representations of the groups and therefore of their mobilization and demobilization: the evocative power of an utterance which puts things in a different light (p.479)

When we define something (with the assumption that this definition is in anyway fixed) we *act* upon the world, and thus make our-*selves* manifest in the world. Imposing a particular definition, or method of representation, or a particular way of looking on the world also fundamentally misconstrues the nature of words and their meanings. As Wittgenstein (1967, §67) points out, a word has many different uses, with each having only a 'family resemblance' to the others. Relying on only one definition of a term can create very arbitrary dichotomies and overly-simplistic descriptions of the world. If we look at the debate concerning teacher authority, we will be able to see how a failure to accept nuances of meaning and multiplicity results in fruitless argument.

Within educational circles, *authority* is an extremely contentious issue. Broadly speaking, the 'traditionalists' take the view that children *ought* to submit to the authority of the teacher, and the 'progressives' question that and suggest that power ought to be shared. The central concern of Kitchen (2014) in *Authority and the Teacher*, for example, is the 'onslaught of progressivism' (p.41). He believes authority is a necessary part of education. Kitchen is not alone in his position; Wilson's (1981) ideas of school discipline are built upon submission to rules and obedience to the teacher. Similarly, Weber (1958), who described three types of *legitimate* authority: rational (or legal), traditional, and charismatic (p.216). Many after Weber identified a fourth distinct type - 'professional authority' (Pace and Hemmings, 2007). Professional authority is constructed by the teacher assuming the role of a professional expert and is inextricably linked to the teacher's educational goals (Grant, 1988; Pace, 2003a; Pace and Goodman, 2008). Arum (2009) and Rogers (1998) also appear to support Kitchen in his belief that there is some form of crisis of authority in the classroom - although I am uncertain as to how one might prove such a belief as being fact.

A central figure for the *progressives* is arguably Carl Rogers with his 'client' or 'child-centred' approach. The aims of Rogers are quite distinct from those of Kitchen: Rogers (2003) defines democratic education as aiming towards 'universal suffrage' and 'Universal suffrage makes every man a ruler. If every man is a ruler, every man needs the education that rulers ought to have' (loc.6461). Gewirtz (2000) and Clark (1998) also dismiss order by control because they do not believe it can lead to self-discipline, on the grounds that it cannot result in an understanding of 'the internal value of the activities they are engaged in.' (Clark 1998, p.295)

This debate has been enormously influential for educators, but I would argue that trying to pin down the meaning of a word like *authority* is a philosophical distraction. Presumably, the hope is that by shoehorning concepts into position we can create fixed rules that govern their use and thus persuade people of our prejudices. The true nature of the question is completely obfuscated by the attempts to define and categorise authority. Many recognise the indeterminacy of their definitions (Weber 2009; Macleod et al. 2012; Pace 2003b) but still appear to believe that such a task can reap rewards. I would suggest that at the root of this obfuscation is the way in which teachers, management, and politicians all position their *selves* in the debate. Politicians impose their *selves* by constructing targets, and tests; management by unquestioningly passing on the pressure onto their staff; teachers by failing to express themselves honestly. A clearer approach is described by Biesta (2016, pp.388-389), who writes that good teaching...

...does not reduce the student to an object but rather has an interest in the student's subjectness. But it does not overcome authoritarianism by opposing it (which would mean leaving students entirely to their own devices, that is, to their own learning-as-signification). It does so by establishing an entirely different relationship. ... we authorise what and who is other by letting it be an author, that is, a subject who speaks and addresses us.

How authoritarianism causes injustice

J. The solution to ethical dilemmas is to not deceive oneself.

Authoritarianism is perhaps the parent of all the dogmas I describe. Even if one is advocating submission to a power other than oneself, the root of the injustice it causes can be found in the arrogance required by the advocator. To claim that one has a monopoly on the truth, or some form of privileged access to the truth is morally abhorrent in itself. The argument that I present here suggests that one ought to recognise the contingency of the world, and that necessarily involves recognising the incompleteness of one's own judgements. Furthermore, if someone claims to have a monopoly on the truth, this more or less frees them to act exactly as they wish. Anscombe (1958) delivers a pugnacious attack on the predominant theories of normative ethics. She summarily dismisses various modern theories, including, Joseph Butler's (2006) reliance on the conscience stating that he 'appears ignorant that a man's conscience may tell him to do the vilest things' (Anscombe 1958, p. 2).

Anscombe (1958) criticises such ideas on the grounds that they are examples of 'legislating for oneself'. Anscombe dismisses this on the grounds that there can be no superiority from the legislator to the legislated upon. The legislator must lie outside the legislated upon. According to the view that I have described, that legislator is the world. Thus, Kitchen (2014) was right in the respect that education requires submission. But he was wrong to suggest it requires submission to the teacher. He was also wrong when he claims Wittgenstein is a foundationalist (see Macleod (2016)) and that this communally mandated position provides teachers with authority concerning what constitutes knowledge. No human can claim they have the authority to which another must submit. There is as

much sense in submitting to the will of another human, as there is to submitting to the will of a cup of coffee. It is to the will of 'everything that is not my will', or 'that which is the case' to which we must submit, to the rules that govern sense.

Perhaps the most obvious injustice of authoritarianism is the manner in which it fails to recognise the value of others. Simone Weil (2005) describes this beautifully below:

At the bottom of the heart of every human being, from earliest infancy until the tomb, there is something that goes on indomitably expecting, in the teeth of all experience of crimes committed, suffered, and witnessed, that good and not evil will be done to him. It is this above all that is sacred in every human being.

The good is the only source of the sacred. There is nothing sacred except the good and what pertains to it.

This profound and childlike and unchanging expectation of good in the heart is not what is involved when we agitate for our rights. The motive which prompts a little boy to watch jealously to see if his brother has a slightly larger piece of cake arises from a much more superficial level of the soul. The word justice means two very different things according to whether it refers to the one or the other level. It is only the former one that matters.

Every time that there arises from the depths of a human heart the childish cry which Christ himself could not restrain, 'Why am I being hurt?', then there is certainly injustice. For if, as often happens, it is only the result of a misunderstanding, then the injustice consists in the inadequacy of the explanation. (pp.71-72)

It is one thing to fail to recognise the incompleteness of one's own views and suffer as a result, but how much evil has been done to others in the manner described above because of a misplaced belief in the authority of a person.

2.22 You *must* accept the truths of causation

Materialism takes the opposing strategy to the idealists and concludes that the world consists of physical matter and that either the mental realm is an artefact of that matter, or that it is simply an illusion. Encouraged by the burgeoning mechanical sciences, especially of Galileo, and Newton, materialism holds that the entire Universe runs according to set *Laws of Nature*. An archetypal expression of this view was given by Laplace (1902) in the quotation from the last section. This view has the advantage that it can claim some form of objectivity. Our criterion of knowing, of certainty, becomes the scientific method of forming laws of nature based on mathematical correlations that have been observed. The future appears to be laid out in front of us, like rail-tracks.

Because people feel as if the world is somehow not as it *ought to be*, many scholars appear to assume we must *work out* what to do - that there is an underlying *formula-for-justice* somewhere, and if only we could find it, we could simply input our variables, and the algorithm will churn out the correct answer. Scholars also look at words like 'justice' and believe they are signs that must point to something. So, they point to various examples of justice in the hope of capturing its *essence*, forgetting

that the various uses of the word *justice* only have a ‘family resemblance’ (Wittgenstein 1967, §67) to each other. According to this picture, the word ‘justice’ describes a *state-of-affairs*. And if this *state-of-affairs* is just, it ought to be something we are all trying to achieve. Therefore, we simply need to define this state-of-affairs, create our formula-for-justice and input the variables. We can view the logic of this consequentialist kind of moral justification as follows:

(where [X is better than not-X] is the description of the just state-of-affairs, [if Y, then X] is the formula-for-justice, and Y is the action being justified)

1. If [X is better than not-X] and [if Y, then X], then [I am justified in doing Y],
2. [X is better than not-X] is true,
3. and [if Y, then X] is true,
4. Therefore, [I am justified in doing Y]

There are various forms of consequentialism. Perhaps the most famous version is the Utilitarianism of Bentham (1907), who sums up the spirit of consequentialism very succinctly:

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. (p.1)

Another famously materialist approach was outlined by Marx (for example Marx 1904, 1999, 2005) according to whom, it was not the will of individuals that were the driving force of history but the forces of production and the relations of production. Rawls’ (1999) theory of justice relies on a mechanistic vision, believing that if an institution were set up correctly or ‘justly’ then it would henceforth run in a ‘just’ way. Similarly, Kant (2007, p.143) wrote, ‘the problem of organizing a state, however hard it may seem, can be solved even for a race of devils, if only they are intelligent...this must be capable of solution; [it only requires] we should know the mechanism of nature to use it on men.’

An analysis of the necessity in consequentialism

To undermine this appeal to certainty, all we need do is show that we cannot say that it is necessarily true that [X is better than not-X], and that [if Y, then X].

K. The persuasiveness of the consequentialist’s justification relies in part upon the attractiveness of their conception of the consequences. Unfortunately, there is little agreement about what these consequences ought to be. (We cannot say it is necessarily true that [X is better than not-X])

Firstly, the very fact that various alternative materialist and consequentialist visions exist suggests that materialism does not provide us with any kind of *moral* certainty. If anyone were able to provide a

definition of a just state-of-affairs, it would have to be so obvious as to be undeniable. Yet this is clearly not the case as the debate has not finished. Perhaps the most famous debate has been between Rawls (1999) who argued we should define 'Justice as Fairness', and Sen (2010) who does not agree that having such an ideal is important or necessary. Recent research concerning social justice in Education is similarly riddled with debates concerning the meaning of a *just state-of-affairs*. Cribb and Gerwitz (2003) outline the tensions between three main forms of Social Justice: distributive justice; cultural justice; and associational justice. They argue current sociology fails to deal adequately with the tensions between these different conceptions. North (2006) also describes discussions of Social Justice as defined by three competing tensions: between the politics of redistribution verses recognition; between equality as sameness and equality as difference; between macro/micro practices and debates. Am I trying to ensure all my students receive the same amount of recognition, or the same access to resources? Should I be treating them the same, or differently? Should I be looking at the *big picture* or simply what is going on day-to-day? There is no method of establishing which of these numerous views is better; we cannot, for example, say it is inconceivable that redistribution is better than recognition. Cribb and Gerwitz (2003) argue there is a tendency to treat the work of sociological analysis as something that takes place 'at a distance from, or above the realm of practise' (Cribb & Gewirtz 2003, p.15). This abstraction allows one to mistake generalisations for necessary truths.

L. The persuasiveness of the consequentialist's justification also relies upon the relationship between the cause and effect (i.e. the rule that connects the two) being inviolable, thus creating a certainty about the consequences that can be used to justify actions that might otherwise be considered immoral. There can be no such inviolable rule. (We cannot say it is necessarily true that [if Y, then X])

It is also necessary for the consequentialist that their *means* of achieving their just state-of-affairs be undeniable. Yet, again, this is clearly not the case, and can never be the case. According to our formula-for-justice, society must be analogous to a mechanism, and we simply need to know which cogs to turn. Unfortunately, many of the *cogs* involved in this mechanism are people, with their own opinions and ideas, and who are unpredictable. Hayek (2012) maintains that since it is impossible for anyone to know the movements and motivations of every person in the society, the idea one could manipulate it with the intention of creating a particular result is nonsensical. Similarly, Winch (2012) describes how the units of investigation in, for example, physics are not different *in degree* from those of the Social Sciences but *in kind*. Karl Popper believed *historicism*, 'which assumes that ... [historical prediction] is attainable by discovering the "rhythms" or the "patterns", the "laws" or the "trends" that underlie the evolution of history' (Popper 2013, p.3), to be impossible. MacIntyre (2007, p.109) echoes a similar problem which he calls 'radical conceptual innovation'. You cannot predict the wheel because in predicting it, you have invented it. Winch (2012, p.87) makes the same point: 'It may help here to recall Humphrey Lyttleton's rejoinder to someone who asked him where Jazz was going: "If I knew where Jazz was going I'd be there already."'

This belief in a form of a *causal nexus*, is, as Wittgenstein (2001, §5.1361) described, ‘a superstition.’ As Hume (1985, Bk.1, pt.3, VIII) argues, the number of instances we may have observed of the conjunction of A and B has no bearing on our *logical right* to expect them to be conjoined on a future occasion. The only thing we can say about the relationship between A and B is that we often *expect* certain outcomes. Hume (1985, p.9) calls such a relationship a ‘constant conjunction of resembling perceptions’. These constant conjunctions may give rise to a scientific theory, or rule, but this scientific theory is not an expression of the *laws of nature*; it is only an expression of the coefficient describing an observed regularity. This regularity stems from *observation* and *experience*, and not from an *a priori* fact. Science is not *prescriptive* but *descriptive*. It can only describe what *has* happened, or guess at what *might* happen, but not what *must* happen. Consider how Newton’s description of the gravitational field was shown to be faulty by that of Einstein. Physics is not complete! The superstition here is the *belief* that the laws of nature will someday be complete, and therefore we must all be acting in accordance with what will someday be written down.

M. The scientific outlook is important because the criteria of correctness for saying that something is *inconceivable* must lie outside one’s self; it must necessarily involve things that are beyond the scope of the will, otherwise we would simply be talking in a private language.

Whilst discussing authoritarianism, I wrote that it is to the will of ‘everything that is not my will’, or ‘that which is the case’ to which we must submit, to the rules that govern sense, and whilst we cannot say that there is any kind of *necessity* in causality, we can say that there is some kind of necessity in what the world can show us is *not* true. In this sense, I would not want the reader to think that I have any desire to throw out science. If we give in to the temptation that we have in some way discovered an inviolable law, we will become ‘dazzled by what we know’, but there is no better cure for such hubris than having it proven to be wrong. Thus, task is not to find instances which *verify* a relationship, but that *falsify* it. ‘But that’s a *fact*’ is often taken to mean something synonymous with ‘you cannot deny that it is true’, or ‘it is certain that this is the case’. Such an exclusion of doubt is quite at odds with the nature of a ‘scientific fact’. Popper (2002, p.18) argued that what demarcated a scientific statement from a pseudo-scientific one was that ‘it must be possible for an empirical scientific system to be refuted by experience’.

One of Wittgenstein’s most famous arguments (if it can be so-called) is known as *the private language argument*:

258. Let us imagine the following case. I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign “S” and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation. —I will remark first of all that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated. —But still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition. —How? Can I point to the sensation? Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak, or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation—and so, as it were, point to it inwardly. —But what is this ceremony for? for that is all it seems to be! A definition surely

serves to establish the meaning of a sign. —Well, that is done precisely by the concentrating of my attention; for in this way I impress on myself the connexion between the sign and the sensation. —But “I impress it on myself” can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connexion *right* in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about ‘right’. (Wittgenstein 1967, §258)

By ‘criterion of correctness’ he is referring to a test, a method of falsification. A measurement is only meaningful when our will is subject to something external. If it is not, then we have no measurement at all. The answer could be anything. It would be like measuring something with an elastic band, stretching the elastic band to fit the object.

Secondly, although science deals in probabilities rather than necessities, one would be a fool to ignore these probabilities. I am not planning on jumping out of a plane without a parachute any time soon simply because I do not believe in a causal nexus. There is a way of using the methods of science to guide us. I will discuss this further in the final section, but it would seem central to find a way of working with and embracing the uncertainties we face. The poker player, Annie Duke (Firestein, 2017) describes how we should focus on the quality of the decision, not the quality of the outcome.

There's this word that we use in poker: “resulting.” It's a really important word. You can think about it as creating too tight a relationship between the quality of the outcome and the quality of the decision. You can't use outcome quality as a perfect signal of decision quality.¹³

Despite not knowing the outcomes, our decisions can still be better or worse. Aristotle spoke about the difference between happiness and blessedness: we must accept that our fates are in the hands of the gods, but that does not suggest that our lives cannot be a series of well-placed bets. And a huge part of this is in learning as many tools to prepare ourselves, all the while accepting that we may not use them. Research can provide us with those tools and prompt us to consider more eventualities. As Biesta (2007, pp.20-21) writes:

... research cannot supply us with rules for action but only with hypotheses for intelligent problem solving. Research can only tell us what has worked in a particular situation, not what will work in any future situation. The role of the educational professional in this process is not to translate general rules into particular lines of action. It is rather to use research findings to make one's problem solving more intelligent.

N. A belief in the necessity of causation imposes a particular aspect upon someone else; it is as if we disbelieve that they are capable of seeing more than one aspect of something, and thus deny their humanity.

¹³ The source is a webpage, hence no page number.

To describe the injustice caused by consequentialism, I shall use the example of students with SEMHD. The difficulties surrounding the labelling of BESD (SEMHD) are well-documented (Upton 1978; Needs 1978; Smith & Thomas 1993; Cooper 1996). Here I want to focus specifically on the aetiological confusion. (Aetiology is the study of causation or origin). There is a temptation to view students with SEMHD, for example, as malfunctioning versions of humans. It is clear why this happens; the internal script goes – ‘most students can do X, but this student can’t. Therefore, this student isn’t functioning properly, and there must be a cause of that’. In this light, it is easy to see why a teacher might initially believe that having authority over a child with SEMHD poses a moral dilemma: How can it be just to punish a child for something they cannot do? The question appears to be whether the behaviour of the child is in some way determined by their biology or social upbringing. One might, for example, cite, as an explanation of SEMHD, attachment theory, in which Bowlby (1969) argued the relationship between an infant and adults is not just about needing food and other basic instincts, but also about the physical and emotional relationship, which helps the infant to develop healthy emotional thoughts and expectations. Thus, a secure attachment is understood as the basis for healthy socialisation (Elliott & Place 2012; Geddes 2006) and insecure attachment leads to difficulties in controlling impulses and poor relationships with others (Talbot 2002). When a baby suffers from an insecure attachment, their levels of bio-chemicals are all skewed and their bodies do not react ‘normally’ (Gerhardt 2014, p.83). One could conclude from all this that the cause or explanation of the child’s behaviour can be found in the way in which the child has been nurtured by their parents or caregivers. I am not suggesting attachment theory is a bad theory, but if one were to attempt to reduce every action a child performed down to one explanatory principle, one would fail to properly see the child; all her hopes, dreams and intentions are reduced to effects of her upbringing as opposed to originating in her-self. In doing this, we de-soul her. It would be as if a student is analogous to a faulty cable – ‘there is something in the cable which is causing signal loss’. But we measure a cable’s *faultiness* against the intention with which it was created. A school student is not created with intention by human beings, and therefore the analogy does not apply. The student is not a tool to achieve some ends; they are the ends. In the *Social Nature of Mental Illness*, Bowers (2003, p. 195) contends that aetiological theorising ‘far from emphasising the humanity of the mentally ill, actually portrays them as passive responders in the face of social pressures’.

Gaita (2002, p.91) similarly emphasises the weaknesses of such causal theories when he asks how useful *social evolutionary theory* will be to understanding ourselves:

Will the concept of pair-bonding help us to understand what we have celebrated in fidelity or, for that matter, in certain forms of promiscuity? Will the concept of territorial instinct show us what love of country can be and enable us rightly to distinguish it from jingoism? Will evolutionary theories of altruism tell us even a little about the nature of compassion for the severely afflicted, of its purity when all traces of condescension are absent from it, or of its power to reveal the full humanity of those whose affliction has made their humanity invisible? In any of these examples, can it help us to distinguish the reality of the virtue from its many false semblances?

To confer humanity upon someone else means to see them *as* someone who is responsible for their actions, and as someone with choice, with intention, yet if people were predictable, that would mean phrases like *blame*, and *moral responsibility* could no longer be applied to them, since their actions did not *originate* with them. Ted Honderich (2015, p.187) contends that according to this logic, we are not responsible for our actions and therefore have no ‘free will’: ‘...on every occasion when we act, we can only act as in fact we do. It follows too that we are not responsible for our actions ...’. On this count, Karl Marx’s materialism (for example Marx 1904, 1999, 2005) was coherent insofar as he did not (ostensibly at least) advocate using moral terms in his work, believing ‘they promulgate illusions, half-truths, misleading arguments, incomplete analyses, unsupported assertions, and implausible premises’ (Carver 1991, p.89). Not all those who write in the Marxist tradition respect this fear though: Bowles and Gintis (2002) argued for more focus on what schools *should become*. But for a Marxist, since everything is determined anyway, what can *should* possibly mean? It seems paradoxical to claim that on the one hand Communism is a *logical* inevitability, and then claim on the other it is a *moral* necessity. Equally, another writer in the Marxist tradition, Paul Willis, was accused by Walker (1986) of *dualism* because he created a distinction between the agency of the youths he was studying and the mechanistic economic system. If Marxism justifies a form of behaviour, then they cannot have agency.

2.23 You *must* accept that there exist *necessary* logical/rational truths

As we can see, Descartes mind-external world duality has resulted in the vision that there are two distinct kinds of reasoning. This is commonly known as Hume’s ‘fork’: all objects of reason are either ‘relations of ideas’ (mathematical or ideas) and ‘matter of fact’ (information that comes to us through the senses). The logical-positivists attempted to build their certainty upon the tines of Hume’s distinction. On the one hand was the certainty provided by experience, on the other, the certainty that stemmed from the *a priori* concepts of logic and pure mathematics.

I argue that neither the logicism, nor the empiricism can offer anything like the certainty that is desired, and in the process of constructing systems based on either tine, we throw a veil over the contingency of the world. Wittgenstein (1991, p.18) suggests our tendency to err towards these two tenets stems from our...

...preoccupation with the method of science. I mean the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural laws; and, in mathematics, of unifying the treatment of different topics by using a generalization.

An analysis of the *necessity* of logical-positivism

O. The language-game we find ourselves playing depends upon the way we look at objects, the *aspects* that we see. Different aspects entail different expectations and possibilities (of which there can be many - hence they can often be vague).

I shall use an educational example to explain my contentions with the logical-positivist's outlook. According to the logical positivist, we can only meaningfully define knowledge in terms of the way in which it is demonstrated, i.e. the capability to perform. One can see the temptation to say something like, *if the child did not put the correct answer, then to all intents and purposes they did not **know** the correct answer*. This is a spectacularly problematic position to hold, and adopting it has grave moral implications. From this, we would have to conclude that were Stephen Hawking no longer able to communicate, we would be unable to meaningfully say he *knew* things. By the same token, if there were no way of demonstrating it, neither could anyone meaningfully say, 'Stephen Hawking loves...'. A compassionate logical positivist might respond to this by saying that what we *really mean* by saying 'Stephen Hawking knows/loves...' was 'were he able to demonstrate knowledge/love, he would'. I outright reject this approach, and the assumption that all utterances can be reduced to an abstracted set of universal logical rules for the following reasons:

Firstly, different domains have different rules - compare the rules governing the writing of a police report with those of writing poetry.

Secondly, the direct-reference theory of meaning is mistaken. This is the foundation of, for example, Zabzebski's (2010, p.50) approach to the meaning of a word described in the introduction, that 'a natural kind term such as "water" or "gold" or "human" refers to whatever is the same kind of thing or stuff as some indexically identified instance'. I shall give two reasons why it is mistaken: 1) Not all words are names or signs - if I 'er' and 'um' during a conversation, to what can we point to illustrate the meaning of those utterances? 2) If I believe a word or a sentence is symbolic of something in the world, then I separate my language from the world; it leads to a kind of dualism whereby language becomes something that exists in parallel to the world rather than something that exists *in* the world. Because of this false separation, we then have the entirely unnecessary question of how the two worlds are connected. Take the following two phrases:

- What one says
- What is the case.

This looks like an identity matching the two *whats*. Although we think these two words must refer to the same thing, there is nothing in common between them (Hacker). The early Wittgenstein believed that what connected them was something *metalogical* - the *sense* of the sentence, but later rejected this view. There is no such identity, quite simply because they are not the same thing! The word 'chair' is

not the same thing as a chair. This confusion can be very easily tempered by learning to pay attention to different *aspects* (Wittgenstein, 1967) of a person, or indeed anything else. If I make a prediction, for example, 'if you sit on that chair, then it will break', I am not relating two events with a rule, I am relating two *representations* of events with a rule. If we become overly fixated on one single method of representing something, we will then miss other possibilities - we will miss its *multiplicity*. The agreement between language and reality consists in what is *shown* in the actual use of expressions, i.e. the difference that using that particular word makes.

Connected to this is my third reason: Logic cannot exist without experience. Take the following example: I once taught a student who could count perfectly well, though it was fair to say she had no real idea what the numbers *meant*. Whilst she was learning her times-tables I had to *explicitly* tell her the answer to each question. I could say to her: $2 \times 2 = 4$, $2 \times 3 = 6$, $2 \times 4 = 8$... but she had no idea how to *go on*; she did not know the *rules*. Wittgenstein (1967a, §218) described such rules appearing like 'a visible section of rails invisibly laid to infinity.' to lay in front of us like train tracks. So then can we not just teach her the *rules*? With this student, no! I was unable to find any expression of the rules she could understand. (An expression of a rule is no more a rule, than the words 'my brain' are my brain.) As Wittgenstein points out, this rail analogy is misleading. It 'springs from a tendency to sublime the logic of our language' (1967a, §38), the tendency to abstract language from its setting, from its context and attempt to make it do what it will not do. Such rules are embedded in practices, in the content and context, and thus simply do not exist without them. Wittgenstein (1967a, §221) describes the rail analogy as a 'symbolical expression' that was 'really a mythological description of the use of a rule'.

Fourthly, how do we verify understanding as opposed to knowledge regurgitation. A child might be able to repeat the correct words given a cue but not have the first clue what these words *mean*. For example, a student may know the date of the battle of Hastings, yet may still wonder why the USA did not come to the aid of the English. One option is to create yet more propositions that enumerate the connections between propositions. This is not possible in all situations, however, since not all knowledge is explicit. Some knowledge is based on what Wittgenstein (1968, p.228) calls 'imponderable evidence':

Imponderable evidence includes subtleties of glance, of gesture, of tone.

I may recognize a genuine loving look, distinguish it from a pretended one (and here there can, of course, be a 'ponderable' confirmation of my judgment). But I may be quite incapable of describing the difference. And this not because the languages I know have no words for it. For why not introduce new words? —If I were a very talented painter I might conceivably represent the genuine and the simulated glance in pictures.

Ask yourself: How does a man learn to get a 'nose' for something? And how can this nose be used?

We can tell whether someone is annoyed with us, for example, without necessarily being able to pin down why we know such a thing. Of course, I accept that in many cases this imponderable knowledge may be made ponderable. Paul Ekman (2004), for example, does this in his face mapping techniques

for registering emotions, or Banaji & Greenwald (2013) use subconscious millisecond timing techniques to establish unconscious bias. Unfortunately, these techniques are not often available for the teacher in the classroom. Even if they are, imponderable knowledge is often made ponderable *post hoc*. It may be pointed out to me that I could tell the other person was annoyed with me because their lips were curled when they spoke to me, but I *recognise* the truth of this description after the fact. I may not have been able to say *before* that ‘if their lips curl when they talk to me, then I will know they are annoyed with me’.

Finally, even if it were possible to make all imponderable knowledge, ponderable, it would not always be possible, or practicable to make all the methods of verification explicit. The methods of verification would become ever more complicated with the number of possible answers that could be judged passable. If the question was merely ‘ $2+2=?$ ’ we can clearly state that 2 is a better answer than anything else. With, for example, an essay, there are more possible answers than there are people who answer it multiplied by the number of occasions on which each person answers it. This level of complication, this combinatorial explosion, then tempts people into creating generalised algorithms for marking and levels. However, as one realises the poverty of one’s first attempt, such a positivist approach will soon get out of hand as one develops more and more strands to one’s algorithms; strands that flit in and out of the core levels in ever more complicated arrangements. These strands are often referred to as *skills* or *competencies* but these are at best heuristics, rules of thumb. There is nothing wrong with heuristics, and I am very much in favour of them. They are tools that can be taught and that can be very helpful, but to view them as mechanical elements of a working mind is probably fallacious.

How a belief in the necessity of logical-positivism causes injustice

P. By attempting to fix the identity of someone or something, one displays a ‘contempt for the particular case’. One denies other possibilities, and forces a particular way of looking at something.

Any system of logic is dependent upon one’s ability to group and create sets of things in the world. However, relying on only simplified notions of what things are, giving priority to the word over and above that which it is intended to describe, brutalises that which we wish to describe and thus describes it inaccurately. Within teaching, especially within our treatment of students with SEMHD, there is a grave danger that the hubristic imposition of identities may result in fallacious justifications. In placing too much importance on labels such as ADHD, autism, or even target grades, we risk disguising many facets of the person we wish to describe. (I am not arguing education professionals are always guilty of this, I am merely highlighting a temptation.) If we become overly fixated on one single method of representing something, we will then miss other possibilities - we will miss its multiplicity. It would be as if we were trying to complete a jigsaw but for some reason believing we cannot rotate the pieces. Adichie (2008) describes the injustice of a person being treated as a part of only one story. She

‘does not accept the idea of monolithic authenticity’ (p.48) for this reason. Consider all the different aspects of Adichie’s identity:

I am Igbo because I grew up speaking Igbo and was raised with Igbo cultural norms—... I am Nigerian because of the passport I carry and the football team I root for in the World Cup. I am African because I find similar concerns, similar ways of looking at the world, in a lot of African people and literature and history. And I am all these and more at the same time. (p.49)

Each is an entirely different *aspect* of herself, and each comes with a variety of expectations and possibilities. To deny her any of these *aspects* is to deny her identity, it is an example of what Wittgenstein (1991, pp.17-18) called, ‘the contemptuous attitude towards the particular case’.

No two phrases are entirely synonymous in terms of their meaning, to treat them as such is to lose much of what is important. If we ‘translate’ the utterances of a toddler into this ideal language, we will lose all the cuteness. This cuteness is part of the meaning of the sentence. In more extreme cases, such a belief in ideal logical rules is simplistic to the point of parody: if my wife lay dying, unable to speak and I said, ‘I know she loves me’, I would not be too impressed if someone then said, ‘no, what you mean is *if she could demonstrate her love for you she would.*’ Raimond Gaita (2004, p.xxi) makes a similar comparison between someone expressing shock at wronging someone else by saying ‘My God what have I done? How could I have done it?’ and a host of other phrases describing various attempts to reduce morality to a single principle: ‘My God what have I done? I have violated the social compact, agreed behind a veil of ignorance; ...I have violated rational nature in another; ...I have diminished the stock of happiness; ...I have violated my freely chosen principles.’

Wittgenstein (1967, p.178) wrote, ‘The human body is the best picture of the human soul.’ He means humanity is present in the subtle inflexions of life, not dull-footed scientism. We often resort to psychology and science when we cannot *read* people, but we must rail against our tendency to see another as a part of our theories about the world. This is not easy; it is as if we are trying to see a single piece of a jigsaw as a thing of value in itself, rather than as a part of a whole.

2.24 You *must* accept that a lack of foundations renders moral judgement merely a matter of emotion.

Building upon Hume’s fork, A. J. Ayer (1976) followed the logical-positivists in arguing that the requirements for an empirical hypothesis were, ‘that some possible sense-experience should be relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood.’ (p.2) For Ayer, any proposition that did not satisfy this principle of verification, and was not tautologically true was ‘metaphysical, and that, being metaphysical, it is neither true nor false but literally senseless.’ (p.2) Ayer found that ethical statements fell into this final category:

‘Sentences which simply express moral judgements do not say anything. They are pure expressions of feeling and as such do not come under the category of truth and falsehood. They are unverifiable for the same reason as a cry of pain or a word of command is unverifiable – because they do not express genuine propositions.’ (p.68)

Perhaps there is nothing more terrifying than the idea that there are no intellectual foundations to our morality. Kauffman & Sasso (2006) for example, refer to the relativism of postmodernism as ‘poisonous’ and ‘intellectually bankrupt’ (p.65). Yet, they fail to make a case for any form of certainty other than repeating the word *science* as if it were God herself they were defending. But I have sympathy with their concerns. I think very foolish things have been said and done in the name of relativism. If there is no certainty, then what is truth?

An analysis of the *necessity* of emotivism

Given I am arguing there is no single way of looking at anything, and given I am refusing to accept any notion of necessity, I am leaving myself open to charges of relativism. However, whilst, given the inherent incompleteness of our judgements, we should be humble regarding our own interpretations, this does not result in a situation where *anything goes*. The confusion concerning rules arises because people get lost looking for the ‘right’ interpretation, or trying to express the *spirit* of a rule, or an answer to all things. All that is needed, however, is more description of what is *actually* done, in *actual* cases. No individual can decide what a word or rule means. Anything goes only so long as the circumstances are given that allow it to *go*. Paradoxes and contradictions do not exist *in* the world. They only exist in our language when our language does not actually describe anything. What do we expect, for example, to occur as a result of saying the *liar’s paradox*? – an appreciative ‘cool!’ from our audience, perhaps? If that is what is expected, then that is the intended meaning, and if that is the actual consequence of saying it then that is the actual meaning – nothing more. The sentence itself does not refer to a particular state-of-affairs and therefore it is meaningless to say it can be proven either true or false. By way of another example: ‘there are no rules’ looks like a paradox, but in fact needn’t be. It is only a paradox if we assume the sentence itself is a *rule*. If we take the sentence to simply be a description, i.e. synonymous with *I have not yet found a rule that does not have exceptions to it*, then there is no paradox—the sentence is either true, i.e. it is true that I have not yet found a rule that does not have any exceptions, or it is false.

In this section I elucidate some ways in which the rules governing sense and nonsense appear to be contingent, yet nonetheless do not result in a situation where anything goes. Firstly, I explain why the rules may appear to change, and secondly, I show how the existence of differences of opinion does not give us reason to believe that we can self-legislate.

Q. Language-games evolve. A concordance can be amended, details and intermediate cases given, that change the possibilities, but given the language-game as it is, there are possibilities but also other descriptions that are inconceivable.

The rules concerning sense and nonsense appear to change, and if they are not rails laid out to infinity (Wittgenstein 1967a, §218) then in what sense can they be rules at all? Here I discuss such situations.

Firstly, new events bring new rules. We can consider stories and narratives as language-games, that is, as *rule-bound activities*. If I begin to write a story, as I set the scene I also set up the *rules* that will govern the action that follows. We can call the collection of rules governing a language-game or story its *concordance*. (One can think of a Biblical *concordance* as an expression of the rules of the words in the Bible.) If the setting is a sci-fi, then things will work in certain ways, if it is magical, then another set of rules will follow and so on. If these rules are not followed, the story might appear *contrived*. The development of characters proceeds in much the same way. Each act they do will create a further set of rules that *should* govern their future behaviour. If they act *out of character*, that will need some explaining. The *truth* of a story consists in the events being bound to a concordance. This does not mean, however, that unexpected events cannot occur in books or stories. These new events merely change our expectations. So long as they were not contrived these events were always conceivable, just perhaps not expected. And as soon as one comes to terms with an unexpected event, it becomes a new language-game with a new concordance. Similarly, certain manoeuvres within a language-game can also be expressions of new rules. Imagine I walk into a classroom, fully expecting the students to behave, but then one student makes an unpleasant comment or gesture at me. Initially I am stunned, and cannot understand why he has done it. Then I remember that I had annoyed him the week prior by pointing out publicly that he'd made a mistake –so I, being petulant, say to myself, 'oh, it's going to be like that, then is it?', meaning the student has made it clear that he has not forgiven me; the student has informed me that this lesson is in fact now a rematch concerning his honour. By making the rude gesture, he expressed the new rules of the game. The point here is that he has changed my expectations, and therefore the rules. If, as part of one's narrative, one can change the expectations of someone else, then one is expressing new rules of the game.

Secondly, the interpretation of a rule might be contingent and change, but the interpretation of the rule is not the rule itself. My niece used to say, 'farmer Christmas' and my sister didn't correct her on it for ages because it was cute. In what sense was my niece wrong? One could answer, 'in the sense that *normally* people say "Father Christmas"'. But my niece was right in the sense that she was going to get a good reaction from saying it the way she said it, and she was unlikely to be misunderstood. So, we can change the rules to meet our ends? This leads us to Wittgenstein's (1968, §198) 'rule following paradox': "But how can a rule shew me what I have to do at *this* point? Whatever I do is, on some interpretation, in accord with the rule." Firstly, we can see that following a rule is different from the expression of the rule. To say, 'it is ok to say, "Farmer Christmas" because it is cute', is not a universal expression of the rules governing the use of the phrase 'Farmer Christmas' – it would not be cute if I said it. This is simply an *interpretation* of a rule. Wittgenstein (1968, §198) continues: 'That is not what we ought to say, but rather: any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets,

and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning.’ The *interpretation of the rule* is a contingent, relative statement: *if you want people to see you as cute, then you can continue to say, ‘farmer Christmas’ but when you get a bit older, people might think it’s a bit weird.* The contingency lies in the necessary incompleteness of any brute description, in the need to *qualify* the setting of the *interpretation of the rule*. The rule is thus demonstrated through the narrative, rather than explicitly said. But the rules themselves (rather than their interpretations) are not contingent, they are not *justifiable*; they are ‘not accountable to any reality. It is grammatical rules that determine meaning (constitute it) and so they themselves are not answerable to any meaning and to that extent are arbitrary’ (Wittgenstein 1991, p.184).

R. To say that something is inconceivable, is to say that one does not know a game one would have to play in order to say or do something, i.e. one cannot place a particular move into a concordance. This is the nature of differences of opinion.

Some might argue that since people do have differences of opinion and since I allow for this, I must therefore be a relativist. I do not believe, however, that allowing for differences of opinion, necessarily results in relativism. This is, however, an important issue: Tirri & Husu (2002) for example, found that most unresolved conflicts involving teachers in US secondary schools involved parents and competing views on what constituted the best interest of the child.

Firstly, what often counts for a *difference of opinion* does not concern anything moral, they are merely generalisations, expressions of identity. If one person says, ‘traditionalist teachers are bad’ and another says, ‘progressive teachers are bad’, I would argue that there is no logical or moral contradiction here. Statements such as these are uttered or written with very little in the way of a criterion of correctness. If there is no test, then there cannot really be a contradiction either. If I say, ‘blue is best’, and you say, ‘no it’s not’, if neither of us offer any criteria, (both suffer from the symptoms of being a ‘private language’) the conversation ends there – the contradiction is superficial and meaningless. Frequently, people say such truth-valueless statements, not so much because they believe them, but as expressions of their identity, of the tribe to which they aspire to belong. Where there can be no criteria by which to judge a statement, it is, to me, a brute fact that the bearer of that position would be unjustified in judging me for not agreeing, never mind forcing me in any way to abide by such a position.

Secondly, it is not the rules that change, so much as one’s knowledge and therefore understanding of the situation. The *aspects* of a situation that one sees will often depend upon one’s experience: I have witnessed many trainee teachers unwittingly say and do things whilst teaching that have made me wince; a child I taught accidentally poured water over a plug socket and could not see why I freaked out when she then went to plug something in. In each case, although that-which-is-being-looked-at is not changing, what is *seen* is. By way of another example, different contexts will draw out

different aspects of a student, leading to very different expectations. I remember taking a group of very rowdy students from Southampton to London. As soon as we stepped off the train, the students changed from being, what some might have seen as, a threatening mob on the streets of their local area, to a group of scared children on the streets of London. Equally, one might be able to reframe an event that renders the event no longer unbelievable. I might become angry at the behaviour of a child and say, 'why did you do that?' and then a second later remember that they are only eleven years old, and of course they do silly things. This is the sense we feel when we say, 'Ah, of course!', or 'I suppose so...' This could happen because we become aware of a new aspect that we had not previously seen, or a new intermediate case might have been brought to our attention.

Thirdly, a plurality of opinion will occur because people have different *forms of life*. Having said that many disagreements do not constitute contradictions, I am categorically not stating that what one teacher considers ethical must be the same as what another teacher considers ethical. By way of example: the Piraha people of the Amazonas allow their toddler children to play with large knives (Diamond 2013), I cannot be in any position to judge them for that though, because we share so little in terms of practices. I would argue, contrary to G. E. M. Anscombe (1958), that this pluralism is perfectly and logically ok. The normal criticism of pluralism is that it leads to moral relativism and (as Anscombe (1958) calls it) 'legislating for oneself' (as in Wittgenstein's private-language). However, as I described, the rules of language are embedded in our practices. If our practices are the shared then so are our rules. 'To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions)' (Wittgenstein, 1968, §199). These rules also govern our use of moral terms, and thus, one can no more label an immoral action virtuous than misuse any other word. If one does have a disagreement to the point of *brute fact* and one is convinced that they are not joking, mentally ill, self-deceiving or that one has not missed out a key point, then it is not a disagreement concerning *facts*, it is a disagreement in one's practices and entire form of life. If I lived with the Piraha for years, then perhaps we might be able to establish some shared criteria by which we can discuss the matter, but till then, I can make no judgement upon them. Our practices evolve around our needs, and if we do not have shared needs then we will struggle. If we ever meet aliens, there is every chance that their forms of life are so different to ours that communication will be as minimal as that between humans and lions. 'If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.' (Wittgenstein 1967, p.223) Between teachers, however, I would expect that our forms of life, our needs and everyday practices are similar enough that we can establish shared criteria, recognise the same brute facts and see the same obligations manifest within them.

The fact that what one person finds inconceivable, another may find conceivable, is not tantamount to relativism. For something to be entirely relative, it must be by a *private-language*, but conceivability is, as I have shown, not something private, but public. The meaning of a word is not decided upon an individual's whim, but as part of a public activity. Therefore, for a meaning to be

impermissible, or inconceivable, it is because it not being recognised as part of that shared practice. Thus, meaning is intrinsically public, and meaninglessness private.

How relativism causes injustice

I have already discussed the injustice caused by a belief in relativism at numerous points in the thesis, so I shall only briefly reiterate the main points here. If one's judgements are simply a matter of opinion, then one can believe that anything goes, and it becomes much easier to deceive oneself that whatever one wants to believe is right is right. Three things can follow from this: firstly, one can behave badly without reproach and defend oneself simply by saying something akin to, 'well I'm entitled to my opinion'. Secondly, it allows one to excuse oneself from harm that occurs to others. If it is the case that anything goes then we do not need to take on any form of responsibility for injustices that occur that are outside our immediate interests. Thirdly, given the purposeless of existence for a relativist, one is more likely to seek such purpose in one or more of the other dogmas.

2.3 Education is learning to pay attention: an ethics of responding

In this final section, I hope to answer the question posed by Meno, and referred to at the start of this chapter: Can we learn to be virtuous? By bringing together some of the main points discussed in the previous two sections, I hope to show that despite the world being chaotic, we can learn to be virtuous – simply because the world is chaotic, this does not mean that our responses must be: we can *learn to play the game well*. Firstly, I describe the form and limitations of ethical judgements, and how this leads to the following: *Given X, response Y is more virtuous than Z*. Secondly, I discuss two important tools that are available to us to improve our ethical understanding: the virtues and self-disputation. Finally, I return to the concept of *paying attention*, and show how that *all learning* is nothing more than *paying attention*.

2.31 Moral value and the virtues

According to Aristotle (2009) it was quite clear that we could educate ourselves to becoming more virtuous, and many people have attempted to apply Aristotle's virtue ethics to education. Fallona (2000) for example, using the proxy of 'manner', created a framework for applying the Aristotelian virtues to teaching (Table 4):

Moral virtue	Aristotle's definition	Application to teaching
Bravery	Having the courage and the moral strength to do the right thing	Making judgments in troubled circumstances about what is to be done and how to accomplish it
Friendliness	Having affection for someone and wishing for them what we wish for ourselves	Showing care and respect for children and accepting responsibility for them
Truthfulness	Being a person who is straightforward	Being honest, having integrity, and seeking the truth
Wit	Having tact and joking in a tasteful way	Having tact and joking/having fun with students in a tasteful way
Honour	Showing admiration and esteem toward those who merit it	Positively reinforcing students who merit it for their good efforts and work well done
Mildness	Having a good temper	Having a good temper
Magnanimity	Possessing pride, dignity, and self-esteem	Expressing dignity and pride in yourself, your students, and your profession
Magnificence	Achieving the best and most appropriate result	Modelling excellence for students
Generosity	Having the character of a giver who does good	Giving of yourself to your students (e.g., time)
Temperance	Desiring pleasure moderately and not more than is right	Keeping the expression of feeling and actions under the control of reason
Justice	Being fair and treating equals equally and unequals unequally in proportion to their relative differences	Fairness in the application of both rules and norms to individual children

Table 4: Applying the moral virtues to teaching (Fallona 2000)

Particularly with respect to teaching students with SEMHD, however, my favourite description of the virtues is Visser's (2002, p.75) list of 'eternal verities'. Visser does not use the term *virtue* to describe the items on the list, but I don't believe it takes a great leap of imagination to view them as such. By 'eternal verity' Visser is referring to those 'core factors which must be present if any

intervention is to successfully meet the needs of children and young people with EBD' (p.68) (Visser uses the old term EBD, where I have been using BESD/SEMHD). For these core factors to be *eternally true*, they cannot be contingent; they cannot be *expressions of rules*, they must be describing something *absolute*. As such, these eternal verities are, I believe, better understood as habits, as virtues, rather than rules one should follow. I shall pick out four of these here that would work well as *reminders* in a busy day.

The second eternal verity is the idea that 'intervention is second to prevention'. According to Visser (2013), nearly all approaches suggest that prevention is better than cure. A focus on such preventative positive strategies in teacher training was relatively new for the time (Visser 2002, p.77).

Visser (2002) calls the third eternal verity 'instructional reactions'. By this he means that teachers and staff ought to ensure that when they issue sanctions for inappropriate behaviours, they are also explaining to the child how their behaviour has caused this reaction. In this way, each misbehaviour is also an opportunity for the child to learn.

Visser's (2002) fourth eternal verity is the need for boundaries and challenge. Using Cole et al. (1998) he describes how teachers need to have boundaries that are flexible enough to bend but that never break. As Royer (2001) notes, an approach which is not flexible leads to all the difficulties being identified as nails because the only tool is a hammer. Boundaries should be accompanied by high, achievable expectations of behaviour and educational achievement (Cole, Visser and Upton, 1998; Daniels *et al.*, 1999). Others had identified that schools that had been identified as having serious weaknesses often had low expectations as a contributory cause (Cooper, 1993; Greenhalgh, 1994). Visser and colleagues also found that clear, consistent and coherent communication between the adults and the students was a regular feature of good practice (Cole, Visser and Upton, 1998; Daniels *et al.*, 1999). This 'transparency in communications' enables the development of a caring school ethos (Visser, Cole and Daniels, 2002).

Finally, 'humour' is not included in the list of eternal verities merely as an aside. Cole et al. (1998) found it consistently placed as one of the top characteristics of effective teachers of students with SEMHD. Porter (2000) and Visser in his later work also underline its importance (Visser, 2012). For me, humour is the most important of Visser's eternal verities, because it eases the fourth anxiety that one faces: The pressure of the demands of the virtuous life. Averroes said that comedy was the art of blame and tragedy was the art of praise. Humour places me in my proper place, lowly and stupid, a clown. And there is much comfort in that. If there is one thread I hope has been evident throughout this argument, it would be that the answer to most of our anxieties is humility. (There is an etymological argument to say that humour and humility have the same root: *humus*, or earth.) The pressure of the demands of the virtuous life are not so great when one recognises one's limits. When faced with the graces and chaos of life and death, there is no comfort in what I know, only in what I don't.

2.32 The virtues as *responses*

I would argue, however, that one important aspect of Aristotle's approach to ethics is missing here. Aristotle's virtues did not exist in a vacuum, they were *responses* to situations. Courage was the virtue that was required to deal with a situation one found to be fearful; magnificence was the virtue required to deal with situations in which one had to spend large amounts of money. Fallona's (2000) account of the virtues is far more general than that of Aristotle. By abstracting the virtues from their original concrete situations, they appear to become something *moral* in an absolute sense. But they are not absolute, they are very much relative, and thus they are very much dependent upon the situation in which one finds oneself. This must not be confused with consequentialism, however – otherwise we would be guilty of 'resulting', as described above. What is important is making the best decision based on what we know at that moment. Thus, *the virtues* are merely heuristics, or rules-of-thumb, not absolute truths.

In this sense, discussions concerning virtues are no more valuable than discussions concerning anything else. Of course, they may help us to develop our ethical understanding, but there is no substitute for paying attention. If we refuse to look, then we are also deceiving ourselves. If one is upset because a child, who continually misbehaves, misbehaves, then one is deceiving oneself. Perhaps it is true that they *ought* to behave, but to think this justifies one's feelings of irritation is to conflate the obligation which one has imposed upon the child with what one *expects*. If B follows A every time, then one is deceiving oneself if one *believes* it won't, and a fool if one gets upset when it does. Thus, there is an ethical responsibility to look, to seek to improve the quality of one's expectations, to practice seeing different *aspects* of a situation, to observe different possibilities inherent in a situation, to pay *attention*. However, even if a person looks, there is no guarantee that they will see. In this sense, our expectations are outside of our will, and given to us by the world. We can view knowledge as a collection of tools, or strategies that we have for *playing the game well* – means by which we might judge our responses to the various challenges we face.

2.33 The nature of ethical judgements

It may be argued that one cannot learn to respond to chaotic situations. If the world does not conform to any particular patterns, then every situation is different and requires a different response. And if this is the case, how do we become *better* teachers? I don't think that it is too bold to suggest *ab initio* that most teachers would reject each of the possible measures as neither individually necessary, nor collectively sufficient to define better teaching: exam results, employment rates, attendance figures, take-up rates, liberation, critical consciousness. Some may be tempted to follow Biesta's (2007, p.10) track, down the road to a kind of ethical relativism:

This is why the “what works” agenda of evidence-based practice is at least insufficient and probably misplaced in the case of education, because judgment in education is not simply about what is possible (a factual judgment) but about what is educationally desirable (a value judgment).

The view that I have put forward here is that the fact/value distinction is not as Biesta describes. Value is not about what is *desirable*, but present in *all* facts given the contingency of the world. It is, therefore, true that every situation is different, but this is not tantamount to saying that there are not similarities. It is the world that is chaotic (or at least beyond our complete comprehension) our responses need not be. As aforementioned, the rules that govern sense and nonsense are shown *in the language-games*, and so long as we are aware of the traps that language lays for us, this is where we can find the means to make meaningful ethical judgements and learn to become better.

When Duke (Firestein, 2017) discusses ‘resulting’ in poker, she is aware that what makes a decision ‘good’ is dependent upon the context; what constitutes a good decision when we have been dealt a 7 and a 2, is not the same when we have been dealt a pair of aces. Similarly, what constitutes good teaching in a class in one school, at one time of day, may not constitute good teaching in another time or place. This does not, however, mean that what constitutes good decision-making is relative, any more than what constitutes good decision-making in poker is relative. The important point is that *given a particular situation* there are better or worse ways to respond.

Thus, questions of *ends* are not so much questions of *values*, as questions of *details*. The notion of ‘point of view’ has been confused with viewpoint. Of course, the number of possible situations that a teacher can face is innumerable and new situations are created all the time. However, the solution to this apparently chaotic situation is not to be found by trying to short-cut the messiness by imposing some form of generalised purpose of education, nor is it to be found by simply shirking the issue and palming it off as a matter of opinion. To choose either of these paths is to hide the messy details, the very aspects of the situations that enable us to know our way about.

S. Moral justifications are adverbial. The ethical concerns the *spirit* in which something is done.

Instead of looking at things in this aetiological manner, we could, as Puett (1994) argues, learn from the ancient Chinese text *the Nature that Emerges from the Decree*, and simply look at things in terms of responses. According to this text, in the beginning, humans were buffeted about by nature, like plastic bags in the wind, responding emotionally to the chaos. However, over time, we found that some responses were better than others. We learnt to repeat the better actions. We can see two levels of response here:

1. The emotional, *first-order* response.
 - a. Justifications for these responses would simply refer to what had happened previously: *‘he hit me so I retaliated’*.

- b. These kinds of justifications are based simply on what one might expect in such a situation.
 - c. They use the logic of *an eye for an eye*; the *letter* of the law.
 - d. They concern what people *would* do.
 - e. They concern *verbs*; what people *do*.
2. The rational, *second-order* response.
- a. Justifications for these responses are comparative judgements about what kind of response is *better*: '*not punching him was better than punching him.*'
 - b. These kinds of justifications are based on one's expectations of one's expectations.
 - c. They concern the *spirit* of the law.
 - d. They concern what people *should* do.
 - e. They concern *adverbs*, *how* people do things.

Treating ethical terms like *justice* as referring to substantives does not pin-down anything. Neither does it clear anything up if we treat ethical terms as descriptions of acts. 'It is always wrong to kill' is, at best, only arguably true. One can imagine various meanings of the sentences 'she killed justly' or 'she killed virtuously' (he was a soldier dying in agony; she did not want to but did it because she thought it was right; she was brave etc.). We get the clearest view of the ethical if we see it as adverbial. I am saying with reference to ethics, what Oakeshott (1983) wrote in reference to law. Laws, he wrote, 'impose obligations to subscribe to adverbial conditions in the performance of the self-chosen actions of all who fall within their jurisdiction' (p.136). In this way, we can see how *that which is just* relates to *that which we expect*. Hayek (1998, vol.1, p.89) states that 'the proper function of all law, [is] of guiding expectations'. There is also a clear overlap here between this description of the adverbial nature of moral values and the descriptions of virtue in virtue ethics. Fenstermacher (2001, pp.640-641), in his research into *manner* in teaching, defined it as 'conduct expressive of dispositions or traits of character that fall into a category of moral goods known as virtues'.

T. The logical form of ethical judgements can be expressed as follows: Given situation X, response Y is a more virtuous than Z. (Moral terms are learnt in a similar way to colour terms.)

According to Puett (1994), these better actions then became rituals. Puett describes how these rituals were recorded and those that were particularly exemplary were chosen to be part of a canon of practices that everyone should follow. When learnt, these rituals were obviously stylized, abstracted behaviours, but they provided the individual with a set of moves to choose from when faced with new situations, rather like someone learning to box will learn certain sequences of movements, combinations and routines that they will be able to draw upon in a fight. Puett (1994, p.30) describes the creation of the canon of such rituals as follows:

A canon, then, is defined entirely in terms of ritual practice, a practice that emerges out of previous responses. This is, by definition, a completely open-ended argument, since any new set of actions that occur could come to be defined as exemplary. Such an argument is neither transcendental nor immanentist. The founding claim is rather that the world is inherently fractured, and the goal is to build an order, endlessly changing, through a constant process of ritualization.

According to this worldview, the key question one ought to be asking oneself is, ‘what is the most virtuous response to this situation?’ There is no necessity to discuss the future at all. This question is answered by laying potential responses side-by-side and comparing their virtue. Again, I think a most fruitful analogy is to be made with how judgements are made in law, specifically *common law*. In common law, the court looks to past decisions, establishes analogy with the current facts (or shows that no analogy is relevant) and synthesises and applies the past decisions. Clearly, the more cases a lawyer knows, the better they will be able to do their job. Here *cases* are synonymous with Wittgenstein’s *language-games*. Through collecting these cases and the judgements upon them, one develops one’s ethical awareness.

One might now ask, ‘how do we know that one response is *better* (or more virtuous) than another?’ The solution to this question is not provided in an answer of the form, ‘an act is more virtuous if...’ but by recognising the kind of answer we are looking for. We know what is moral in the same way we know what is blue, and we know what it means to act morally, in the same way we know what it means to run quickly. The pictures that have held us captive made it appear as if we have some form of choice as to what we consider to be virtuous. But we don’t have any such choice, just as we don’t have any choice as to whether ‘blue’ is a meaningful description of an object. That which is ethical is *recognised* in the sense that it is seen, or manifest in the situation. The ethical is *demanded by the situation*. Thus, it is a mistake to think that ‘justice’ can be prescribed *a priori*. Sen’s (2010) capabilities, for example, cannot be prescribed as a list of ‘canonical capabilities’ *a priori*. ‘Canonical capabilities’ are fundamentally things that we *expect* people to be able to do, and expectations are not *intentionally created*; they are embedded in situations. In my first year or so of teaching, I discovered that one of my students could not read at all. I walked around the school with her, and she had no idea what signs like ‘walk on the left’ or ‘head-teacher’s office’ or ‘fire hose’ or ‘languages’ said. When I discovered this, I was *surprised*— I had *expected* her to be able to read at least a bit. My thinking was that she *ought* to be able to at least function according to the *expectations* of the school – i.e. be able to read signs, ‘queue here’ etc.... In the language of *capabilities*, she *ought to have been capable* of reading the signs. It was the *situation* that *demanded* this.

My description here may be confused with that of G. E. Moore (2004, §6): ‘If I am asked, “What is good?” my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter.’ The confusion may be especially tempting given I have also compared moral terms with colour terms. However, Moore’s (2004) solution to his version of Meno’s paradox was to call upon *intuition*. It would be tempting to do the same here. But that will not solve our problems.

So it must have been intuition that removed this doubt? – If intuition is an inner voice—how do I know *how* I am to obey it? And how do I know that it doesn't mislead me? For if it can guide me right, it can also guide me wrong.
 ((Intuition an unnecessary shuffle.)) (Wittgenstein 1967, §213)

Intuitionists effectively deny any criterion by which we might decide what is morally right, and I do not. There are criteria, and moral terms do have meaning, but these can only be *shown* and not *said*. They are shown in the fact that one does or does not understand what is *meant* by an utterance. We cannot provide any other kind of justification because the rules of grammar, and therefore of morality, are (to us) arbitrary:

Why don't I call the rules of cooking arbitrary; and why am I tempted to call the rules of grammar arbitrary? Because 'cooking' is defined by its end, whereas speaking of a language isn't. Therefore, the use of language is autonomous in a certain sense in which cooking and washing aren't. For anyone guided by other than the correct rules when he cooks, cook badly; but anyone guided by rules other than those for chess plays a different game, and anyone guided by grammatical rules other than such and such doesn't as a result say anything that is false, but is talking about something else. (Wittgenstein 2013, p.187)

The only justification we can offer is 'don't think, but look!' (Wittgenstein 1967, §66)

This manner of improving one's ethical understanding via apprenticeships with cases, mirrors how we learn ethical terms. Wittgenstein (1967, §77) specifically suggests that we look at how words are learnt:

In such a difficulty always ask yourself: How did we *learn* the meaning of this word ("good" for instance)? From what sort of examples? in what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings.

When learning the word 'blue', at first a child may learn to distinguish between blue and red, for example. But as they grow, they will learn more nuanced applications. They might then learn the meaning of turquoise, and then navy blue, and then teal. We can also imagine how someone might *use* the word *blue* to distinguish between one object and another, even if the object isn't what Dulux would class as *blue* at all. Equally, a child might begin by saying 'it's not fair' simply when they don't get what they want; then they might say it when someone gets something that they don't get; then they might say it when they believe someone is being vindictive towards them. A person's understanding of moral terms changes and grows all the time, just as a person's understanding of colour terms changes. But this is not a matter of choice, nor a matter of belief, it is a matter of understanding; the ethical is *recognised* not believed. In this sense, what one person considers virtuous may be different from what another person considers virtuous; but again, this isn't a matter of choice, only understanding.

One can compare this understanding of ethics with the normative theories of deontology, and consequentialism, using Hayek's (2012) distinction between two different conceptions of Law, *nomos* and *thesis*. *Thesis* are rules that have been *intentionally invented* by people, whereas *nomos* are rules that are simply recognised as *the way things are*. Consider the rules of English grammar, they have not been decided by anyone, they have simply survived. Of course, they *evolve* and change, and of course,

retrospectively we might be able to assign a reason or purpose to their being as they are, but no single individual can cause this to happen. As one develops one's ethical understanding, as one becomes aware of more and more cases, one's responses become more nuanced. Learning, therefore, is the refinement of one's responses through apprenticeship with cases. Note how, I have not stated this in terms of a *purpose* of education. This would be nonsensical – one could never reach a stage where one had accurate expectations about everything! Thus, this process of refinement, and education has an inherently negative character. Nomos does not so much tell us *what to do* but rather *what is wrong*. Nomos 'is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.' (John 15:1-2). This seems to me to reflect well our psychological approach to education:

... a work is never completed except by some accident such as weariness, satisfaction, the need to deliver or death: for, in relation to who or what is making it, it can only be one stage in a series of inner transformations. (Valéry 1971, p.xvi)

Hence, there can be no 'rubric', or algorithms, or methods of verification, or human authority to follow to achieve one's aims, since one's aims cannot be described. Because of the contingency of the world, we can never say that a particular response is *best* in an absolute sense. We simply could not know such a thing. Thus, the logical form of moral judgements is comparative; our judgements are inevitably incomplete. Given the context, response Y may well be better than response Z, but there is no reason to believe that you have come up with the *best* response. All we can say is that response y is the best response we can think of. In this sense, I would understand why someone might think that moral judgements are *transcendental*. They seem to point at something, have a kind of direction; it is transcendently teleological – we assume some form of purpose, but we cannot know what that purpose is, nor speak of it. Thus, perhaps a better word would be *teleonomic*. Pittendrigh (1958, p.394) coined the term to remove the confusion caused by describing something in terms of its *apparent* ends, despite one not knowing what those ends might be:

Biologists for a while were prepared to say a turtle came ashore and laid its eggs. These verbal scruples were intended as a rejection of teleology but were based on the mistaken view that the efficiency of final causes is necessarily implied by the simple description of an end-directed mechanism. ... The biologists long-standing confusion would be removed if all end-directed systems were described by some other term, e.g., 'teleonomic', in order to emphasize that recognition and description of end-directedness does not carry a commitment to Aristotelian teleology as an efficient causal principle.

Unlike in English (and apparently most other languages), where our metaphors tend to describe the future as being ahead of us, in the Aymara language, the future is behind them: 'the future in Aymara is what has not been seen' (Miracle and Moya, 1981, p.33). English is concerned with where we are going. We *face* the future. Consider how educational language is littered with future obsessed terms: progress, outcomes, targets, goals, aims, objectives. Ethical language must be more like that of the Aymara, and turn its back on the future. I must not worry where I am going but pay attention to

where I am. Oriented towards the future, we are pitted against the unknown, against the fear of what happens next. We are brutalised and defined by what we lack, by our desires, and by the extent of our power to bend events to our will. By turning our backs on the future, we quite literally give ourselves time. Like Hitchens (2010), one might argue that it is madness to suggest we ‘take no thought for the morrow’. Borrowing C. S. Lewis’ (1952, p.56) trilemma, Hitchens argued this central tenet of Christ’s teaching could only have been said by a mad-man, a liar, or the Son of God. But I doubt such a thought would seem insane to the Aymara. Perhaps it only fills us with horror because our language urges us to submit to a belief in the *judgement of history*. Neither does not worrying about tomorrow exclude the possibility we might invest or learn, as Hitchens argues. One might well invest or learn, not because of concerns about ‘the morrow’, but simply because it is the correct *response* to a situation.

Consequentialism permeates all our thinking about education: a lesson is only valuable if ‘progress’ is shown; a teacher is only valuable if ‘targets’ are achieved; schooling is only valuable if it enables a child to ditch her roots; and knowledge is only valuable as a tool for creation. But this is all wrong. We’d do well to recall the words of Francis Bacon (2008, Bk.1 §129):

Without doubt the contemplation of things as they are without superstition or imposture, without error or confusion, is in itself a nobler thing than the whole harvest of inventions.

U. Different conceivable possibilities and expectations are not beliefs, or predictions about the future; they are *seen* or embedded in the way in which we look at a particular state-of-affairs.

Some might suggest that I appear to be saying that ethical behaviour is dependent upon one’s linguistic ability. I would reply that there is a sense in which one person’s understanding might be more nuanced than another’s. However, the relative degree of nuance in one’s understanding is irrelevant as to whether one acts ethically. To act ethically is to act in accordance with the demands of one’s ethical understanding, *whatever that may be*. There is no literature in the educational sphere which specifically attempts to define *conscience* beyond references to one’s intuitions, so I will draw on a distinction made by Aquinas (2014) in *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas makes a distinction between ‘synderesis’ and ‘conscientia’; He defines synderesis as a *habit* or disposition to distinguish between right and wrong, and conscientia, as the *acting* in accordance with that judgement. Similarly, though not equivalently, I would make a distinction between one’s *ethical understanding* and whether one acts in accordance with that ethical understanding —one might say *whether one acts in accordance with one’s conscience*. To act in accordance with one’s conscience, means to refrain from self-deception. To act ethically is to not deceive oneself. Only when one is not deceiving oneself can one see moral value, or *the good*. Some might object to my continual references to self-deception on the grounds of Fingarette’s (2000) paradox of self-deception: how can one both believe and not believe the same thing at the same time? However, when one denies one’s own ethical understanding, one is denying something that they have *seen*, something ‘imbedded in a situation, from which it arises’ (Wittgenstein

1968, §581). Imagine you observe a toddler placing a cup precariously on the edge of the table. The possibility of the cup falling off the table is already *in* the scene you have witnessed, though perhaps the toddler has not seen it. Such understanding is distinguished from a belief in that there is no *choice* as to what one sees.

One technique I have frequently found useful when I have been confused by a situation is to look for synonymous phrases that eliminate the moral terms entirely: Imagine a child accuses a teacher of being *unfair*. The term *unfair* does not *pin-down* what the student is talking about. Instead we need to look for other phrases which might be said in that situation: ‘Other people were talking, not just me’; ‘you are being vindictive’; ‘you don’t like me’; ‘I am worried you’re going to call my mum’. Depending upon the situation, the phrase ‘you are being unfair’ could be replaced by these phrases, or plenty of others; ‘unfair’ is pleonastic in this sense. Equally, if a teacher says that they teach because they are ‘committed to *social justice*’, what phrases are interchangeable here? ‘It upsets me that poor children don’t have the same chances as rich children’; ‘Daily Mail¹⁴ headlines upset me’. A concern is the way in which moral values are appropriated by managers and politicians to induce teachers to behave in certain ways. ‘It is *really important* for the students that we mark their books in this way.’ *Really important* has insidious moral connotations, but in my experience, teachers tend not to question what *really important* means. If these connotations are not brought to light, then the spectre of moral force remains despite lacking substance. If we do not establish whether a comparison is appropriate, then teachers will repeatedly find themselves in *moral dilemmas*, where they do not know what to do.

Self-deception becomes more likely when we are confused, for example, we might feel as if we are torn between two alternatives: ‘I would be being kind if I let the child stay, but I am being kind to the others if I send him out’. However, such situations only appear to be dilemmas because they can be presented as alternatives in the abstract. One only needs to recognise what is the most accurate description of one’s actions to realise that there is no decision to be made concerning *what is right*. I might tell myself, ‘I gave the student one more chance and kindly allowed the student to stay in the class’, when in fact it would be more accurate to say, ‘I weakly allowed the student to stay in the class because I was worried about them getting angry’. Equally, I might deceive myself and say, ‘I *had to be* firm and send the student out’, as if one were being courageous, when in fact it might be more appropriate to say, ‘the child was irritating me so I *pettily* sent him out, and used the needs of the other children as an excuse.’ One knows what is the best description of one’s own actions, but it is the possibility of self-deception that causes the difficulty. A further technique is to describe one’s options and then simply to ask oneself: *which course of action is more admirable?* This is particularly useful when one becomes wrapped up in the effects of one’s behaviour on others. For example, the

¹⁴ A UK right-wing newspaper

exhortation to *be kind* might fool one into thinking that there is a dilemma when there isn't. If I have given a student a punishment for their behaviour and they are upset by it, I may question whether I am *being kind to* the student. This is a confusion, however. The exhortation is to *be kind*, not to *be kind to*. If one describes one's options and then asks oneself which is more admirable, one can step back from the fears one may feel about upsetting the student and concentrate on *being kind* rather than *doing a kind act*.

So far, we have established that the logical form of an ethical judgement is as follows: *Given situation X, response Y is a more virtuous than response Z*. The reader might notice the abstracted nature of this form. This is intentional. Firstly, it does not refer to a specific person or situation, to do so one would be claiming to have a clear and *complete* view of a situation, which would clearly be wrong. Secondly and relatedly, it avoids the aberration of being morally judgemental or dogmatic as discussed in the last section. Finally, its abstracted nature allows it to be comparative without being instrumental.

All of this, of course, assumes that a person can see things in one way, but chooses to see it in another. In section 2.2, I discussed Wittgenstein's notion of *seeing aspects*. Wittgenstein (1967, p.213) expands on this notion and discusses the possibility of *aspect blindness*:

The question now arises: Could there be human beings lacking in the capacity to see something as something—and what would that be like? What sort of consequences would it have?—Would this defect be comparable to colour-blindness or to not having absolute pitch?— We will call it “aspect-blindness”—and will next consider what might be meant by this. (A conceptual investigation.) The aspect-blind man is supposed not to see the aspects A change.

Wittgenstein states that someone who is *aspect-blind* will have ‘an altogether different relationship to pictures from ours’ (p.214). Clearly, this would appear to have important ramifications for the possibility of moral judgements; it would make no sense to judge such a person as being hypocritical or self-deceiving. However, there is another important aspect to Wittgenstein's discussion here. He compares an *aspect-blind* person to someone lacking a ‘musical ear’ (p.213). This strikes me as important, not simply because it is an excellent metaphor, but also because we do not consider *having a musical ear* to be of any *moral* importance. Of course, if someone does not have a musical ear they can try to improve it, but we do not consider them morally bankrupt for not having it. Now compare how one might educate oneself to have a musical ear, and how one might compare oneself to be better at aspect-seeing. Developing one's ability to see aspects is much of what constitutes education, (and more specifically, ‘character education’). But this is no more important than learning music or maths.

V. The correct spirit can be seen as being described by Simone Weil's concept of *attention* - self-less looking, the giving of oneself entirely to the expectations and preoccupations of another.

Perhaps the thing that most surprised me when I first read Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* was the fact that he considers ethics, or good behaviour, to be of secondary importance (Aristotle, 2009, bk.X). I hope, that by now, the reason for this should be clear. All facts have absolute value, and it is the *act* of recognising this that is important. Thus, to conclude this chapter, I would like to return to the notion of *paying attention*. I want to explain why we can say that all education is learning to pay attention, learning to recognise the contingency and absolute value in the world.

Weil wrote in a letter to her friend, what must be one of the most beautiful lines ever written: 'Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity' (Weil & Bousquet 1982, p.18). When we pay attention, we give of ourselves. We put aside our selfish concerns and only concern ourselves with responding to the world and others virtuously. In *the Therapy of Education*, Standish, Meyers and Smith include a short section on *A Philosophy of Mothering*. In this section, they compare the state of motherhood with an ideal philosophical perspective. Quoting Naomi Stadlen is *What Mothers Do: especially when it looks like nothing*:

If she feels disorientated, this is not a problem requiring bookshelves of literature to put right. No, it is exactly the *right* state of mind for the teach-yourself process that lies ahead of her ... If she really considered herself an expert, or if her ideas were set, she would find it very hard to adapt to her individual baby... She needs to feel uncertain in order to be flexible ... Uncertainty is a *good* starting point for a mother. (Stadlen, 2004, p.45 quoted in Standish et al. 2006, p.214)

The authors compare this to Wittgenstein's (1967a, §123) 'A Philosophical problem has the form: "I do not know my way about".' And again they quote Stadlen (2004, p.210, cited by Standish et al. 2006, p.215): 'Whenever I'm sitting with a group of mothers, everything seems so obvious that there doesn't seem anything to explain'. They compare this to Wittgenstein's (1967a, §126): 'Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. - Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain.' This appears to me to be a description of an example of a correct *philosophical attitude*, or *weltanschauung*, or *way of looking at things* that Stadlen's mothers have, and that I have witnessed myself in my own sisters. (Wilfully ignoring the possibility of bad mothers) there is an extreme selflessness about motherhood: A mother is in a 'condition in which she is endlessly there for her child to the point that she may feel she has no life of her own' (Standish et al. 2006, p.213). It is a job of the utmost seriousness: there is no time for theories or ideas, or working things out, or the maintenance of one's ego; there is a sense of *immediacy*. The result of which is that motherhood is a job undertaken utterly *sincerely*. It is a paradigm case of paying attention. Again there is a striking similarity here with the *Intensive Interaction* approach (which was influenced by Ephraim (1982) and *Augmented Mothering*). In *Intensive Interaction*, the practitioner 'makes careful use of watching, waiting and timing. This may involve rhythms of activity blended with the rhythms of the learner's behaviour...' (Hewett & Nind, 1998, p.2).

Yoda (2014) shows how Plato's solution to *Meno's paradox* is supported by Simone Weil:

Contemplation is rooted in reality. It involves seeing the reality as is and patiently waiting. It is admitting that human intelligence has limitations and there is mystery beyond these boundaries. The virtue of humility is thus central: it is Socratic wisdom to know that one does not know. It is the method of how we as creatures in this world relate ourselves to transcendence. This orientation of the soul is attention. Weil thinks this orientation is Platonic wisdom or virtue in the question of the *Meno*. “The wisdom of Plato is nothing other than an orientation of the soul towards grace.” Weil confirms that this orientation and wisdom are love...

Weil’s claim that the sole purpose of education is attention thus is a comprehensive response to Plato’s *Meno*. Virtue in the *Meno* is attention, love, and wisdom. (Yoda 2014, pp.191-2)

There is also a clear similarity between Weil’s *attention* and what Noddings (2013) calls *engrossment*:

Our dictionaries tell us that “care” is a state of mental suffering or of engrossment: to care is to be in a burdened mental state, one of anxiety, fear, or solicitude about something or someone. (p.8)

Attention is the opposite of egoism; it is a relinquishing of one's self, for the sake of the world. Weil describes how, in learning, one becomes the ‘slave’ of truth. Good historical writing consists in submitting oneself to the sources, not imposing oneself upon them. Good maths is submitting oneself to the numbers; English to grammar, to the writing; science to the experiments; philosophy to the rules of sense and nonsense. Of course, these subjects are more than this simple list, but in each case, learning is an act of submission. Again, it is not submission to the teacher, but it is submission to the cases, search for *truth* (to which the teacher is herself should also be submitting) whether that be careful study of the accounts of the execution of Thomas Beckett or evidence for the manner in which an Ox-bow lake is formed. Of course, neither am I suggesting that one should submit to what sources or cases tell us on a superficial level. To *pay attention* is not to be foolish or gullible; it is not to accept what we are taught on face value; it is simply to recognise the boundaries of what can be said. Neither is Weil suggesting a passive response to education than she advocates. Of course, when one recognises an injustice, one is obliged, compelled to act. H. O. Mounce (1973a, p.19) wrote:

It is important to see that if a liberal education has an effect on a student’s character this is not because he has taken a course in character training but because he has become absorbed in the problems that constitute a subject, this involving, among other things, that he is no longer preoccupied with his own character, his attention having been turned from himself to the subject, which exists independently of him.’

In the same way, the teacher must not be preoccupied with her own character; she must submit herself to the truths about the students that she is teaching. Egoism, and the worship of the self are scars upon the body of educational thinking. And this is evident in much of what counts as *inspiration* for teachers. The original meaning of *inspiration* was to breathe in, and it was largely associated with the idea of being immediately influenced by God. Nowadays, the term *inspiration* appears to have morphed into the exact opposite: being convinced of one’s own power.

Of course, I understand that the reference to God in the original meaning is an unacceptable notion for many. But replacing the concept of God with ourselves is more than foolish. Of course, if I am told that I am in control, then I will feel enlivened by the possibilities. If I am told that I can be part of a revolution, it yanks me from the drudgery of simply being one in seven billion. If someone offers me an identity, by allowing me to join in with some tribal chants, I may feel that I am included. However, in reality, these things exclude me from the rest of the world. The rewards for such forms of inspiration are shallow. The rewards for *paying attention* are deep. When one becomes a *slave* of what one is learning, one is accepting and not resenting, the logical limitations the world places upon oneself. And in doing so, one's slavery is paradoxically rewarded with freedom.

3. METHODOLOGY¹⁵

If the purpose of the first half of this thesis was philosophical, the second half is *demonstrative* (in every sense of the term). As I mentioned in the introduction, I would have presented the philosophy, the ethnography and analysis altogether, were it not to fulfil the PhD requirements more clearly. In the first half, I presented twenty-two observations concerning moral values in education (of students with SEMHD). The purpose of these observations was to show how moral value becomes hidden due to a misplaced desire for certainty. I argued that this desire is misplaced because moral value is absolute value, and this can only be *shown*, and not *said*, *recognised*, but not *pointed out*. I also showed how this Cartesian anxiety (Bernstein, 1983) results in dogmatism if it is not recognised to be the result of a philosophical confusion. The recognition, or unhiding of moral value is a methodological one, in that it requires us to develop a *way of looking* at problems best described by Weil's (2005) notion of *paying attention*. This ethnography is an attempt to develop this methodological ability, my ability to *see aspects* or at least reduce my *aspect-blindness* -to improve my 'musical ear' (Wittgenstein, 1967, p.214) or to get a 'nose' for moral value (Wittgenstein, 1967, p.228).

What was required for this, however, was a reality. Willis (1977) wrote the following concerning the purpose of his classic ethnography, *Learning to Labor*:

It tries to introduce something of the profane air of the real cultural world into social analysis and to suggest that education in its broadest sense, and as something more than is narrowly associated currently with schooling, must listen and speak partly with this wind of life. (p.218)

With this ethnography and analysis, I set out to do with philosophy of education what Willis wanted to do for 'social analysis'. Along similar lines, I repeat what Wittgenstein wrote in a letter to his friend Norman Malcolm:

What is the use of studying philosophy if all that does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse question of logic, etc., if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious than any ... journalist in the use of the *dangerous* phrases such people use for their own ends? You see, I know that it's difficult to think *well* about 'certainty', 'probability', 'perception', etc. But it is, if possible, still more difficult to think, or *try* to think about your life & other people's lives. And the trouble is that thinking about these things it not *thrilling*, but often downright nasty. And when it's nasty then it's *most* important. (Malcolm, 1958)

¹⁵ The title 'Methodology' is somewhat misleading, given that the entire thesis is methodology. This chapter is specifically the methodology of the ethnographic second-half: it is the methodology of the *exemplification of the methodology*.

The philosophical first half is all very well, but unless I can apply it to real-life, and use it to be a better person, or a better teacher, then it is all but worthless. In this second half, my aim is to apply these observations to my experiences to demonstrate their meaning in real-life.

This application of the philosophy to real-life requires, however, some real-life to which I can apply my philosophy, and this brings with it certain problems:

1. I do not want to be accused of trying to fit the real-life to the philosophy, and that entails some methodological issues. The ethnography needs to be honest and recognised as such.
2. This real-life is not only my own. It is also that of the people with whom I have lived and worked and this entails many ethical issues.

I deal with these issues in turn, but first, by way of summarising the last chapter, I revisit the questions raised by Jackson (2013) concerning choice of methodology.

3.1 Theoretical assumptions and observations from Chapter Two that are relevant to the methodology

Jackson (2013) describes the crucial aspects of choosing a methodology as being *positionality* and *relationality*, *ontology*, and *epistemology*. Here I shall use the observations from Chapter Two to, firstly, describe the nature of the kind of answers I am looking for, and secondly, to generate some answers to the questions these aspects pose.

3.11 The nature of the answer I am looking for

My aim in this thesis is to dissolve the *apparent* contradictions present in the way in which we look at moral values in education. I compared the process to a visual illusion in which one sees two apparently contradictory states-of-affairs at the same time. Such illusions are only possible because the point of view of the observer is fixed and therefore they are unable to walk around the object and take in different *aspects*. Wittgenstein (1967) describes the aims of Philosophy as achieving ‘clarity’: ‘For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed complete clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should completely disappear’ (§133). The philosophical problems which I wish to disappear are those which hide moral values.

As pointed out in Chapter One, in order to make these problems disappear, one requires a ‘perspicuous representation’ that consists of ‘seeing connections’, and which would be achieved through ‘finding and inventing intermediate cases’ (Wittgenstein 1967, §122). In this part of the thesis, the focus was on finding intermediate cases from the experiences of myself and my students. The

importance of using examples from *real-life* cannot be understated. Whilst Hacker (2009) thought that a ‘perspicuous representation’ might be a tabulation of expressions that sheds light on the philosophical grammar, Savicky (2014) interprets perspicuous representation somewhat more aesthetically. She argues it is a ‘dynamic, (or dramatic)’ (p.120) form of representation; it is perspicuous, precisely because it feels alive. Consider Wittgenstein’s (1967) explanation of how an arrow ‘points’: ‘How does it come about that this arrow \Rightarrow *points*?’ ... The arrow points only in the application that a living being makes of it’ (§454). In the context of our investigation of moral values that means that we need to bring conceptions of ethics and moral values from the land of the dead, and into the land of the living. Thus, the first link to make clear is that the clarity I am looking for is not a dry, theoretical clarity, but a breathing, practical clarity.

3.12 Relevant conclusions relating to positionality, relationality, ontology and positionality

Concerning positionality and relationality

Perhaps the key point from Chapter Two concerns the position of the teacher’s *self* when considering what is moral. I repeatedly reiterated that the ideal would be to refrain from making one’s self the subject of one’s attention. In the demonstrative section that follows, I aim to show exactly how I fell foul of this obligation. Thus, it is not my intention here to demonstrate the ideal, but rather to show the many ways in which I was *not* ideal. The ethnography is, in some senses, a demonstration of *mistakes*. The analysis is my finding and describing those mistakes. In this sense, the biases, and assumptions with which I conducted the ethnography are the *key* element of it, and those parts which I wish to *unhide* in the analysis. Equally, there was little concern that the students might be susceptible to social desirability bias (for example, as per Crowne & Marlowe 1960); the desire of the students to please the teacher/researcher (i.e. their relationship with me) is exactly the kind of information with which this philosophical method is concerned. One could argue that I am in a weaker position as a researcher because I am seeking to make public my own mistakes, and therefore subject to social desirability bias myself. On this point, I can only argue that if the ethnography contains *some* of my mistakes, then it is useful. Since this is demonstrably true – it contains content which embarrasses me – even if there are matters I have hidden (though there are none of which I am conscious) it will not render the ethnography useless.

Concerning ontology

The ontological position is intimately related to the positionality and relationality. Examples of ontological questions are ‘what exists?’; ‘what is a thing?’; ‘Into what categories can we sort existing things?’ Perhaps the most crucial idea in Chapter Two was the idea that the *self* does not exist in the

world in the way in which the selves of *others* do. In fact, there is nothing logical we can say about ourselves (in the sense of our ego, or our will) because we have no criteria of correctness for our propositions. The second key ontological point was that creating *sets* or *categories* of things was an imposition of one's *self* upon the world. I wrote that all identity-relationships were no stronger than similes or analogies. Again, the ethnography is, in this sense, simply a series of mistakes, and the analysis is a catalogue of those mistakes.

My purpose is not to prove any kind of identity-relationship, but to show the opposite:

... my interest is in showing that things which look the same are really different. I was thinking of using as a motto for my book a quotation from *King Lear*: 'I'll teach you differences.' [Then laughing:] The remark 'You'd be surprised' wouldn't be a bad motto either. (Drury 1996, p.157)

My study seeks to find discordances in the language of the education of students with SEMHD, and illuminate them. It is an important aspect of this study that it resists the 'craving for generality' (Wittgenstein 1991, p.17) that frequently bogs down investigation. In Chapter Two I resisted the craving for generality when I insisted words like *justice*, and *authority* have many different meanings; I resisted 'the tendency to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a general term.' (Wittgenstein 1991, p.17).

3.13 Concerning epistemology

There were several important epistemological points made in Chapter Two, but perhaps the most important was that the objective/subjective divide was problematic; one may as well talk about the God/Human divide. I do not think that Silverman (2013) goes far enough, when he describes the 'often contingent nature of the data chosen' (p.234). The data that is chosen is *always* contingent. In the case of this study, that contingency is essential. As is the 'likely non-random character of cases studied' (p.234). It would be of far less value for me to study a random case, since, were I in a different situation, my anxiety would probably be caused by different things. This is not to say that this thesis will be of no use to others. It may be, but in an *illustrative*, rather than a *causal* way. I am demonstrating a particular manner of investigation according to a particular 'world-view' (Wittgenstein 1967, §122). I described how Wittgenstein was trying to draw a line between the *ethical* or *absolute*, and the *relative*. I argued the ethical could only be *shown* and not *said* and therefore, there was a sense in which it could be *recognised* rather than proven. According to this view of things, I am only trying to *show* the reader various things and make a few connections between relevant concepts.

3.2 The research design and techniques

Although I am not trying to establish any empirical correlations, I do not want my philosophical remarks to be held in contempt because the reader feels as if I have contrived the evidence in some way. The remarks will lose their force if the description of the experiences upon which they are based does not feel *honest* or academically legitimate. In this section, I shall endeavour to make it clear what my research design and techniques are to pre-empt any counter-claims in this regard.

3.21 The philosophical history of some conversations between a teacher and his students

My paradigm of ‘good research’ is given by Wittgenstein in a conversation recorded by O’Connor Drury (1996, p.138):

Two books: One Wittgenstein often praised to me the other he ridiculed. The first was Faraday’s *Natural History of a Candle*. The second Jeans’s *The Mysterious Universe*. What is the striking difference between these two books? Whenever Faraday uses hypothetical language he immediately goes on to describe in minute detail the actual experiments on which the hypothesis is based (and in the original lectures demonstrated the experiments before the eyes of his audience). But Jeans on the other hand makes startling assertions about the nature of the Universe (The Universe is like a rapidly expanding soap bubble) but never tells us what the Astronomer actually *does* and *observes*. It is the skills and techniques which scientists make use of that constitute the very soul of each particular science...

Wittgenstein considered Faraday’s *the Chemical History of a Candle* (as my version is entitled) to be ‘good’ science. The title has an appealing humility about it. The series of lectures is simply a detailed description of several different things you can do with candles with some safety tips thrown in. I wish I were humble and clever enough (and had a larger word limit) to do this model justice; I have nevertheless tried to write *the philosophical history of some conversations between a teacher and his students*. Thus, my research approach is ethnographical, and the specific method of conversation.

3.22 Ethnography as research approach

The ethnography I have produced here could be described in several different ways. I explained in the introduction how it can be described as a *philosophical ethnography* (as per Feinberg 2006), and for me, that is the most appropriate way. However, there are senses in which it could also be described as a *confessional ethnography*, an *auto-ethnography*, or an *impressionist ethnography*. I shall discuss each of these here.

Confessional ethnography

Foucault (1976, p.59) wrote how ‘...the confession became one of the West’s most highly valued techniques for producing truth ...’. (Whilst I probably do not agree with, what I assume is, Foucault’s slightly ironic use of the word ‘truth’ here –I cannot say I understand his work well enough to pass judgement – I do believe, from personal experience that confession is an important technique for producing truth.) Van Maanen (2011) contrasts a confessional ethnography with a realist ethnography. He describes that confessional work is done to...

... convince the audience of the human qualities of the fieldworker. Often the ethnographer mentions personal biases, character flaws, or bad habits as a way of building an ironic self-portrait with which the readers can identify ... The omnipotent tone of realism gives way to the modest, unassuming style of one struggling to piece together something reasonably coherent out of displays of initial disorder, doubt, and difficulty. (p.74)

The confessional aspects of my ethnography are not written to provide transparency as such, though it is an advantage if the reader can more fully see my human qualities (or failings). The confessional aspects are written in order that the reader can understand how the moral values became hidden in the first place. Perhaps the most pertinent aspect of confessional ethnography here is ‘their highly personalized styles and their self-absorbed mandates’ (Van Maanen 2011, p.73). I am not sure whether Van Maanen intended the phrase ‘self-absorbed’ to be derogatory, but I am interpreting it as such, and this takes us to the heart of the matter. Part of what my philosophical remarks show is that moral values were hidden from me precisely *because* I was self-absorbed. Thus, it was essential I display this aspect of confessional ethnography.

The term ‘confessional’ is also reminiscent of the idea of Tanabe (1986) that in order to philosophise, we must first realise what it is that we do not and cannot know, that is, we must first confess. It alludes to the tradition within philosophy of confessional writing: Augustine, Descartes, Rousseau, Tolstoy. It also links to Foucault’s (1976, p.64) description of confession being the expression of ‘everyday deficiencies ... oddities [and] exasperations’, and what Van Maanen (1988, p.75) describes as ‘personal biases, character flaws, [and] bad habits’. For Macfarlane (2009) reflexivity is an important value (or virtue) of good research, and the word *confessional* also encompasses his virtue of *humility*.

Autoethnography

The ethnography here is not strictly autoethnographic, because it concerns the relationship between me *and* my students. However, it is auto-ethnographic insofar as one’s understanding of what is inconceivable is necessarily subjective. Autoethnography appears to some academics as a research approach that many might justifiably ‘eschew ... as self-indulgent personal writing that bears limited significant impact on the scholarly genre (Anderson, 2006; Coffey, 1999)’ quoted in Starr 2010, p.3). Starr (2010, p.4) discusses the advantages of auto-ethnography in terms of the positionality of the

researcher-practitioner: ‘Autoethnography allows the educator the opportunity to effectively acknowledge the pragmatic demands of teaching and of everyday life to take stock of experiences and how they shape who we are and what we do’. This for me is the real beauty of this as a research approach. It ensures the researcher has more *skin in the game*. It connects theory and philosophy to the realities which ought to define education. Starr (2010, p.5) makes the fine point that the ‘criterion of generalizability comes from the reader’s ability to identify with the experiences of the writer and in terms of his or her own life...’. It is a shift away from the inevitably flawed (that is not to say pointless) attempts at moulding Social Science in the image of Science and Maths towards a body of knowledge which is *illustrative*, rather than *predictive*, from which the reader can say, ‘I think this because *as it says in...*’ rather than ‘I think this because *this is this*.’

Armstrong (2008, p.47) argues that ‘there is a responsibility for those using autoethnography to incorporate critical reflexivity into their practise.’ This concept of *reflexivity* is critical for the kind of autoethnography I wanted to produce. Webster (2008, p.65) states ‘most definitions of reflexivity refer to some sort of conceptual ‘bending back’ of thought upon itself – thought, folded upon thought, folded upon thought, *ad infinitum*’. There is some debate, however, as to whether reflexivity deserves to be called a virtue or not. Lynch (2000), for example, does not believe it is necessarily a virtue, identifying six different types of *reflexivity*; instead he describes it as ‘unremarkable’ and ‘unavoidable’. Webster (2008, p.75) writes that ‘reflexivity is not a “sense of honour” to be defended, but a “principle of practice” to be deployed – not a moral principle based on virtue.’ Both Lynch and Webster seem to have got a bit stuck on a false dichotomy here between that which is moral and that which is not. Presumably, honesty, and the pursuit of truth are virtuous, so if reflexivity is necessary for being honest, then it is virtuous.

For me the pinnacle of autoethnographic research would have to be the work of John Holt (1982). *How Children Fail*, is simply a collection of the observations of Holt whilst he was a teacher of young children. Holt gives close attention to the particular, and is especially interested in rule-following when it comes to the children learning Maths. He describes for instance a student trying to solve a simple question about how far a car will travel in X minutes if it is travelling at Y mph. Holt suggested that even though he finally gave a correct answer to the problem and could back it up with an ‘explanation’ he was still not sure whether the child was really able to follow the rules: ‘Yet we see here that a “successful student” can give the answer and the chatter without understanding at all what he is doing or saying’ (p.31). One can see that it is not only the honesty, simplicity and heartfelt nature of his work which I wish to emulate, but also its similarities and connections with the work of Wittgenstein.

Impressionist ethnography

The final way in which one might describe the ethnography that follows is what Van Maanen (1988) describes as *impressionist*. He compares the impressionist ethnographer to the impressionist painters, describing their work as, ‘figurative, although it conveys a highly personalized perspective.

What a painter sees, given an apparent position in time and space, is what the viewer sees.’ (p.101) He describes the materials of the ethnographic impressionist as being ‘striking stories ... words, metaphors, phrasings, imagery, and most critically, the expansive recall of fieldwork experience’ and the result is, ‘a necessarily imaginative rendering of fieldwork’ (p.101). Whilst I would not be so bold as to say that the ethnography that follows *is* an impressionist ethnography, it is certainly what I have attempted. Each section is an entirely accurate description of the conversations, and all the episodes I describe are exact, but it is the story-telling aspect of the work, the choice of words and descriptions, that are important in *showing* the moral values.

3.21 Conversations as a research method

The idea of using undirected conversations and experiences as research is certainly not new: Sigmund Freud’s discussions with his patients, or Piaget’s conversations with children or Roger’s (1945) ‘nondirective method’, are clear examples. Rogers (1945, p.283) states that the, ‘attitudes of acceptance and permissiveness upon which the interviewer bases his work are enriched by specific techniques which avoid making the client defensive and eliminate the personal bias which the worker might otherwise impose on the interview.’ It was in this spirit of the ‘nondirective method’ that I organised conversations with my students. In one sense, I could be quite honestly ‘nondirective’ because I was not hoping to prove any hypothesis. However, I did, as aforementioned, carry plenty of biases and assumptions that I try to tease out in the analysis.

As mentioned above, there are those who believe that for conversations to be considered worthy of research, they need to be ‘systematic’ (Stenhouse 1975). Feldman (1999, p.140) for example, writes the following:

Some conversations are not research because they are not systematic. While all conversations have direction, it is a directionality that does not necessarily lead them forward along a particular path or toward a predictable goal. Conversation can have direction and yet be peripatetic and perambulatory in space, time, and content.

I would challenge anyone to find a single ‘direction’ in the conversation with Joan contained within the next chapter. However, I would maintain that it is this ‘perambulatory’ nature of the conversations, which is so fascinating. If we place this conversation in the light of the philosophical analysis discussed in the last chapter, we have some wonderfully illuminating material – did the fact that one participating student, Joan, made so little sense contribute towards moral values being hidden from me? What concordance was Joan following, and how does this affect my ethical understanding, or my expectations?

3.3 Ethical and Practical Issues

3.31 Ethical approaches to research

In one sense, the ethics of my dealings with my students are the entire content of this thesis. But it is worth explicitly discussing the ethical concerns relating to my empirical research here. I had three principal guides in conducting my research: The BERA document, *Ethics and Educational Research* (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012); Virtue ethical principles (primarily as per Macfarlane 2009); and my own ethical understanding of the situation. I was not content to simply rely on the BERA document, since, as Pring (2001b, p.244) argues, it may not be ‘sufficient to think in terms of principles, codes and rules. It may be more important, from an ethical point of view to consider much more carefully the virtues of the researcher than the principles he or she espouses.’ Furthermore, given that my thesis is broadly in support of a virtue approach to ethics, it seemed more coherent to also consider the virtues I needed to develop to conduct the research ethically.

Ethics and Educational Research (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012) offers five main principles for guiding the ethics of research: Minimising harm; Respecting Autonomy; Protecting Privacy; Offering Reciprocity; and Treating People Equitably. Macfarlane (2009) lays out the following virtues of ethical research: Courage; Respectfulness; Resoluteness; Sincerity; Humility; and Reflexivity. There is a great deal of overlap between the principles based approach of Hammersley and Traianou, and the virtue approach of Macfarlane. I would argue that the dichotomy between *principles* and *virtues* is somewhat problematic. It does, in a sense, depend upon how one chooses to interpret phrases such as *respecting autonomy*, as to whether it is treated as a *rule* or a *virtue*. That overlap can be seen even more clearly in some of the other groupings of the virtues provided. Orb et al. (2001) offer a simpler list of autonomy, beneficence and justice, for example, with beneficence covering the principle of minimising harm, and protecting privacy. For me, the lists act as a set of provocations that question my judgements (even as I write this up). Stemming from these provocations, there are a few issues that were *greyer* than others, and I would like to touch upon those here. The first one was the issue of informed consent; the second, beneficence and confidentiality; and third, and in a sense, tying them all together was what Macfarlane (2009) calls *reflexivity* and *humility*, for which one might substitute *paying attention*.

3.32 Informed consent

Informed consent has been at the centre of all codes of ethics and statements of ethical principles since the Nuremberg code (1947, §1):

The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential. This means that the person involved should have legal capacity to give consent; should be so

situated as to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, overreaching or any other ulterior form of constraint or coercion; and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved as to enable him to make an understanding and enlightened decision.

Given I was researching with students from difficult backgrounds and with various forms of SEMHD, the question of whether they were actually giving me informed consent bothered me. As one might be able to glean from the short extract above, one could not always clearly establish what the students did or did not understand. However, my first thought was that students who have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties should not be excluded from research (as argued by Thomas 2007). The students themselves, by definition, are alienated, they are not part of any *national conversation*. (Given that the students who I teach are, according to some estimates each likely to cost the country over £100,000 over the course of their lives (Coles *et al.*, 2010), it is of benefit to everyone that they are not ignored.) Secondly, in the spirit of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) I presumed all the students were capable of providing informed consent. Kvale (1996) writes that one must strike a balance between over-informing and under-informing, and this was key. It would have been possible, for instance, to a. bore the students to death talking about the research, and b. scare them unnecessarily concerning possible consequences – given that the students were still my students, and given that they may have felt some obligation to help me out even if they were a little worried, I did not want to then burden them with too many wildly hypothetical possibilities. As Orb *et al.* (2001, p.96) wrote, I did not want to ‘further burden the already burdened vulnerable group of participants’. On the other hand, I did want them to feel that they had the power.

There was also the issue that a couple of the students were under the age of 16 at the time of the conversations. Consequently, I went for a belt-and-braces approach, and to further safeguard the students I also sought the consent of their parents and guardians; I performed all the conversations with another adult (Jonny, who also worked with them) present to act as someone to challenge me; and I provided the students with an information sheet, which was made available to any other adult who had an interest (mentor, targeted youth support worker etc....). I also made it clear to the participants that they may withdraw consent at any point by repeatedly telling them so – in the letter; at the beginning of the conversation; once they had had time to think about what they said.

Given the nature of the relationship that I and Jonny (my co-worker) had with the students, there was every likelihood that the students would begin talking about things which are sensitive. (Despite the inevitably tumultuous [because we are responsible for getting the students to do things they often do not want to do!] nature of our relationships, we are often among the first adults who they will speak to about extremely sensitive issues.) During the conversations, I reminded them that the conversations were being recorded. This was necessary because in a pilot conversation, the student became so wrapped up in what they were saying that they appeared to forget. If they wanted to talk about these things, other than reminding them that the conversations are being recorded I would not stop them.

However, I did give them the option to remove sections of, or the entire conversation, afterwards if they so wished. One student took this option for one part of their conversation as will be shown in the ethnography.

3.33 Beneficence and confidentiality

There was a clear temptation for me to be overly paternalistic towards the students. However, as Orb et al. (2001, p.95) point out, ‘a paternalistic approach indicates the denial of autonomy and freedom of choice’. This was a particularly tricky one for me, especially concerning confidentiality. I did not want the students to feel silenced by my anonymising them, but at the same time, from my own experience as a ‘difficult student’, I understood they might perhaps not want their actions, words or names associated with them in the future. I thus decided I would, by default anonymise them, but give them the option to specifically ask for me not to (if, for example, they have said something of which they were proud). No students took this option. In one sense, I wanted to give them credit for everything, but a. nobody will care as much as me about what I have written, so it is a moot point; and b. not every person who reads this will interpret their actions and words in the same light that I do – i.e. I tend to think that they were wonderful, others might not agree. In some senses, concerns about confidentiality are unavoidable. Barnes (1979, p.145) writes ‘confidentiality is at risk from the very moment when the scientist is told or allowed to see something that would normally be hidden’. On the one hand, I want to do the students justice, and show that they are wonderful human characters, on the other hand, to safeguard them. There is a sense in which I do not want the reader to have any interest in them beyond being characters in a story. I comfort myself in the knowledge that the stories of the children are couched in my own confessional (auto)ethnography, and therefore, despite it all being *real*, it is the narrative, and the *concordance* of that narrative, that is more important than the events.

3.34 Reflexivity and humility (attention)

I have already written about the importance of reflexivity and humility in terms of the philosophical value of my thesis, but it also clearly has an ethical value. The constant questioning of myself is an essential feature of the ethics of this study – indeed it is what this study is about. And if, once I have written it, I feel I have been in any way hypocritical, then what I have written is entirely devalued. The whole thesis is, in the words of Simone Weil (2005), an attempt to *pay attention*, and I should like to be able to abide by her words: ‘The authentic and pure values – truth, beauty and goodness – in the activity of a human being are the result of one and the same act, a certain application of the full attention to the object’ (p.232). (The *object* being the students). However, I know I have fallen short of this. I only hope the distance is not too great.

3.35 How the research was carried out

Despite describing the conversational approach as *see-what-happens*, because of the ethical considerations and the need for transparency, planning was required for the conversations. All the conversations included in the next chapter took place in the summer term of 2013. As described in the introduction, there was also a pilot conversation with one of the students. This was not included in the ethnography for reasons which I explain in §5.5. The four conversations which were included were with four different students, named here as Matt, Marky, Lucia and Joan (two boys and two girls). I chose to have the conversations with these students rather than other students because a. they were older, and I felt more comfortable that they understood to what they were agreeing than the other students and b. I had worked with them all for the longest time. As described below, the pilot conversation lasted half-an-hour and that produced far more data than I could feasibly use. Because longer conversations would result in me having to make (possibly arbitrary) decisions about what to include, and thus tempt me into cherry-picking examples, I decided to limit the conversations to ten minutes, and ideally keep them at five. All the transcriptions were completed by myself, and of the four conversations included, all except one (that of Joan) were included in their entirety, and the part that was not included was done so at her request. This is explained in detail in the section entitled *Joan* in the next chapter. Surrounding the four conversations are background details about my experiences and the students. These are taken from my own journal entries that I kept throughout my PhD.

3.4 How my research can be extrapolated to different contexts

3.41 Findings

Although this section is *empirical* insofar as it is information collected through observation, it is not the information itself which I would consider to be the *findings*. The relationship between me and my students is of no academic interest in itself. In one sense, the *findings* are the remarks and observations that offer solutions to the philosophical and moral confusions. As described in the introduction, these remarks and observations were made as a result of the experiences herein described combined with reading the literature. Therefore, the value of describing those experiences is twofold. Firstly, it might enable a clearer understanding of the remarks and observations that make up the philosophical method by showing how they came about. Secondly, and primarily, it is a *demonstration* of that method.

Thus, the findings that the conversations provoked were not empirical findings, so much as examples of philosophico-grammatical connections. For the pilot study I conducted, I had a

conversation with one of the students, which lasted for about half an hour, looking at the question of *how we should view BESD*. In almost every paragraph there was a sentence, spoken by the student, which could have been construed as being evidence supporting one theory or another. For example, attachment theory appeared to leap from the page when I was reading it back. I made a list of thoughts based on this conversation, (which ran to many pages because I underestimated the depth of her conversation) and saw that many of the potential conclusions which I had drawn could have been seen as valid (and I knew from personal experience of others who worked with that student, that many of the conclusions were already held). In the end, however, these were not the kind of *findings* which enabled me to *solve* the problem. The findings were instead, what was *exemplified*, and these could not be reduced to mere data. The great potential depth of qualitative research, is also its grand weakness. In Sandelowski & Barroso's (2002) informative and logical assessment of 99 qualitative studies, they highlight a number of difficulties encountered whilst trying to *find the findings*. Many of the issues they identified were based on a degree of wooliness in the qualitative method which effectively makes qualitative work difficult to read: 'Often complicating the identification of findings are the varied reporting styles in qualitative research. Quantitative researchers have a widely accepted genre for communicating the results of their research, but qualitative researchers do not' (p.215). I believe that my research avoids some of these problems in the sense that I was looking for stories, for narratives that could *exemplify* rather than be *evidence* of something.

3.42 Analysis

I have analysed these *stories* using the hermeneutics of contemplation (as per Phillips 2001) and through a Wittgensteinian 'lens', which drew heavily on the work of M. O'Connor Drury and P.M.S. Hacker. Once armed with my stories, I wanted to lay each one down under the light of Wittgensteinian philosophy and see how it connected, what it showed. It was like a form of philosophical discourse analysis. Wittgenstein described 'meaning as use' and it is only by placing an utterance in its entire context that we can understand what the *use* of that utterance might have been. This conception of meaning is not too dissimilar from what Cameron (2001, p.7) says about working with spoken discourse: 'When linguists and other social scientists analyse spoken discourse, their aim is to make explicit what normally gets taken for granted; it is also to show what talking accomplishes in people's lives and in society at large'. This echoes what Pring (2001b, p.250) wrote in explaining that moral dilemmas arise...

... when underlying norms and values (previously only implicit) are challenged...in the very social foundations of one's practice. It is then that the principles implicit in one's practice need to be more explicit. One then asks the question 'What ought I to do?', seeking genuine reasons.

Although there is obviously a great deal of crossover, the difference between sociological discourse analysis and the philosophical discourse analysis in which I have been engaged concerns the frames of

reference and the kinds of judgements I will be making. The judgements I will be making will be philosophical, rather than sociological.¹⁶ Hacker (2007, p.23) provides a perfect description of the role of philosophy here:

Philosophy is a tribunal of sense, before which erring scientists can be arraigned for transgressing the bounds of sense. They can be arraigned, not by criticizing them for deviating from ordinary usage – which deviations may be wholly innocuous – but for invoking ordinary usage and then misusing the terms invoked, through misunderstanding and conceptual confusion. Philosophy is no policeman, but an impartial judge ... It is not the task of philosophy to sing the Hallelujah chorus to science or to police its pronouncement. It is rather to identify conceptual confusions that are rife in science, and to eradicate the scientific myth-making, no less than the anti-scientific myth-making, that is endemic in the culture in which we all live today.

There are several different Wittgensteinian approaches to philosophy, which vary greatly. My aim was to perform a philosophical ‘contemplation’ as per the philosophy of D. Z. Phillips (2001). In his book *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation*, Phillips (2001) describes an approach to the interpretation of religious concepts which stands in contrast to ‘the hermeneutics of recollection’ (which supports an interpretive model which is largely apologetic in nature) and ‘the hermeneutics of suspicion’ (which is an interpretative model which is a reductionist approach to religious concepts). It is my contention that there is an appropriate analogy to be drawn between the way we seek to interpret both the language of young people (especially those who are in some senses *alienated*), how we interpret competing social scientific views and how we interpret religious language. To put it very simply, imagine a child says: ‘Mr. Andrews is an idiot’. We could either spend our analysis thinking of reasons why s/he is right ‘He wears odd socks’ (recollection); think of reasons why s/he is wrong ‘He got some GCSEs’ (suspicion); or we could place what the child has said in context, assume that the child’s utterance had some meaning and work out what it was ‘Mr. Andrews had just told him off and he was angry’. As Malinowski (1923, p.307) wrote, ‘A statement, spoken in real-life, is never detached from the situation in which it has been uttered ... an utterance has no meaning except in the context of the situation’. Again, I would draw a parallel between Phillips’ approach and Weil’s notion of attention. It is not Phillips’ aim to ‘debunk’ other philosophers, in fact it is entirely the opposite. His treatment of their work enables us to see the world as they see it. His aim is to elucidate religious concepts without reducing them. By adopting this method, I hoped to elucidate the communications of the children, and the ideas which gave rise to my initial findings without reducing or distorting them; I wish to attempt to see the world more as they see it, but also draw limits to what we as people who

¹⁶ See §2.1 for a brief explanation of the differences between a semiotic study and what I am trying to achieve.

work with the students, can sensibly say about the connections between the concepts and words that they, and we, use.

I hope I have not given the impression that the analysis will be in anyway benign. It is not the purpose of the analysis to let anything slide. The effect I hope I have created in my analysis is frequently brutally honest, about myself, the theories and the students. I hope to have performed a form of critical philosophical discourse analysis, which is by no means a pushover:

The study of the ways in which language is used to construct convenient realities and persuade opinion is of enormous social significance. And it should be acknowledged that work in critical discourse analysis has had the effect of alerting us to this significance, and provoking us to enquire more closely into the institutional use and abuse of language in public life. (Widdowson 2000, p.9)

4. ETHNOGRAPHY

A note on the text:

1. As I have stated, every part of what follows occurred. It did not, however, occur on the same day, but I have written it here in such a way as to allow the reader to read it as if it did. This is to provide the reader with a more coherent picture of the situation. Although it may not relate to the events chronologically, it allows me to tell a more truthful story in that it does, I believe, show the material events in the correct context.
2. I have used Discourse Transcriptions conventions (as in Du Bois et al. 1993) when transcribing the conversations, as this seemed the most natural for the manner of telling the story. Thus, ‘ .. ’ indicates a short pause; ‘ ... ’ a longer pause (in conversation, outside of conversation, the ellipses serves its normal purposes); ‘ — ’ indicates a truncated or cut-off word, or an interruption.
3. The language in which I have written this ethnography is not formal, and certainly not academic. I have written it in this way because it most naturally and honestly and subjectively describes my experiences. It is not my desire to cause offence but to write it any other way would have felt more contrived.

4.1 Me

As was usual after one too many drinks, I had awoken in a panic at four am, and had to rock myself back to sleep. My alarm jolted me from my uneasy slumber, in what seemed like only a couple of seconds later.

I had handed in my notice about three weeks prior, and I believed my heart had largely left my job. In truth, I had become despondent with my situation a good while before that. And with only three weeks of the school year left, I hadn't felt any restraint when invited to go to the pub, and it had felt good to tipsily ramble and whinge and describe how things ought to be. The day before, I had overheard a discussion about the IC (the Intervention Centre that I managed) and Jonny and I: 'they just let the students do what they want!'; 'you call them to help you, and it never makes any difference; the child is exactly the same the next lesson'; 'all the children in the IC are going to fail their GCSEs'; 'those children would have been better off just being excluded' and other things to that effect. These comments gambolled about me as I despaired at the crumpled shirt I was about to put on. The sense of shame - that my dishevelled state would somehow prove my unworthiness - gave way to a wafer-thin belief that my appearance was somehow two-fingers up to the complainers.

—What do they want us to do?! I'd like to see how you coped in our position! I chastised myself for my stupidity, but did nothing about it. For a little comfort, I remembered the praise that had been heaped upon us as I presented the students' attendance figures to the local council. Without exception, they were all up. I knew this was self-deception; I knew it wasn't really important, but it soothed my ego, so I re-ran the memory anyway.

Walking to the station, my hangover was justification enough to indulge my gently-suicidal vices. I held the cigarette in the same hand as my can of redbull so I could use my free hand to continually check how late I was on my phone.

—Yes, I know we've not done a good job this year, but we can't take the blame for that! I ran through the events of the year to see whether my position was plausible. The IC had frequently disintegrated into chaos since we had moved into the new building in

September. In our old buildings, an old police station, we had been able to manage the space and we had designed our behaviour protocols around its layout: we had an exit straight onto the street, so in the worst case scenario, we could always send the children home without disrupting anyone else; as one moved from the exit, one had the feeling of physically being promoted and praised: we had our timeout room, the corridor and then the main classroom (which also had the door which connected us with the main school building). The school, having recently turned into an Academy, and had a new building built, in which there was no annex for the IC. We were simply given a couple of rooms in the main building. In this new building, we had a lovely big open classroom (the police cells only had tiny windows with some of the bars still attached) but our timeout room led straight into the main school and had windows looking on to a corridor and classrooms. This unsuitability was further exacerbated by the fact that the school had been designed without walls separating the classrooms. Thus, when a student was sent out of the main room they could entertain at least sixty others before they were removed. This gave the students more reason to misbehave, and changed the meaning of 'being sent home' to 'a chance to cause a massive fuss.' I always felt that, whilst trust was central to any relationship, one mustn't wave temptation in someone's face. For example, I didn't think it was ok to leave one's wallet on the table in front of a student who was a compulsive thief. Equally, I don't think it's ok to design a building which has too many temptations in it for students. Misbehaviour has currency amongst students, and unless we give them an appropriate response to the question, 'why don't you do something naughty?' some will feel pressured to do something naughty.

With these facts in mind, I was happy that I could at least make the argument that our failures weren't our fault, though I had the nagging feeling that we had been stupid to believe we could simply transfer our old system into new rooms. Our system wasn't planned *a priori*, it was developed through two years of trial and error, and it was developed in a particular context. That context had changed and we had not adapted. I'm embarrassed to admit that, as I walked to school that day, my main concern was simply being able to justify ourselves to others, and I knew that nobody had paid enough attention to what we were doing to make this possible. My emotions had been stirred, a sandstorm had been whipped up and I was struggling to find my way.

Staff cuts had also meant that Jonny and I were now responsible for behaviour in the whole school building. Previously, one of us would marshal the timeouts, whilst the other taught in the main room. Now, one of us was often running around the building supporting the mainstream staff. Again, I knew I held responsibility for this. In a fit of hubris, we had offered to oversee the behaviour throughout the whole school after the change-over. We'd done so on the understanding that, a. we would have four other people working with us, and b. that the school would adopt our approach. I'd largely written the new school behaviour policy. It had then been mangled out of all recognition, and so no longer made any sense. A lack of money meant that we would have no one working with us. We were being expected to do our old jobs of looking after the students in the IC, as well as our new jobs of running the behaviour in the whole school. Both Jonny and I were all too aware that we were doing both jobs badly. I am unable to describe this situation without mitigating my role somewhat, but I'm aware I have correctly apportioned my guilt.

We'd had a decent system going in the IC; There was a period of a few months, which we still refer to as 'the golden age' when we had twelve students, who had all been extremely difficult in the past, working hard and calmly in the front room. So much so that when people had walked through, they had commented on it being calmer than the mainstream; one inspector even criticised us, saying that the students ought to be in the mainstream. This small amount of success made us believe that a *solution* to the problems faced by the students was possible. We believed that if the whole school ran according to our system, when the students were returned to the mainstream, they would be better able to cope.

Given that most of our regular students had finished their exams and so wouldn't be coming into school, we had the time to record the conversations for my research. I'd done my best to arrange times for the ones who had left to come in, but it was always going to be a bit hit and miss. On the train, I read through some of the diary entries I had written over the past three years. Their façade of authority now looked foolish. In those diaries, I heard echoes of stories told in staffrooms throughout the world: the visible part of the stories being mundane tales of student silliness, but in reality they're an account of that teacher's competence: '. .. so I said, "Dave, do you really think blah-blah-blah?" and

needless to say, he got on with his work!' I read one description of our approach, which was written during our 'Golden Age'; I still believed much of it, but there was that stench of hubris again. It was difficult for me to say exactly where the smell was coming from;

—perhaps the whole thing is *on the turn*, I thought:

Taken from notes written in November 2012

Our approach is based on a fairly simple observation: If a teacher says to a student, 'Can you take your coat off, please?' it may, at first glance, appear to have a very clear meaning; so clear, in fact, that a teacher may well be forgiven for not understanding why a student does not simply remove their coat. However, in practise, the phrase 'can you take your coat off, please?' has a thousand possible meanings, depending on the tone of voice used, the student to whom one is talking, and myriad other contextual elements. To understand the inherent equivocality of such a simple phrase is to recognise the importance of paying attention to the particular, to the details.

I previously adhered to the philosophy that, for our own sanity, we should 'pick our battles' but this often led to our instructions being inadvertently ambiguous. The ineffectiveness of what I was doing was highlighted by the last of the agency staff who came to work with me. He had a very strong (some might say inflexible) attitude towards the students and the effect was dramatically positive. It is not that I am concerned about having one rule for one student, and another for somebody else. (It was clear to me that this was often necessary). What became clear was that I wasn't communicating with the children at all. When I said 'take your coat off' it was understood as 'I want you to do something you don't want to do because you believe it will belittle you in front of your peers, so we are going to have a row now.' The word 'coat' had previously had virtually nothing to do with 'coats' at all because of the how we had used the word.

We decided we would ensure our instructions with the children were meaningful by making sure, that once we had instructed them to do something, they either did what we asked (eventually) or went home. Jonny and I refer to this as 'never losing a battle'. We expected a massive backlash and thought that the pain would last for weeks. In fact, within a few days, things calmed down and the students began doing as we asked much more quickly. We noticed almost immediately that the defiance of the children suddenly appeared strange and meaningless. For example, the students would initially say 'no I'm not doing that' in a manner which led us to believe that they meant what they said and then two minutes later be doing exactly as we'd asked. We felt that we had somehow previously taken the students at their word and suddenly they were shown to be paper tigers. (At this point I should perhaps add that these children are not timid, compliant children, but 12–16 year olds who were often big and aggressive.)

Equally, the phrase 'take your coat off', now seemed to mean what I'd assumed it meant in the first place. The students had been behaving according to routines with which they had grown up, but those routines were no longer working for them. If they didn't want to do things, then they had learnt to refuse and shout until they got what they wanted. Now they weren't getting what they wanted; we weren't backing down and they had no idea how to get the best outcomes for themselves. It was as if the children had just been shipwrecked on a desert island and were faced with a tribe behaving in exotic and unusual ways.

We see this in terms of what Wittgenstein calls 'Language-games' (Wittgenstein, 1967, p.5). One person says something and then in accordance with convention/rules another person says something else. In this light, we described the situation by saying that the children simply didn't know the 'language-games' necessary to function in the expected ways. So we decided to teach them. To this end, Jonny and I began noting down the difficulties the children had and the 'games' that they needed to learn. We soon had a long list of such games:

- The teacher is trying to have a whole class discussion so you...
- It is the beginning of the lesson so you...
- You are working in class, but are now feeling a bit stuck...
- You are about to enter a room where there is work going on so you...
- You come into the class in a bad mood because of something that has happened at home so you...etc....

For each game, we then wrote down a description of the routines and conventions that governed it. These were not 'rules' in the sense they are normally understood in school; not prescriptive rules but descriptive rules in the sense in which Wittgenstein used the term. These rules exist independently of the will of any one individual.

Throughout the development of the approach we were thinking about how we would rearrange the incentives to encourage them to play the game. Several 'blind allies' were headed down in pursuit of this. We were often asking questions like: Why do the children act in this way? What is their motivation? etc.... We asked these questions out of a genuine desire to help the students but they frequently resulted in us making comments that were useless, pointless, or espousing theories about the workings of the minds of the children. We were not exercising the kind of 'mental asceticism' mentioned by O'Connor Drury; we were being quite the opposite: 'mentally self-indulgent'. For example, one of the students had been diagnosed by other teachers as having 'low self-esteem'. I took this on board and said I would create a programme to increase his self-esteem. After a month of attempts to do so by specifically targeting his own self-view with a programme of intense praise and introspection etc.... it became obvious it was making no difference. I was treating 'low self-esteem' as if it were a physiological description of a dysfunction of the child's brain (in the same way I may have treated a child with a weak bicep by creating a training

programme of push-ups). However, low self-esteem, ought to be treated more as if it were a predicate of the child's actions and behaviour rather than in isolation, or even worse something that exists 'in its own right' (Wittgenstein, 1967, pp. 28-29). Because of this, Jonny and I decided to ditch our confused self-esteem programme and instead we made the focus language-games, and the way in which he reacted to them.

For several situations, we described four different ways of reacting from best to worst (described in terms of Gold, Silver, Bronze and Red) and gave him the option to choose which he would follow. We were clearly aware that this was a simplification and we were not in any way trying to describe anything moral: it was a representation of the social mores. This was comparable to a form of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy insofar as we included descriptions of mental states for example:

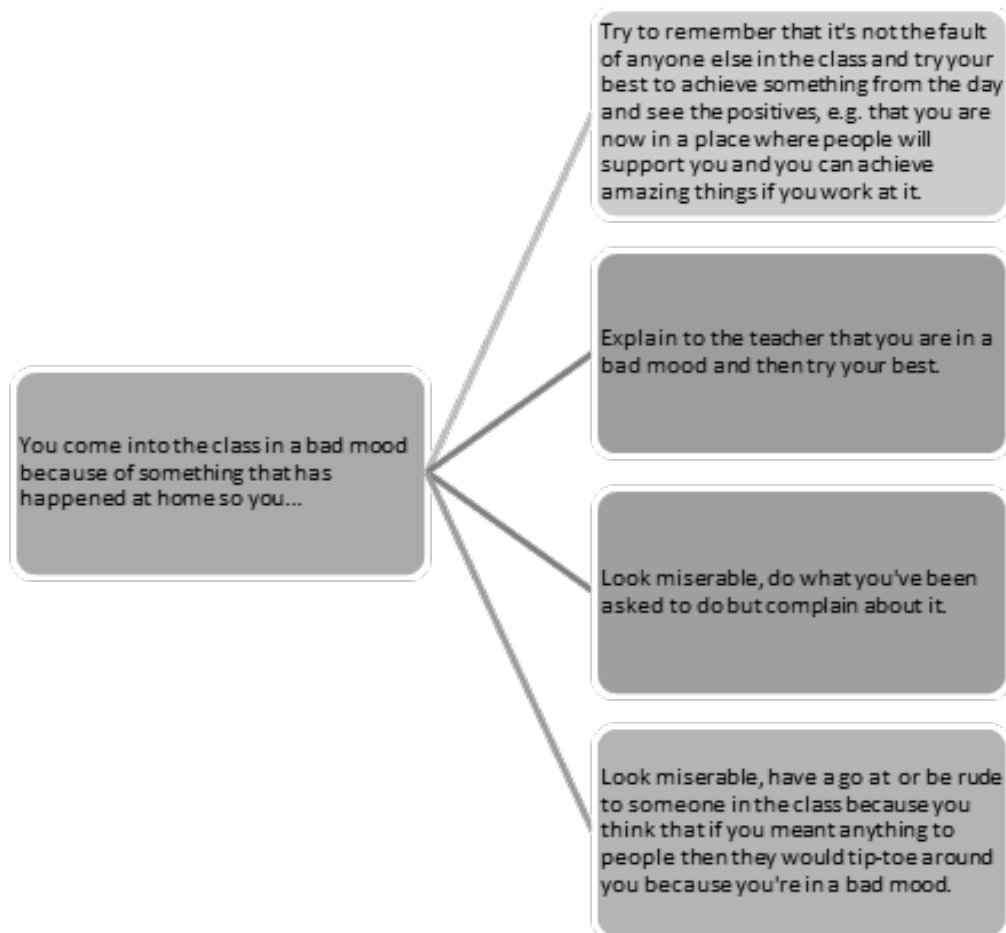


Figure 3: An example of how we taught the students to follow the language-games

I am not treating the mental state as a cause of the behaviour but as logically connected to it. One can ask the question: What does the child think this language game requires of him? Is it 'A battle for the survival of my ego in a world in which everyone hates me?' (not that he would use those words!) or is it 'An unfortunate situation, but fortunately I am now in a place where there are people who genuinely want the best for

me and are willing to help?’ It is reasonable to assume that experience taught the lad to view the situations as the former and our job was to help him to see them as the latter. This was not easy, however, since he may well have learnt what was necessary for him, and we had to teach him to believe that things are different. Within another month he had produced work he previously would have thought impossible and his relationships with his peers had improved significantly. Any observer would describe his ‘self-esteem’ as much improved.

We use ‘timeouts’ as our way of dissuading the students to misbehave. If I am honest, this simply came from watching the TV programme ‘super-nanny’ but it does provide us with a tool to increase the level of calm in the main teaching room, insofar as they would not be allowed into the main teaching room until their behaviour was as we wanted it to be. We wanted the students to value being in the main teaching room. It also seemed to give us and our instructions some value, and limit the amount of contempt in which the students could hold us. It is an unpleasant reality that people frequently rate other people in terms of the power that they appear to have. On the other hand, whilst they were in the main room, we would note down whenever the students played a language-game well, and then award points accordingly. If they got enough points, then they would work their way up from ‘red card’, through bronze and silver to ‘gold card’. As the student’s behaviour improved, we would increase their freedoms. ‘Gold card’ students could make cups of tea; go into the mainstream at break; listen to music whilst they worked etc.... In effect, the card system is a measure of trust.

...

As I walked to school that day, I felt like I was on my way to court. Were we culpable? Statistically, we looked terrible. Many of these students were, according to the government’s algorithms, *meant* to receive higher grades than we thought likely; SLT¹⁷ were not happy with us; it was true that behaviour in the school was getting worse not better, but was that our fault? The staff were not happy with us; was the IC a waste of time? Had we let the children down? Were the children disappointed in us? I felt that the conversations I was about to have with the children would either confirm the negative comments I had overheard the day before, or offer me solace.

...

¹⁷ SLT stands for *Senior Leadership Team* –the head-teacher, deputies and assistant heads.

I got to my room and began my routine of removing my coat, and filling a water bottle in preparation for my almost-daily cocktail of Alka-Seltzer and Berrocca. Jonny came in. It was first thing in the morning when the two of us appeared most antithetical: Jonny having come straight from the gym, me having come straight from smoking as many cigarettes as I could.

...

4.2 Matt

The room was large and airy. A big window spanned the entirety of one length. The opposite side was embellished with my books. I'd wanted to soften the acoustics and give the room a library feel. In front of the books was a row of soft seats and behind them the desks and chairs. There was only Matt, Jonny and I in the room.

I turned on the camera, and towards Matt, 'So, Matt...' I looked at him with a faux serious expression. He smiled back. In part to demonstrate the relaxed nature of the conversation, and in part because I wanted my cup of coffee, I commentated as I reached across the camera, 'Oh I'll just get my coffee, hold on. .. So Matt, why do you think you got put in the IC?'

'I don't know!?', he responded, laughing and looking at me like I was an idiot. 'You've got to tell me this stuff before you start recording. I don't know!'

'It's not an exam! There's not like a right answer or anything. You don't know why you got put in the IC?'

'No! I don't know!'

'You don't think it was something to do with your behaviour?'

'Well of course it was to do with bad behaviour, but I don't know *why*.'

'Oh, I see you thought it was a deeper question.'

'Yeah, like [you wanted] some detail.' He nodded towards the camera, 'to make you look smart.'

'No I just meant--'

'alright, alright start again...'

Still laughing, I started again, 'So Matt, why do you think you got put in the IC?'

Matt was used to the way schools ask questions. There's a right answer, a particular answer or kind of answer the questioner is looking for. I'd asked him a question I thought was straight forward, but he was thinking in terms of GCSEs. Answers in education often require, what appears to be, a kind of mind-reading ability to answer them. You need to know the *game* the questioner is playing to provide the *correct* answer. The further I've gone in education, the more correct this assumption appears to be. I remember being at secondary school, and being told 'when you do A-levels, then you can start giving your opinion'; that turned out not to be true; there were a clear set of hoops that you had to jump through at A-levels, and then at University, and even when doing a PhD, it doesn't entirely feel like one is free to say what one wants. It's to be expected. In the end, if one were to give an answer entirely free from constraints or rules, it would be impossible to understand. And there's something arrogant about the assumption that other people ought to pore over your work to extract from it not only the meaning, but also the criteria by which that meaning ought to be established. Matt emphasised the word '*why*' as if that were the signpost (in educational parlance – the trigger word) to something deeper, some kind of meta-explanation as to his appearance in the IC. That wasn't what I meant. I suppose the fact that he knew that I obviously already knew why he was in the IC made my question ambiguous, but I just wanted to hear his version of it.

At the second time of asking Matt responded quickly, '—because of bad behaviour'.

I followed it up. 'So what sort of stuff were you doing?'

Again, Matt looked at me as if I were being an idiot. He threw his hand in the air and could barely get his words out in disbelief at how stupid I was being, 'you just said you don't need detail and then you ask me that!'

Laughing, Jonny stepped in. 'Matt, Matt, right. Just forget about .. We're just having a conversation.'

'But I don't know what I was doing, it was four or five years ago.'

To use an overused phrase, Matt was not in his 'comfort zone'. He was laughing; we all were, but he did not know the rules of this game. A couple of years before, this would

have been enough for Matt to have thrown a wobbly, ripped up a book and stormed out. It had been as if he perpetually thought people were trying to make him look stupid. Fortunately, he had got used to Jonny and I enough that he now just thought we were the stupid ones.

Matt continued, 'I can remember is being rude. That's it.'

'alright being rude. Like what sort of things?'

'-but now that just makes me look like a bad person.' Matt nodded towards the camera again.

'Well I'm obviously not going to think you're a bad person, so don't worry about that.'

A little anxious to give Matt some scaffolding, I referred him to comments he had made previously. 'Before .. In the past, Matt, you've said, that you used to be really good in school and then your Dad died and you then got in trouble all the time.' I immediately felt bad about saying this. I felt like some kind of sordid director of an X-Factor contestant, prompting him to tell a sob story. My guilt is certainly justified in the sense that I thought that this was an interesting aspect of Matt's history, but I certainly wasn't trying to create a *causal* link.

Fortunately, Matt didn't see it in that way either: 'Well I don't know how that works, but yeah. I thought that someone dying would make you want to be good, but it didn't.'

'Why would it make you behave better if someone died?'

'Because you'd want to make them proud.'

Matt went on to explain, 'I think the main thing was, was because of what people said, so then I always got angry and started hitting them .. and then that got me in more trouble.'

I repeated his answer back to him, 'so people would say stuff and you would get upset and—'

Matt objected to my use of the word upset, he preferred 'angry'.

'And from then on you just kept getting in trouble? Do you think that the teachers were unfair on you?'

'No', Matt lent back a little and looked upwards, clearly looking for the right words. 'I think it was .. too easy.'

I pressed him to explain, and he continued, 'say, if like someone had a fight, and it was a proper bad fight, you'd usually just get sent home and probably excluded, but they'd just sit you outside for an hour or two and then you'd be allowed to go back out.'

Matt was describing his teachers as being too lenient on him in primary school. I don't know whether this was a genuine feeling, or simply a way of expressing a lack of personal responsibility. The conversation was interrupted by a call over the radio to go and pick up a child who was misbehaving somewhere, just as Matt had begun explaining how one of his old teachers 'broke the law' at his primary school.

I turned the camera back on whilst I was in the middle of expressing my own frustration at a student who was on the verge of being permanently excluded but still did silly things like sit in a lesson on her phones and then get kicked out. I often felt it was of some value to express such frustrations in front of the other students. I wanted them to know that we were cross, not because they had upset us, but just because we cared about them. It also gave us a chance to advertise our reasoning to the other students. 'Why do they do that?' I asked.

He laughed, 'I don't know, I'm not her, am I? Maybe all her friends are naughty so she just wants to join in.'

'But nobody else was being naughty.'

'They probably were, they just weren't being punished .. when I went in [to school] and got sent out, it was mainly because when someone started a joke, and I'd carry it on-not carry it on, but tag in, and I'd be the one who's getting in trouble.'

'So you do feel like people are being unfair to you?'

'No, they just pick me out because I'm the naughty one out of the lot, so they assume that I was the one who started it.'

I felt as if Matt had put quotation marks around the word 'naughty' as if to suggest *so called*. 'So you think that teachers genuinely had a bad view of you, that you were the naughty one?'

'Yep, it's true I am the naughty one.'

Jonny joined the conversation, 'do you think it's because you're in the IC, that they think you're the naughty one?'

'Yep.'

Jonny continued, 'But I'd say your behaviour is a lot better than most of the kids out there. Do you agree?'

Matt stuck his bottom lip out in recognition of what Jonny was saying, but wouldn't commit to an answer, 'I don't know, because I'm not out there so I don't know what their behaviour's like.'

'Well even just compared to when you were out there? In the last two months, just compared to what you're behaviour used to be like-'

'This table wouldn't even be here,' said Matt laughing. Jonny and I laughed too, at the memories of Matt's previous episodes of destruction.

'You did love to break tables-', I said. 'but .. what's .. erm .. what's made it better?'

Matt paused again to think, before offering a knowingly facetious response: 'You guys.'

Matt had become genuinely funny. He'd found a niche in making jokes, partially at the expense of himself. I distinctly remember the first time he'd said something that really made me laugh. We'd been discussing farts, probably because Jonny had done one. In our old centre, there were no windows (it was a collection of old police cells), so I considered it the height of rudeness to break wind, but that only seemed to inspire Jonny. Whilst we were discussing it, Matt told a story about how he'd been in an assembly once and thought he'd be able to slyly let one go without anyone noticing. To his horror, the fart came out as a great big trumpet blast and everyone had turned around to see who it was. He said, with a genuine sense of shame, that he had blamed it on someone else.

I asked him what he thought the genuine reason was for the improvement of his behaviour. He explained that perhaps it was just because he was away from everyone in

the centre, and as a result, he just got 'in the way' of doing what he was asked to do. 'Just out of habit?' I asked.

'Yeah' Matt replied.

'-This is a bad habit' interjected Jonny. 'Taking the backs off books.' He lent over with a smile on his face and took the book out of Matt's hand. Matt still had a habit of breaking things, not because he was intentionally trying to do something bad, but simply because he wasn't thinking about what he was doing. Fortunately, nowadays, it wasn't tables or furniture that he was destroying, it was just pencils and books. And he certainly wasn't doing it because he was angry.

Matt had had a lot of struggles with our approach. Matt had a terrible habit of spiralling out of control and losing all his points very quickly. What Seligman calls *catastrophizing*. As soon as he began to lose points, he would believe that he was going to lose all his points and then never make it back up to gold again. As a result, he would get terribly upset and smash the place up. Obviously, the punishment of the timeout, was in the withdrawing of our attention, but it was always a fine balancing act. We wanted to withdraw our attention so that Matt felt as if he had *paid* for what he had done, but we also needed him to realise that we were only doing this for his own good. We had repeated conversations with him where we would say stuff like, 'do you think they would let you get away with this in Eton or Harrow?' (We had to explain what these two places were.) 'Well why do you deserve any less than what they get?' By the time we were having the recorded conversation, he was out of that phase, and he had learnt to take criticism as if it weren't an attack on the value of his soul.

I asked him whether he thought he'd be ok the following year, once Jonny and I had left. They were discontinuing the IC because nearly all the students were about to leave. Matt was in year 10, so he had one more year left. Matt said it depended upon the timetable he was given, and the lessons he was put in. Jonny clearly wasn't keen on him suggesting that his behaviour was all due to outside factors. 'But do you not think that there's been a change? I mean, and I said this to you this morning, you seem like you've matured over the last few months .. I mean in the old IC, you were kept away from everyone, and there wasn't even that many distractions-'

‘–Or maybe just a pencil’, I threw in as a joke.

‘–and you’d find something to kick off about, and throw tables, and spit the dummy out, and then, you got a bit better, and then slipped a bit, and now you’re much more aware of yourself. You’re more aware of if you’re acting a bit strangely.’ Matt nodded his agreement.

‘But do you still think of yourself as the naughty one?’

‘No, but that’s what other teachers see. Because I’ve been in the IC for a long time, so they assume that I’m the naughty one out of the lot.’

Jonny was keen to get him out of that mindset, ‘but like, you never used to want to take your coat off, but do you think, if a teacher asked you now, you would? Would you still want to fight it?’

Matt looked at Jonny sideways, ‘you said yourself, I used to fight it in here, but do I now?’

‘No’

‘Exactly.’

4.3 Marky

We suggested to Marky’s Mum that she might want to get him to a doctor and have him diagnosed with Tourette’s. She thought about it. I even wrote her a 16-page document describing Marky’s behaviour for her to take. But she never went. And to be honest we were glad. We preferred that he wasn’t *diagnosed*, as that would have made it feel as if there were something wrong with him. I suppose I just felt I had an obligation to give her the option. It wasn’t really a problem in the centre, but the tricky thing, and it was also quite sad in some ways, was that in the outside world, the fact that Marky would shout the rudest thing he could at people did make his life difficult. He had been banned from buses, from pretty much every shop in the high street, and finally he’d been banned from school. It was easy to see how he got himself into trouble. People, obviously feeling offended, would shout at him for his outburst, but Marky could never bring himself to apologise because he didn’t feel like it was his fault. People were loathe to believe he

had Tourette's because he was also a tearaway. But if you spent enough time with him, you could tell when he was taking the mick and when he couldn't help it. This was difficult to explain to others. The signs were microscopic and always contextual, perhaps a sly glance, or just the tone of voice would give away that he had control over what he was doing; it was somehow *written in* to his actions. We did get him to start apologising, just because we thought it was a good habit. But sometimes that would go awry:

'Sorry for saying "shit", sorry for saying "shit", sorry for saying "shit" [...]

The other thing about his outbursts was that he was incredibly funny, and always outrageous. I remember telling him that my dad's a priest. He just stared at me, his eyes widening, and his face almost going red, and then it came... loudly:

'Your Dad rims God's arsehole!'

There was nothing I could do but laugh and Marky sat there feeling extremely unsure.

Every month or so, he'd become obsessed with a different word. One month it was 'cabbage,' another 'clit', all this was interspersed with references to Bin Laden. Then all the unpleasantness with Jimmy Saville business came to light. He couldn't let that one go for a good while. Jonny got on with him particularly well, and it was a real joy to listen to their conversations:

Marky: 'Your mum rubbed her mum's clit all over—'

Jonny: 'Marky stop, anymore mum jokes and you are working outside'

R: 'what about jimmy jokes?'

J: 'depends on the context'

R (sung to the tune of Abba's gimme gimme): 'Jimmy Jimmy Jimmy raped a cat after midnight—'

J: 'No Marky!'

Without any apparent registering of what Jonny had said, Marky then launched into another vignette:

'I was watching dell boy last night and he sold a cat that when you pulled the thing it sung 'how much is that doggy in the window' A cat!! .. that's something that I would sell isn't it?'

And that was quite true. Marky was a master salesman. We weren't always sure where he got his goods, but he could sell anything. I remember him once coming to school with a pair of Nike baby shoes. He escaped into the mainstream school at lunch and had sold them for £40 by the time he came back. He was always astute. At Hallowe'en he came into the centre with a hold-all full of masks, sweets etc. If we were confident about the provenance of his goods we might turn a blind eye to him setting up stall out of the back entrance of the centre. That Hallowe'en he made a killing.

Marky: 'Jonny did Jimmy come to your house last night?'

Jonny: 'No'

Marky: 'He came to mine last night and I said naaa go see Jonny Young he lives in Teddington somewhere.'

Jonny: 'You just told him I live in Teddington somewhere.'

Marky: 'Yeah he put it in his sat nav. I mean his perv nav.'

I could see why people often didn't believe that he couldn't control himself. Sometimes, it would be so subtle I wasn't sure myself.

Caretaker (to me): 'Those lads have been messing around with the fences again.'

Marky (shaking his head sympathetically and knowingly): 'Tsssch, tell me about it. They can be right cunts sometimes.'

We did try to train him out of it, giving him targets like, 'go 5 minutes without swearing'. The maximum he ever achieved was 17. We tried getting him to listen to music but he'd sing along, changing every word that sounded vaguely like a swearword (or Jimmy or Saville). He somehow couldn't even control himself when he was writing. Every morning we'd give them target sheets to fill out to encourage them to take some responsibility. One morning Marky's just said 'shag Jonny's mum'. Unfortunately, the answer to a maths question he was doing on the whiteboard once was '69'. Marky wrote

'your mum' pointing to the 6 and 'Jimmy' pointing to the 9. Even his own family suffered sometimes:

Jonny: 'I meet your mum tomorrow, I haven't met her before.'

Marky: 'Stupid slut, she should have just bought a TV! If she just bought a TV then I wouldn't have as many brothers and sisters. Stupid whore!'

Perhaps he could control it more than we believed. But how could we ever tell? But then what would have been the point? What difference would it have made? Is there an *absolute* rule somewhere saying that we mustn't swear? In the context, I always knew what Marky meant. As he was leaving on a Friday afternoon after a good day, he couldn't bring himself to just say, 'Bye, have a nice weekend.' Instead we'd get:

'Give your girlfriend one from me!'

But the thought was always there.

Marky, along with Matt, had flourished under our approach. Unfortunately, our ability to implement the approach had come to an end before Marky had developed the *habits* described by Matt.

Thus, by the time I managed to record my conversation with Marky, he had seemingly developed a much darker attitude to school and the *establishment*. There was a brooding aggression in his face that hadn't been there previously. We'd noticed the change in him a couple of months before he sat his GCSEs. As well as being due to the changes in the centre, perhaps it was also due to his evermore frequent brushes with the law, a slightly different social circle or the fact that he realised he was going to get very few marks in his GCSEs. Most likely it was a combination of factors. He was in reasonable spirits, however, when he arrived for his interview.

'So Marky—' I didn't even manage to get the first question out without laughing. Marky was sitting in my spinny chair, with his moped helmet still on, sucking loudly from a near-empty cup of McDonald's milkshake. Having finished his exams, he didn't need to be in school. He'd just come in because his Mum had told him to. She'd not told him why he needed to come in, just that he *had* to. He wasn't annoyed when he found out why. He remembered he'd said he would help out with my PhD. I managed to continue with my question, '—so why do you think you ended up in the IC?'

'For being a little shit.'

'For like doing what?'

'For telling teachers to go fuck their mum.'

'And do you think that it was right that you ended up in the IC?'

Marky nodded. 'Yeah, yeah.'

'—and do you consider your school career to be a success.'

Marky nodded again, smiling. 'Yeah. .. I didn't think I was going to last this long.'

It was indeed a surprise, looking back, that Marky had actually finished school. I wouldn't, in the slightest, say that his behaviour was any better. In fact, during his recent GCSEs, he had been ruder than he ever had been. But then again, I suppose that's not a surprise, given how unprepared he was to answer any of the questions.

'Ah well that's good,' I said. 'I was feeling a bit depressed, especially given that you didn't even turn up to your Maths exams. Do you .. do you .. just not care about your maths exam?'

Marky shrugged.

'Why not?'

'I just can't be fucked with it.'

'You just don't see any point in it?'

'No'

'Why's that, because you know what you're going to do when you leave?'

'Yeah .. working with me Dad.'

'If you had children, would you send them to school?'

Marky shook his head.

'If you were in charge of the country, would you have schools?'

Again, he shook his head.

'So, what would you do? ..even if they're little?'

Marky thought for a while. 'I'd teach them all to be motocross riders'

'Even if they were a girl?' Jonny asked.

'That's a bit sexist, Jonny,' I said.

'No, I can just imagine him wanting his sons to do what he does, and work with his Dad, but I don't get the impression that Morgan and Charley [his sisters] work with his Dad. Or go on motorbikes with his brothers.'

Marky nodded.

'So, they do?' I asked.

'Nah I'm joking. They don't.'

Jonny understood Marky and his background better than I did. Marky's family still had a traditional traveller culture edge to it, despite not being travellers for a generation or two.

'So, if you had girls, you'd want them to go to school?'

'Yeah'.

'If we could have done anything differently for you, what could we have done?'

Marky thought for a while. 'erm ... dunno ... nothing.'

Jonny pressed him. 'Even if you'd started behaving really well so you could go back to mainstream, and you kind of did at one point, would you have been bothered about getting your GCSEs?'

'A little bit'.

'You would have liked to have got them but it just seemed a bit too much like hard work,' Jonny suggested. Marky just nodded.

The conversation was dying a little bit. If I'm honest, I was feeling a bit sad that the life seemed to have drained from Marky in the past few months. I tried to change the subject to something nicer.

'What did you like most about school?'

Marky thought for a while. 'Subway.'

When the students were doing well, we'd often buy them a Subway for lunch on a Friday.

'Did you like it in the IC?'

'Yeah.'

'Why?'

'Because it was more chilled out.'

I looked at Jonny and laughed. 'We're going to look bad from this.'

Jonny agreed. 'Yeah really bad.'

I was completely running out of steam. Marky wasn't giving us anything. Jonny took over.

'So what would you say, obviously, when you were put in the IC, it was because you were swearing at teachers and stuff, but then we were kind of working on your behaviour, and you did improve loads. At one point you wouldn't do any work, and then there were days when you were doing loads of work, doing timeouts, What do you think was the main part of your behaviour that really stopped you behaving and getting your GCSEs? What was it that was kind of holding you back? –because you improved in loads of areas, what was it where you just never properly made it back into mainstream where you were doing enough work to–'

'Certain lessons'

'What, too many distractions or just–'

'Teachers being arseholes.'

'In what way?' I asked.

'Just whereas I've been known as the naughty kid. I always just got [told to] get out, instead of getting warnings like the other kids. So I told them to fuck off.'

'So you think people were unfair to you from the start?'

Marky nodded.

Jonny continued. 'Do you think that, in the IC you probably liked it better because we knew that some of the things you were saying, we didn't really take it like you meant it?'

'yeah'

'Cos obviously, if I took seriously all the things you said about my mum over the years.'

'Or my Dad .. and what he wants to do to God.'

'Or handy Mandy [Jonny's Mum], and all her escapades with all the kids in the school.'

'If we'd been a bit more sensitive, then maybe you wouldn't have made it all the way through, so maybe we should be pleased with ourselves for that.'

The day of the conversation, I was feeling a bit sensitive. It had become clear that a couple of senior managers thought that the IC had been a failed experiment. Here was Marky, a shadow of his former self, with no GCSEs, proving to me that they were right. Fortunately, Jonny cheered me up, by reminding me of what was important:

'Just one more question, Marky .. does your sister still fancy me?'

'No!'

4.4 Lucia

For all the difficulties that most of the children faced, none terrified me as much as those of Lucia. The thought of some of our conversations make me go cold. Who the bloody hell was I to have those conversations? On one occasion, she had refused to go to CAMHS¹⁸ anymore:

¹⁸ CAMHS stands for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service - a government run service.

'It's just another busybody who wants to know my business,' she'd said. I couldn't just leave her, turn her away. Tell her that I'm not qualified to help her! But bloody hell, how does one go about convincing someone to be happy? To live? To keep going?!

I remember sitting in the centre one morning. In between bouts of throwing up in the room's only bin, (which caused me concern not only because Lucia was being sick but also because the previous day, Marky had repeatedly kicked the bin in an uncontrolled rage, probably rendering it not being quite as water tight as I would have hoped) Lucia sat forward with her elbows on her knees, propping up her bowed head with her hands.

In the time I had taught Lucia, she had tried to kill herself at least three times. The number may have been higher. Twice it had been by cutting her wrists, and once it had been with some pills of which she had managed to get hold.

'It's not that I'm cold. But sometimes it's better to be so,' I remembered thinking as I readied himself for the conversation. I looked up at the wall behind Lucia on which I'd stuck the famous prayer by Bonhoeffer:

'Dear God,

Grant me the serenity to cope with the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.'

I'd put it up there to remind myself but I often pointed it out to the children, not proselytizing or suggesting that they ought to believe in God. I just liked the logic of it.

'But I don't believe in God! So who's going to grant me that?' Lucia said, in a voice that was at once irritated but also suggested she was sincerely asking the question.

'Well there's the rub,' I said in response, largely to myself.

She was at that place again: hanging on the edge of an abyss. She felt like the only person preventing her from tumbling was her boyfriend, a twenty-five-year-old drug dealer. Lucia was fifteen, so he was also, in my eyes at least, a paedophile – quite a catch, I thought. Jonny and I had a 'no bullshit' policy in the centre, according to which we did our best simply to be as clear and honest as possible. Both of us found it hard to do in reality, especially when a suicidal young girl was sitting in front of us, but 'people can recover from the truth. It's lies they can never recover from,' went our refrain.

'Right, I'm going to be blunt here, Lucia,' I said. 'I've known you for two and a half years and in that time you have destroyed every relationship you've had, whether it's with friends, boyfriends, your dad, your brothers, teachers .. and you've destroyed them in exactly the same way. You are so terrified of being alone, of not having anyone to love you, that when you get a sniff of someone caring about you, you throw your entire self into it and pin all your hopes onto that relationship and people can't cope with it, you can't cope, so it blows up. You sell yourself short each time. Look... If Marky offered you an iPhone for 50p what would you think?'

'That it's broken.'

'Exactly. So you wouldn't want it. But that's what you do. You try and sell yourself to other people for 50p and wonder why they don't want you. And that's what you're doing now. And that's why you're going to destroy this relationship with this fella now. And you know what I think of this relationship. You know I don't like it, but that's not the point here now. I'm just telling you that you're going to destroy this one like you've destroyed all the rest unless you learn to *be willing* to give it up.'

'But I love him! I can't live without him!'

'Then you don't love him at all. You're obsessed with him, addicted to him. But it's not love. And I'm not saying you have to give it up, you've just got to *be willing* to give it up.'

'But I'm not!'

'Then you've got to learn. You've got to find something, a passion, that doesn't depend on anyone else, which no one can take away from you, that is just yours.'

Lucia then picked up her phone, making it clear to me that she was going to ignore everything I'd just said.

When I mull over the logic of what I said that day, there had been truth in it, and I'd certainly believed what I said at the time. She should have stepped back from her relationship and seen it more as a game, but she was never going to be able to separate herself from her situation like that.

Jonny and I used to speak about interactions being *transactions* before I had ever come across Eric Berne's *the Game People Play* (2010). I felt, after I'd read *the Games People Play*, that Berne had created too strict a mechanical system for my theories. The Parent, Adult, Child delineation was too fixed and didn't allow for the many shades of one's sense of social standing that might occur. Nonetheless I was struck by how the underlying mechanics of the *games* described in the book had a real 'ring of truth'. There's a reason why those books describing 'picking up' girls are such a success, I thought. Neil Strauss' book was even called *the Game* (2005). It's all just a form of transactional analysis, making one look socially valuable to someone else. Jonny and I had often spoken of how the principle that one should follow to chat a girl up is the same as one should follow to get a child to leave a room. In both situations one had to employ the tactic of what Viktor Frankl called 'paradoxical intention' (Frankl, 2004). Since blushing is caused by embarrassment, if one doesn't want to blush because it makes one feel embarrassed then one ought to try to *want* to blush to stop blushing. If you want to 'pick up' a girl, then you need to make out that you don't care whether you pick them up or not, then they will see you as being of higher status and then want you more. If you want a child to leave the room, then you need to not care whether they leave or not otherwise they will know they have some power over you and will refuse to leave. Obviously, I thought, it only works with girls who are not completely confident in themselves; if the girl doesn't care whether you want them either then you won't be able to change their minds by not caring yourself! But it's all the same thing – it's about a person's sense of power, of who they are and how much control they've got, or at least think they've got. All these situations are just little games, just little bits of acting. *All the world's a stage...* and all that. Even the word 'person' has its etymological roots in the mask worn by ancient Greek actors.

The situation described above had occurred at the beginning of the year. In all honesty, we had no idea what to do with her. We couldn't impose our approach on her, because whenever she was given a timeout, she would collapse completely, and we were always scared of what she would do when she left. As a result, we had no hold over her whatsoever by this time. She would turn up in non-school uniform, sit on her phone the whole time and wait for us to tell her off. We were in a total bind. For the sake of the other students we couldn't just leave her be, but the consequences of the opposite were

terrifying. Instead, we went in completely the opposite direction with her. We told her, that providing she came in once all the other students had left, she could come in in non-school uniform and she would not be subject to the same rules as the others. We would trust her to do what she needed to do. Within a month of doing this, she was calmer than I'd ever seen her. Her attendance wasn't perfect, she wore her own clothes, but she worked hard and she was polite and more to the point, we weren't scared when she went home.

'Lucia, why do you think you ended up in the IC in the first place?'

'Because I was a troubled child? I liked to be the class clown if you'd like to say.'

She reminded me that the final incident that had placed her with us was a fight she had had with another student.

'No, I used to, in normal lessons, tutor or whatever, just start swearing at teachers, being rude .. just a nasty piece of work basically .. because everyone thought it was funny, and I thought it made me look good, and I thought it was funny.'

'You think that the thing that made the difference was Byron, who's the fella you're going out with. Explain why you think that's the case.'

'Because .. even though when you're at school when you have people to talk to, like teachers and people that you think that you have a bit of a connection with, it's all happy days and that's fair enough, but it is completely different from when it is somebody that doesn't know you at all, that is outside of school, outside work, out of everything, out of your hometown, whatever. They don't know you and you don't know them and you have to tell them everything about you really, and all your past and what you was like and that. But having someone who just sits there and listens to you for hours on end and not judge you and things like that, it's good. And to know that they still love and care for you for who you are, and even though you've done all these bad things and near enough messed up your whole education and that, it is good. It's good to have someone to listen to everything you have to say, that you need to get off your chest; whereas with somebody else, sometimes, it's not appropriate to say some things to teachers that you need to get off your chest or to somebody.'

'It's not appropriate to say the things that you feel like you need to say?'

'Yeah, because in some ways some people might feel like, "oh I can't say that to a teacher because they might go back and say that" and so on and so on.'

'Like social services and that.'

'Yeah, so if you have someone who doesn't really know you and they don't really care about any of that stuff and you can just talk to... it doesn't seem like it makes a difference but in the end it really does.'

'I can see that, because you know, there've been safeguarding issues and we've had to tell other people, and we have a responsibility to do that. I suppose .. and I think this is probably true for you too Jonny . .. the facts we know about Byron are, well we don't really know anything about him, but the fact that he's older, there may be some things that are a bit shady or whatever about him, and obviously we've had our massive concerns.'

'Yep.'

'And so .. there's nothing much we could do, or necessarily wanted to do, but .. for me, the most important thing is that you're happier, and you've obviously been a lot happier recently, for the last year or so, and I can't argue with that. But, if I'm honest, part of me still finds it difficult to deal with—'

'Yeah, of course, yeah'

'From a professional point of view, I don't agree with it, but at the same time, I can't argue that you're happier.'

'It's so hard, because you can say it from two different points of view. You can say it from "he's too old for her, and he doesn't understand her" and things like that, but then you can say, "Look what he's done for me".'

'It's not so much that he doesn't understand you, it's more that I suppose I feel that it's an unfair relationship, and he's got a hold over you, but that's by the by anyway.'

A call came in over the radio. I went off to deal with it. I turned the camera back on.

'You've put your coffee cup in the way!' Lucia said, laughing at my stupidity.

'Oh—' I moved it out of the way. 'My question is this:' I continued, 'why do you feel that you needed somebody like Byron? I completely understand why you feel like you

need somebody to talk to, somebody without consequences and all the rest of it; why do you feel that you needed him and other people didn't? Or who do you think that other people have that you don't have? What do you think it is?'

'I personally think .. I didn't know that Byron was going to do this to me. I didn't know that I was going to get my GCSEs and the rest of it, and even bother with my life. I didn't know that it was going to pan out like that. I think .. even though it sounds really, really silly, but .. somebody that doesn't really have an understanding about how you are or who you are, even if, say, for example, like a counsellor. They don't know you and you don't know them, and you can talk to them about whatever you want, and say whatever you want, how you want... to me the main important thing is whatever you have on your chest, on your mind, how you feel, is the only way to get out of being depressed, or being naughty .. it's finding the root of the cause of it. Even though it's hard to find it. It's very hard to find it. It took me near enough three years to find it. But it is well worth it in the end.'

'It's the talking bit. But You were given counsellors and CAMHs and all that.'

'I know!'

Jonny wanted to help her express what she was saying: 'Does part of you feel that when you were talking to them, does part of you think, "yeah they seem interested and some of them are really nice but, it's their job to ask me questions'

'Yeah'

'Because with Byron, obviously, it's not his job. He could leave at any point. But he's chosen, "I want to get to know Lucia Adams for who Lucia Adams is."' "

'Yeah'

'Not like it's my job .. even me and Bernard, to a certain degree, even though we've got good relationships, "it's still your job—"' "

'—to make sure we're safe and things like that, yeah.'

'You know, how much are people doing it just for you, and how much are people doing it—'

'—for themselves—'

'—well because it's their job to do it.'

'Well that's what I used to say, when I got new services and that, I always used to say to them, "You don't know nothing, you've just read a load of my work about my life, and you just want to know my life [business] and that's it. I never used to feel like they were there for me. Yeah, yeah .. that is spot on! That's a good point.'

It's difficult to know whether Jonny put the words into her mouth, but they certainly seemed to ring true for Lilly.

I wanted to clarify. 'So you don't feel like—'

'You need to feel like the person you're talking to is there for you, and not because they have to be there. They're there because they want to.'

'Why .. do you feel like other people have that person?'

'No, not everyone has that. And teachers say stuff like, "yeah go and talk to your Mum, or talk to your Dad. That's the worst possible thing that you can say to a child, if they want someone to talk to about their feelings. I could never talk to my mum about how I felt, never. Now I talk to my Mum about everything.'

'But you couldn't before?'

'No. I couldn't trust my Mum as far as I could throw her .. I don't know, you have to realise .. when you see people, like you two .. I never used to hate you but I used to despise how you used to make me do the things that I didn't want to do, like sit down and do my work or, I'm not allowed to go there, I'm not allowed to go here, but you end up, and you realise, "they're only doing it for your best interests".'

'But at the time..'

'You don't realise that at all.'

'You can't see it.'

'No .. it is hard... it's very hard to explain, and to say how to get out of that situation. Because I didn't know. You don't know until it smacks you in the face. You don't.'

4.5 Joan

Philosophers talk a lot about doubt, about scepticism – ‘what can we know?’ Perhaps the most famous example is that of Descartes’ Demon, whom, he supposed, was the ultimate reason as to why we should doubt everything. He was ‘as clever and deceitful as he is powerful, who has directed my entire effort to misleading me.’ Thus, Descartes decided, we shouldn’t trust our senses, because how can we possibly trust our senses if an evil demon might have used my powers to mislead us. Some people react to Descartes’ demon seriously, and watch *the Matrix* and genuinely wonder whether they might be living in a computer game (some with a childish excitement, and others with a terrible dread as they begin the long descent into the darkness of an existential night). Others sigh with irritation at it, and think it nothing more than a diverting game for the weekends for somebody else to play. Descartes hadn’t made me question my senses. Descartes’ ‘Demon’ just wasn’t up to it. If you want an idea that will make you doubt everything you think you knew, then try ‘Joan Baddams’ instead. Before she joined the little centre we ran for children-in-danger-of-exclusion, I and Jonny, thought we had it nailed: natural consequences for wrongdoing and rightdoing; if the children misbehaved then they showed they couldn’t be trusted, so they had to earn the trust back; If they showed us that they could be trusted, they could more or less do what they wanted, because if they could be trusted, then they could be trusted to make the decisions that I and Jonny wanted them to make. It was pretty straightforward, and for five months or so, we saw some very, very difficult children turn into little angels. And then Joan arrived. And the whole thing went to pot.

(NB:// I would never describe Joan as malign, and certainly never ‘evil’. I thought she was wonderful, often kind, and very, very funny.)

Joan was initially only placed in the centre for a short-term stay, but it soon became clear that the school had outmanoeuvred me. The school demanded she apologise to the teacher, with whom she’d had the relationship breakdown which constituted the ‘final straw’, before being allowed back in. It was a fairly usual request and I had accepted it and felt confident that we could talk Joan into making the apology. However, it very quickly became clear that there was no way she was going to apologise.

'There's no way I'm fucking apologising to that bitch!' Joan had said in response. 'She put me in here because she made me a shitty cup of tea! Nah nah nah.'

Jonny and I tried to explain that it was her reaction to the cup of tea that had caused the problem, but she was having none of it. Joan went on, and on, and on, and on. I had never heard someone speak so much but communicate so little. The sentences ran into each other; the topic changed before the sentence was finished. It was almost completely impossible to have a conversation with her sensibly. The strange thing was that both Jonny and I loved talking to Joan, so long as it didn't matter whether the conversation was sensible.

The normal rules of conversation just didn't apply. She could entertain us for hours, but there was no real chance of a 'two-way' conversation. It would largely be a monologue with Jonny and I filling in the gaps. And that was absolutely fine – unless you wanted to use language to convince her of anything. Then it was a total nightmare.

I remember an incredible conversation Jonny and I had with her one Monday morning. Joan came in and announced that she had turned into a racist. She said that a black man had punched her uncle. She knew it was a black man who'd done it because her uncle's lip went all fat... Jonny and I stared at her with our mouths open, not quite able to understand what she was suggesting. After a few questions it became clear that Joan, somehow thought that people got fat lips when they were punched in the face by black people because black people have big lips and therefore anyone they punch in the lip would 'catch' the big lips off them – as if they were to punch someone in the hair then their hair would become an afro. After having cleared this mess up we spent a good deal of time discussing the matter with Joan. She kept contradicting herself over and over again. There was so little in terms of a 'thread' running through her sentences that Jonny and I couldn't help her. Neither could she stop herself from talking for long enough that we could help her analyse what she had just said.

Joan loved drawing cubes. She was 16 but used to draw cubes everywhere. 3D-ish ones. When she did a good one, she'd tell you. Most weren't great though. She'd often draw them on the table. We'd tell her not to...

'You what? Why are you saying that I'm vandalism things? I didn't do nothing! I didn't even touch the pen? Marky, did you see me do that?'

'Marky wasn't even here—'

'Exactly! That's exactly it, favouritism. Ohh noo! If Marky does it that's fine! But if poor old ginger Joan does it! Then it's time outs!'

Eventually we'd get her out of the classroom, and then I'd ask her seventy times to move her foot so I could shut the door, then she'd sit outside and get crosser and crosser, working herself into a frenzy, screaming at us that she didn't draw on the table. She'd scream at us for so long, telling us she was innocent that, even though I'd seen her do it, I'd begin to doubt myself. I'd have to go back and check...

'Jonny, Joan did draw—?'

'Yep, she definitely did.'

Then there'd be the series of threats: I'm going to spit in your mum's mouth; I'm going to dash that chair so fast at your head; fucking bake crackhead... And finally, she'd throw her phone at the wall and smash it a bit more. And then blame us. The strange thing was that I don't think that there was anything remotely *conscious* about what she was doing. There was no real *manipulation* in the sense that she had a planned strategy of which she was aware. If that were the case then she'd not have smashed her phone each time, nor would she head butt the windows. After that, she'd calm down and start talking about something else:

'—If my son was a paedophile I will tell you something for free: he would not be a paedophile no more .. he would be a dead paedophile! No seriously I would get Jimmy Saville to paedophile him .. I would bring Jimmy Saville back from the spirits to paedophile him to teach him a lesson.'

In the two years we had Joan, we never once succeeded in convincing her of anything. She was the ultimate philosophical sceptic. She was so much more effective than Descartes' demon; at least the demon was led by some kind of malevolence, some kind of logic. Joan was led by... well sometimes cigarettes, but mostly nothing. The real question isn't 'what can we truly know?' Mostly, we'll carry on living anyway, led, as Hume

suggested, by custom. The real question is, 'is there anything we can say that will convince Joan of what we know?'

Jonny and I often wondered whether we should have kicked Joan out. We didn't ever want to kick out anyone. The one student we did expel was because we had no choice- the lad brought an axe to the school for a fight. And still we didn't want him to go, but the school insisted. The truth was, that with Joan, we had no idea what anyone could have done to help her. At one point, I was told that the school counsellor was really worried about Joan because she seemed to be regressing and just wanted to play with children's toys. Joan came into the centre after her next session holding a wodge of play-dough she'd made. She said 'look at this that I made!' I had said 'Oh that's clever.' Perhaps there was a quizzical tone to my voice but she then explained that she didn't really know why the counsellor was making her do it, but she didn't mind because it was an hour out of lessons. 'She just wants me to play with toys and shit. Sorry for swearing.' Her mum brought up the counselling later on the phone and questioned how the counselling was going because Joan told her that she just says what she thinks the counsellor wants to hear. And yes, she was sent to CAMHs, but that was completely useless. They said there was nothing wrong with her, and perhaps she had anger management issues (she'd been kicked out of anger management at a previous CAMHs thing for being too angry). At least our relationship with her wasn't pretend.

There's a quotation that I always think of in connection to Joan. At the end of the sermon on the mount, it says: 'The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.' There used to be a craze for wearing wristbands that said 'WWJD' standing for 'what would Jesus do?'. I've never had much time for the idea, on the basis that according to accounts, Jesus had more in his toolbox than I've got: run out of booze at a wedding? Sick man needs curing of leprosy? Need to cross the sea of Galilee? But the greatest miracle for me, is this idea of 'teaching with authority'. I wonder whether there was someone like Joan sitting on the hillside listening to Jesus that day.

...

Joan was in high-spirits when she came in for our conversation. Like the others, she had finished her exams, which had, as was to be expected, been a complete disaster. Joan wasn't fazed by that though. Not in the least.

Joan didn't want the camera to be facing her during the interview.

'Are you sure I can't turn it round Joan?'

'No, Bernard, please!'

'Alright, alright. I won't .. yeah, basically all I want it to—'

'I know you're recording.'

'I know you know it's recording .. all we wanted to do was ask you about the IC and you tell us exactly what you think, no holds barred, it doesn't matter—'

'Can I swear?'

'Well try not to, but just because we're here .. but you're leaving, and well we're leaving—'

'—yeah! Why are you going to Spain for? You didn't even tell me, and [to Jonny] where are you going?'

'Dubai.'

'What? No you're not. You're lying.'

'No it's true. He is. He's going to Dubai,' I said

'Swear on my life.'

'I'd never swear on anyone's life. I promise you it's true.'

'I swear down.'

'Swear on my life, Jonny.'

'Walahi' Jonny said, in reference to a phrase that Joan was keen on.

'No you're not Somalian, don't say that .. you don't believe in Allah. Can you swear on my life that you're going to Dubai?'

'Yes, I swear on my life, Joan,' replied Jonny.

'You've got your hands crossed.'

'I'm going to Dubai!'

'No crosses included.'

'He is!' I said.

'No he's not!'

'He is going to Dubai!'

'Why?!'

'Why not?' asked Jonny.

'Well why would you?'

'—what when I've got the beautiful scenery of Whitton to look at,' Jonny suggested.

'Why not? .. is your girlfriend going with you?'

'Yeah, hang on!' Jonny attempted to change the tack of the conversation. 'Are we not meant to be interviewing you?'

'Ugly fucking bitch! .. [to me] are you taking your girlfriend with you?'

'I'm not taking her, but she's coming with us though, yeah,' I replied.

'I'm surprised you ain't going to dump her and get a new one, like you did the last one... I can't believe you lot. You didn't even tell me Bernard!'

'I did!'

'—No, no, no, no, no, no, no. [to Jonny] You told me you was working with the police, which is a load of shit, and [to me] you told me—'

'That was two years ago!' said Jonny.

'It weren't two years ago!'

'—in the old IC?'

'No, it weren't in the old IC two years ago!'

A boy, who we had in detention in the next room, came in and asked, 'what's the time?'

'it's erm .. 42,' Jonny answered.

'You've got eight minutes,' I added.

'Why is he in even sitting in here?' asked Joan.

'Can I have my phone?' asked the boy.

'In eight minutes you can, yeah,' said Jonny.

Joan wasn't happy not knowing everything that was going on: 'Why is he sitting in here? ..[to the boy] .. why are you sitting in here?...!' The boy left the room. ' .. isn't he bare rude? .. I was just fucking talking to him and he shut the door on me! —so you didn't even tell me you was going. You told .. we were sitting here and was like, "I might go there you get this much weeks off, fucking hell Bernard you'll be well rich yeah," and then "but I wouldn't leave the IC!" and then Tim tells be, "oh you do know Bernard's going to Spain?" I went, "yeah, did know," didn't know anything about it Bernard! You made me look a right dick!'

'Ah you look hurt! Are you really sad?' I said.

'No'

'It doesn't matter to you anyway, you're leaving!'

'And?'

'What if I was coming to sixth form?'

'What?'

'Who would I sit with all the time and just verbally abuse all the time?'

'Yeah .. you're right.'

'It's probably why we're leaving,' said Jonny.

'No it's not. You would never leave for that.'

'Yeah I've had enough nights going home crying,' I said.

'No, you're liars .. ha "going home crying" .. I'll never be able to make you cry again now Jon.'

I tried again to get the conversation back to our interview: 'yeah .. well, so far you've just interviewed us!'

'No but why are you actually going? Be serious. I asked a question, I want an answer.'

I tried to answer the question. 'Because .. because .. I'm going .. in all honesty, I'm going because I have worked with "children in danger of getting exclusion" or "people who have been excluded" ...'

'What are you doing in Spain?'

'I'm just in a normal school. Well actually it's quite a posh school. I'm teaching—'

'And you're going there looking like that? .. and that's called a posh school? .. Bernard, you wear the same suit throughout the whole week! You've only got like two, I swear?'

'I've got three actually. Well one of them's got a big hole in the trousers though.'

'Why do you want to work at a posh school? Have you had enough—'

'It's not that I want to go and work at a posh school; it's that I want to go to Spain. I want to live abroad, learn Spanish.'

'Are you living out there?!' Joan exclaimed, clearly surprised.

'He's not going to commute!' said Jonny.

Joan ignored Jonny's comment, and continued her interrogation of me. '—forever? .. what about your sisters and your little nephews and that?'

'I'm going to come back. I'm only going out there for a year, probably.'

'A year!'

'Yeah.'

'You're going to come back blacker than black! .. and [to Jonny] why are you going to Dubai? What are you doing out there?'

'I'll be working—'

'—in a pub?'

'In a school!'

'No, you're not! You're a liar! Why are you working in a school out there? What's wrong with Twickenham?'

'Oh .. just lots of things.'

'What?'

'I just want to go to a nice hot country—'

'Why?'

'— and not have kids shouting at us.'

'— you get hot weather down here!'

'It's not hot!'

'Oh .. I swear to God right, you know when it was really sunny? I caught the sun on my leg, yeah? It was for three hours, and I came out in blisters. Are you telling me that's not hot?! .. I sizzled through my skin! .. burnt!'

'Yeah, but you're ginger. You burn easy.'

'Alright, you didn't have to talk about that there. That was a bit uncalled for Jon .. that was a bit .. er .. very rude...!' Joan was laughing, putting on a face pretending that she was hurt. '...but honestly, why do you want to go?'

'...because...erm—'

'—You're going to miss me too much.'

Jonny tried to explain his reasons for leaving. '—I graduated in 2010, and I was in my student overdraft, which is where you have minus money in your bank, and now I'm twenty-six years old—'

'Is this that whole debt thing? How much are you in?' Joan was laughing.

'And I'm still in debt.'

'How much? .. cos last time it was like two-digit grand. What is it? What is it now?'

'It's not really any bigger. It's about the same, because my student loan's about—'

'You told me this, like, last year, that you was in this debt. How've you not paid?'

'It's because I get paid; I spend my money; I get paid; I spend my money—'

'—at the pub.'

'No!'

'—at the gym, and on them stupid protein shakes you bring in .. go on, how much debt are you in? Go on .. I'm not even in debt yet, I'm alright. The most debt I'm in is 50p from an Indian shop down the road; that's me sorted. I'll pay them that back. How much debt are you in Jon? You said like 48 grand or something.'

'I don't know, however much my student loan is, which I don't even check anymore, probably like 25 grand or—'

'—Are they after you?'

'No!'

'They're not going to break his knees or anything,' I said.

'Ah I'd love to break your kneecaps I really would. I actually would, do you remember that time you .. ; Joan spotted someone walking past the window. 'I swear she thinks she's Joseph and the colourful coat or whatever that thing is. Did you see the coat? Did you see it? Did you see it?!'

'Joseph and his Technicolor dream coat.'

'Ah yeah I done that you know, and the lion king.'

'What do you mean you 'don—'

'Ah no I done another one actually at school, primary school, nooo, basically at the end of the year, at the end of the year yeah, you know like at here you have them stupid little achievement things, at ours, at primary school you had to do a show thing and I didn't want to be in it so I just did the music.'

'Did you? You—'

'—Fucked it up a bit though..'

'Why wh—'

'—Played the wrong songs... put the wrong CD in... cos it was meant to be the instrumental ones where they don't have the singing, but I was putting the one with them

actually singing .. sort of yeah .. put it up too high as well .. weren't my bad .. didn't pay me to do it, so...'

'How old were you? .. eight?'

'No. Year six, you're about ten or eleven ain't you?'

'Oh right year six is ten or eleven.'

'So about ten.'

'anyway... we've erm—' Jonny walked towards the door.

'—Go on! Get on your plane to Dubai. Don't come back!'

'He's just giving the phone back.'

'Oh.'

'We were meant to have an interview, and so far, as I was saying before, you've just interviewed us.'

'No, cos you lot have wound me up now!'

'Why?'

'I was your best student here. Don't lie.'

'You're leaving!' said Jonny once more.

'—I was the most funniest girl, or funniest person, I should say. True or not true?'

'Joan—'

'—was I the funniest person in here, true or not true?'

'—you—'

'—and the most aggressive at the same time... True. True. ...and there you go! And you lot couldn't even be real to me and tell me you was going!'

'I have at no point lied to you!'

'Yeah you did.'

'No, I didn't.'

'Yes, you did.'

'No, I didn't.'

'I told you when you were having one of your exams,' said Jonny.

'You didn't!'

'When you was all—'

'Well Jonny, why would I believe you? You lie so much! You believe my lies and they was lies. So how am I meant to believe yours?'

'It doesn't matter if I'd told you then, because you wouldn't have believed me anyway.'

'You still don't believe him,' I added.

'I know... I don't .. I didn't think you would.'

'What .. leave?'

'Yeah.'

'Well, times change,' said Jonny.

'You've fucking made me distraught now .. I'm going to go home and break down.'

'Look .. Joan .. we wanted to go away last year, maybe even Christmas—' Jonny was trying to explain to her that we did care, just in case she was actually upset. It was difficult to tell.

'—and then you found out Joan Baddams was coming here and you thought, "right we'll stay".'

'No, well genuinely, genuinely, we stayed until nearly all our year elevens, all our...'

'When do you go?. .. you still owe me a birthday cake and a birthday card before you go, thank you very much.'

'Alright, I'll get you a b—' I conceded.

'—[to Jonny] When are you going?'

'15th August.'

'No way...[to me]when do you go?'

'17th August.'

'Are you going to like the same place?'

'No—'

'—so you're never going to see each other again?'

'Maybe not.'

'Meet up in a local pub in Twickenham...so you're never going to see each other again?'

'We might well see each other again—' said Jonny.

'—Don't get on drugs though .. No, in Spain it's really bad, Bernard. They all do drugs and stuff .. '

'Where?'

' .. you'll come back like that [pulls a face, suggesting I'm in a wheelchair] .. "You alright there, Bernard?" "No, I haven't overdosed yet."' "

' .. whereabouts in Spain do they all do drugs?' I asked.

'Everywhere! .. Bernard, everywhere does drugs.'

'It's alright, don't worry, I wo—'

'—[to Jonny] And you! Don't do drugs.'

'I won't.'

'Where you going?'

'Dubai.'

'Yep, you're definitely in danger there .. but be careful! And don't end up coming back with just one arm or something!'

'Do you know where Dubai is?'

'—No, I'm telling you. Spain and that are really dangerous...Look! That's the coat! Look! Tell me that's not like that jacket! Did you see the colours on it?' The girl had just walked past the window again.

'Yeah.'

'Am I true or not true?'

'You're true... No, we won't get into drugs, and why would we come back with one arm, anyway?' I asked.

'Because they're very, like, violent, and you're, like .. scared.'

'What do you mean, I'm scared?'

'You're just like [does a timid face] .. and Jonny's like, "alright bruv, do you want it?"'

'Oh, why couldn't we have it [the camera] facing her?' said Jonny.

'I don't know why you lot do things like that .. Oh I've got some gossip for you boys! I swear you're going to love this ...'

Joan then went on to describe a whole series of dramas from the prom, that she later decided she didn't want in my PhD. She did tell me I could keep the recordings for myself though, to cheer me up when I was crying and alone in Spain.

'The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.' I do like to imagine Joan in the crowd on that mountainside in Galilee.

...

As I walked back to the station that evening, I looked up at the clouds. I was still laughing at the conversation with Joan. —However much I might want to inflict a self upon the world in order to feel justified, however much I might believe that my descriptions are true, and however much I might chastise myself for my failures, people like Joan will embody a real truth beyond anything that can be expressed in words. She lives in a world that transcends the borders and rules that limit language, that transcends any judgements and justifications that a person can make. And in doing so she showed me my place. And in that place, I felt quite content.

Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Man, in his weakness and shortsightedness, believes he must make choices in this life. He trembles at the risks he must take. We know that fear. But no. Our choice is of no importance. There comes a time when our eyes are opened. And we come to realise at last that mercy is infinite. We need only await it with confidence, and receive it with gratitude. Mercy imposes no conditions. And see!

Everything we have chosen has been granted to us. And everything we renounced has also been granted. Yes, we even get back what we threw away. For mercy and truth are met together. And righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
Babette's feast (the film)

5. PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ETHNOGRAPHY

My argument in the first half of the thesis was that un hiding moral value is a methodological issue, in that it requires us to develop a particular way of looking at problems. I would not claim to suggest that the manner of looking described in the first half is the *only* such manner; it is simply one way amongst many. In chapter two, I described this manner in twenty-two observations that were divided into three themes: The first concerns a description of moral value; the second section concerns how philosophical confusions result in moral value becoming hidden; the third concerns how we might go about un hiding it again.

The structure of this chapter mirrors that of chapter 2. It is divided into three parallel sections covering each of these themes. The chapter is subdivided into the twenty-two observations that were made in chapter 2. For each of these observations, I have chosen sections from the ethnography that illustrate that observation in concrete terms.

5.1 To respond to a situation correctly (to pay attention) is to recognise its contingency; and thus, ascribe absolute value to all aspects of it.

In this section, I exemplify the way in which, by recognising the traps set by language, we can recognise the contingency of the world.

A. In trying to establish whether virtue can be learned, we become distracted by the question, ‘how do we know what virtue is?’

I hope that the reader who is unfamiliar with the difficulties associated with teaching students such as ours can appreciate the difficulties that we faced. The unusual situations that we faced often led to us being unsure of ourselves and asking ourselves the wrong questions. During our time in the IC, everyday there were occasions when we had to challenge the students, and insist on a certain thing happening, and it frequently ended up in enormous displays of emotion.

I remember Jonny and I resolving to challenge one boy (who was in the mainstream school) on his refusal to go to class. The mainstream teachers were not challenging him because of his tendency to become very aggressive and destructive. One afternoon, we were asked to go and see the boy, who was refusing to go to class and was just wandering around the school disturbing other lessons. We had no students in, so we both went. Our tactic was simply to follow him around and repeatedly give him the option of going to class or going home until school finished. Initially the boy walked away.

We followed him, repeating his choice. It was not long before he issued his usual threat, 'leave me alone or I'm going to kick off'. I simply replied with 'ok'. Realising he would have to go through with it, he (cleverly, I think) moved to an area surrounded by open spaces that counted as classrooms in that ridiculous building. The boy began shouting and then threatened to throw over a bookshelf. We ignored the threat, and repeated our request. The boy became more and more irate, and then tearful. Jonny and I knew that we looked awful, as if we were torturing the boy, but we knew we were just engaged in a power-game. Finally, the boy threw over the bookshelf. We did not react to it (though many children and staff who were now watching did). The boy then collapsed in a heap of tears, and after we gave him time to recover himself, he went off to class.

In situations like this there was a fairly regular pattern: we challenge the student; they go as far as they are willing to go in displaying their anger; they realise we are not going to back down; they give in. And as was often the case in situations like this, we never had another problem with the boy. He would still try it on with the other teachers but as soon as we were called, he did as we asked. In fact, we got on very well with him after that.

We knew that the other teachers would be shocked by all this, but both Jonny and I felt morally justified by how we dealt with the situation. The other teachers had the expectation that we would stop bothering the boy and leave him alone. And to be honest, so did I. I was fighting my own expectations throughout the scenario, in the sense that I kept having to remind myself that we were doing the right thing.

It is absolutely right that we questioned and continually question ourselves, but we had to work hard not to question ourselves in the wrong way. One can easily imagine, for example, coming away from such a scenario and asking: *how do we know that we did the right thing?* Rather than *did we do the right thing?* The first question would have led us down the garden path. The second was sensible. I do believe that, in this situation we did do the right thing, because I think that the expectations I was fighting were somewhat cowardly and vain. I had those expectations because I was worried about what the other teachers would think, rather than having the interests of the boy at heart. When you spend a long time with students with SEMHD, you begin to see certain things about their behaviour from a different aspect. One of the things I particularly notice is the way in which students walk. Students who are often considered *hard* or *tough* walk with their shoulders up around their ears and look about themselves in quick, jerky movements. Initially, I simply believed such students *wanted* to appear hard and so walked in that way. Now I see it quite differently. Often (though not always) such a gait is not put on to appear tough; it is the natural way of walking for someone who feels threatened and scared. There is a lovely quotation from the film *American Gangster*, where Denzel Washington's character says, 'the loudest person in the room is the weakest person in the room', and a similar antithesis is often present in behaviour. For example, someone who is acting arrogantly is often feeling very defensive of their ego. We had noticed the boy in question had begun to change his gait and the way he was walking. As he was pushing against the school rules, he was discovering

that no-one was pushing back, and that scared him. He wanted someone to stand up to him. Whilst that may not have been his conscious expectation, it was his deep expectation. With many of the boys we taught, we would often have some form of playful physical battle. I do believe that they wanted to know that we (or rather Jonny) were stronger than them. If you know that you are being looked after by someone who is tougher than you, it makes you feel safe. It makes you feel it is not your responsibility to look out for danger.

B. We can escape philosophical confusions, if we view the meaning of a statement as *its use in language*. We can interpret this to mean that the intended meaning of a word is *what we expect to occur as a result of the word (or phrase) being uttered*. Equally, we can say that we have been understood when the listener recognises that expectation. The actual consequences that occur may or may not match these expectations. Often there are many possible meanings of a word, because there are many possible consequences of its use.¹⁹

There are many occasions throughout the ethnography that exemplify the idea that the meaning of a word is its use, as opposed to the idea that the meaning of a word is fixed in language and is simply a *name*. Firstly, in the extract from my notes, I gave the example of how ‘can you take your coat off, please?’ did not mean what we might normally assume it means. Although I may well have initially expected the child to respond by taking their coat off, I soon realised this was hopeful. Reading through my diaries and journals from the time, it is clear I was often concerned we had lost *control* or *power*. As a result, I kept thinking about how we could get it back again, searching for some kind of quick fix to establish authority over the children. The revelation was in realising that authority was not a cause of students doing what we asked, but an effect of the words meaning what we wanted them to mean. In order for this sentence to mean what we wanted it to mean, we had to set up the context, the *language-game* that both we and the students could play.

This is perhaps the most explicit example, but there are many examples littered throughout the ethnography. When Marky said, ‘give your girlfriend one from me’, it was actually a form of goodbye. The times when we assumed fixed *referents*, rather than paying attention to the expectations attached to words or actions, often coincided with occasions when I feel that we acted wrongly. We were complicit in the ritual humiliation of Marky during his GCSEs (an issue I shall return to later) because we failed to recognise the *meaning* of the exams to Marky; I had assumed they were merely a test, when they were an exposé. Had I properly thought about it, had I paid attention to Marky, I would have realised this and done something about it (though I am not exactly sure what that would have entailed). On a more positive note, during the conversation, Joan never

¹⁹ As aforementioned, the twenty-two observations are numbered A to V, of which this is the first.

explicitly said she liked and appreciated us, but she showed it by attacking us for leaving. What she was saying was not really what one might have assumed she meant. Her expectations were that we would know that she was upset that we were leaving; anyone else might have simply expressed their sadness. The key to understanding the students and the situation was always in paying attention to them, and the language-games they were playing.

During the conversations, I experienced various expectations as if I saw them embedded in the situation. Thus, I noticed particular *meanings* in the situation. I can only describe it as like witnessing a tension that needed resolving. At the beginning of our conversation with Matt, there was clear tension because he did not know how to answer the question, but then, even once the conversation got going, I could still sense that Matt was struggling and he needed propping up. So, I provided him with some *scaffolding*. I did feel as if I had not thought about it enough beforehand from Matt's point of view, but given that he was not really stressed I only felt slightly guilty. This tension, this expectation, had embedded in it a moral obligation to help him out. Similarly, during the conversation with Marky, I clearly remember feeling a tension and an expectation that Marky was going to get annoyed and frustrated because the conversation wasn't going anywhere. I could have chosen a different *aspect* with Marky, i.e. I could have felt annoyed that he did not really want to speak. I chose not to look at it that way because it would not have seemed right: he had at least given up his free time to come in, after all.

It would not be right to call these tensions *beliefs* because I wasn't choosing to see these things, they were part of the language-game we were playing. Although there were obviously options regarding the *way* I saw the situation, once I was looking at it in one particular way, I had no choice but to have the expectations I did. In this way, we can say that morality is entangled with the *way* in which we look at things. Neither nor could I call these tensions *predictions* because I wasn't interpreting and applying a rule. It was simply the way things were as I saw them. One could call this *empathy*, but empathy tends to refer to 'putting oneself in another's shoes' and often, especially with some of our students, that was nigh on impossible given how different our lives were. That does not mean I had no expectations as to how they might feel or act. The accuracy of one's expectations clearly relates to one's ability to empathise, but I am not sure that, as a concept, it is the most useful here. Empathy is often used as if it were some form of analogous logic, *if I were you, I would feel the same*. As I have stated elsewhere (concerning the first/third person asymmetry) this brings with it a host of difficulties. One can get to know someone else without being able to empathise with them; instead certain consequences become expected as one builds up a shared concordance.

C. Moral value is *absolute* value, when things are viewed as valuable in themselves. This is as opposed to *relative* value, when things are valuable for the sake of something else.

For Jonny and me, it was difficult to remain positive on days when we were repeatedly being sworn at. This is yet another reason why it was useful to look at life in terms of a ‘game’. In Bernard Suits’ (2005) *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*, his (or rather his protagonist’s) general point concerns one’s attitude to games, and by extension the proper attitude to life. The grasshopper²⁰ eloquently defends his position and explains why he must die. He describes, as one of the essential elements of game-playing, the *Lusory attitude*. And the *Lusory attitude* as ‘the attitude without which it is not possible to play a game’ (p.49). The attitude by which someone accepts the arbitrariness of the restrictions placed on the activity of achieving one’s aims for no reason (other than it would not be a game if it were any other way). By viewing our job as a ‘game’ we did not see the restrictions placed on us (by the children) as being in some way a personal attack on us, but simply accepted them as part of the game. Their role in the game was simply to outmanoeuvre our attempts to make them do some work. Suits (2005, p.10) defines a game as follows:

To play a game is to attempt achieve a specific state-of-affairs, using only means permitted by the rules where the rules prohibit the use of more efficient in favour of less efficient means, and where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity [lusory attitude].

For Jonny and me, the *game* was created by school, by society, and as much as some might believe the achievement of a *specific state-of-affairs* to be something ultimately important, it cannot be so for the reasons I have outlined. Thus, we accepted our position, because that was just the way it was, and chose the most beautiful way to look at it.

Of course, this ludic aspect of *game playing* was not what Wittgenstein had in mind with his talk of language-games. Wittgenstein’s concept was intended to elucidate the nature of language as a rule-governed practice. Indeed, Suits’ (2005) was specifically taking aim at Wittgenstein’s claim that there was no single definition of a *game*. However, I do think that the lusory aspect that Suits describes is not so dissimilar to the vision of absolute or moral value described by Wittgenstein. If all facts are equally valuable, then there are no concerns that are more valuable than any others. Thus, there is an aspect of describing moral (or social) rules as being game-like, which deflates their illusory importance. After all, any description we can give of moral behaviour will only ever be of *relative* value.

In the ethnography, I described how Jonny and I, in an attempt to make our communications with the children more meaningful, adopted a strategy of ‘never losing a battle’. This meant that whenever we gave an instruction, we would not rest until it was carried out. We were trying to create a shared set of expectations with the students, a shared concordance as a result of a shared language-

²⁰ The Grasshopper in the title is that same grasshopper from Aesop’s fables that dies in the winter due to its spending the entire summer playing games and not preparing for the winter.

game. We wanted them to *expect* to do what we expected them to do, i.e. take their coat off when asked, or *expect* to be badgered by us until they did. Some of the children quickly learnt to *play the game*, and their actions became concordant with our game. However, in retrospect, we were a little brash with our implementation of the idea. We did not understand all the students well enough, and made assumptions about what would happen based on a couple of cases:

Marky acted almost exactly as we had expected. He put up a big fight initially. He was clearly upset with us for not behaving as he expected, and appeared to believe (understandably) it was a flash-in-the-pan idea from us. It would be fair to say that in the heat of the moment, Marky believed us to be being unjust, but he accepted it once he was able to step back from the situation, and once he accepted things had changed, he dealt with it very well. After the initial fight was over, Marky was able to adjust remarkably quickly, and accept new expectations. It is also worth noting that he quickly accepted the reversion of his expectations when he realised we were losing control because of the changes made to our roles in the school!

Matt struggled for a long time with the change. He would very quickly lose heart, and believe that all was lost. His anger was not, however, generally aimed at us. Rather his sense of injustice was with the world – the world was not acting as he was expecting it to act. Even though they fought us, I would not describe the behaviour of Marky and Matt to be discordant. They were still behaving, more or less, in ways we could understand. They were obviously not the ways we wanted them to understand but fighting back in the manner they did was still part of the game. We were all playing a kind of power-game, and we all knew the rules.

Things were different with Lucia, however. Lucia never came to terms with the changes. We expected she would fight the changes, but we were wrong in terms of *how* we thought she would fight. With most of the other students (we employed this approach with about twenty-two in total) they fought, reached a peak and then they gave in. She began, almost immediately, to behave differently to the other students, and our expectations shifted quickly. I do not think that we were wrong for trying the approach with Lucia, but more attention might have brought concerns to light. In the interview, Lucia described how she did not realise until afterwards that we, and other professionals, were acting in her best interests. Lucia often understood something completely different by our words, from what we intended. She was placing them in a very different language-game to the one we thought we were playing. When we said, ‘Right Lucia, you’ve got a timeout. Please, leave the room’, she understood, ‘we don’t care about you’. It is not simply words, however, that are given meaning by their use; the meaning of actions works in a similar way. The wrong facial expression or gesture was often enough to send Lucia into a spiral of anger.

Looking back, the difficulty was that we felt pressured by SLT to act before we had managed to create a situation in which we could truly pay attention to Lucia. In the end, by allowing her to come in on her own terms, we had that situation, but not before we had caused a lot of damage. If I were in

the same situation again, I would force myself to worry less about what my bosses and other people were saying, and find a way of properly getting to know her first. This would not have been a simple matter, but it was essential. Through properly getting to know Lucia, I would have been more able to treat her *and all of her foibles* as something of absolute value in themselves. Lucia's value did not stem from her abilities to get grades, or to learn English, it stemmed simply from the fact that she existed. I also wish that I had not worried about what SLT thought because what Lucia did would not have been an indictment on me had I been brave enough to ignore the pressures entirely.

D. Although the *self* as a metaphysical notion appears to have a privileged ethical place, this is a conceptual confusion.

In the ethnography, I included references to *myself* as a form of confession. I was not so much confessing that I smoke, or that I was foolish, or that I drank on school nights, but the fact that I frequently made myself the subject of my attention. Doing this was not only unethical in itself (it is *inconceivable* that it is the best course of action, but nonetheless understandable) but it also left me open to blind-alleys of thought. If *I* am the subject of my attention, then I have no criteria of correctness, and thus *anything goes*, and everything I say is just chattering. If I manage to avoid making myself the subject of my attention then I will find that I cannot simply begin calling a pen an elephant and expect to be understood; the behaviour of others will act as my criteria of correctness.

The difficulty, however, is in fighting the temptation to place myself as the object of my thought. Why I wish to do so is perhaps a psychological question rather than a philosophical one. Perhaps it is simply because I am afraid of my own insignificance. And I say this, even though it is in my own insignificance that I found peace. There is a clear sense here of there being an *ethical way of looking*, an *ethical aspect to be seen*.

E. Recognition of absolute value cannot be *said* it can only be *shown*. In this way, there is no distinction between understanding and responding.

As I described, we explained to Lucia that if she came into school after the other students had left, we wouldn't make her wear school uniform, or force her to abide by the same rules as the others: no mobile phones, time-outs for swearing etc. At one point, a member of SLT complained to us about this situation. This member of SLT felt that, a. we were setting an unhelpful precedent, and b. that we were not providing Lucia with her legal entitlement in terms of hours at school. Both complaints were fair enough and true. There was no denying it, other children were asking questions about the situation, and we were a few hours under her legal entitlement. We had offered her more but she did not want to stay. I did not want to have any conversation with the SLT member about what we were doing with Lucia, and I did not want to be *justifying* anything to her because, unless she had spent every day with Lucia for the past few years as we had, she could not completely

understand. I was concerned about what SLT might demand. For example, I didn't want them to suggest that we count Lucia's absence from school as truanting. I cannot remember the exact words of my response to her, but it was something akin to the following:

Lucia has repeatedly tried to kill herself in the past. She is now much happier. The fact that it is an unhelpful precedent, and that we are not providing her with her legal entitlement are our problems, and I am not going to make them Lucia's.

Hume (1985) is often interpreted as proposing a logical ban on deriving an *ought* from an *is*, i.e. we cannot derive a *prescriptive* proposition from *descriptive* propositions. According to this reading, I could not logically derive the following proposition:

- I *ought* not to compel Lucia to follow all the school rules.

from the following facts:

1. Lucia has repeatedly tried to kill herself in the past.
2. She is now much happier.
3. The facts that it is an unhelpful precedent, and that we aren't providing her with her legal entitlement are currently our problems because we are not compelling Lucia to follow the school rules.
4. The act of compelling Lucia to follow the school rules would be making these facts Lucia's problems.

Firstly, I am not certain that Hume was, in fact, proposing an outright ban on such manoeuvres; I would argue that he was simply suggesting that an *ought* from an *is* is not a logical deduction given that the two propositions are of different *types*. Williams (2006, p.123) states that 'It has been reasonably doubted whether Hume himself meant by this passage what has subsequently been made of it.') 'I *ought* not to compel Lucia to follow all the school rules,' is simply of a different type to 'Lucia is now much happier', and therefore there is clearly at least one premise missing before we can logically connect the two together. The following is a logical leap:

1. I have three apples.
2. You have two apples.
3. Therefore, I ought to give you an apple.

However, I can find nothing *logically* impossible about the following:

1. I have three apples.
2. You have two apples.
3. We want to share the apples evenly.
4. Therefore, I ought to give you an apple.

The logical mistake was in leaving out *material* (in the legal sense) intermediate propositions, not in the logical manoeuvre itself (which is clearly perfectly acceptable in everyday language). In this more complete version of the argument, we might say that there is a *logical compulsion* for me to give you an apple; to argue otherwise appears inconceivable. However, logical compulsion only appears so compelling because it takes place within a closed system (which real-life never is). If I open this system up, and allow in other facts, the argument suddenly stops being so compelling, and

alternatives become conceivable, for example: ‘You ate four apples yesterday and I had none’, or ‘one of the apples is tiny’. All descriptive propositions are contingent on the circumstances; whatever I *say* will be contingent, unless I am somehow able to state every possible contingency. Thus, there were no propositions I could say to SLT that would mean it was *logically necessary* that Lucia not be compelled to follow all the school rules. However, it was, for me, necessary that Lucia not be so compelled; it was *inconceivable* that I would be morally correct in so compelling her. This compulsion could only be *shown* by the narrative, however. I could not *say* any particular reasons for it being the case. Our experiences, and our expectations that follow from that experience, provide us with the rules according to which we feel a compulsion to act. Thus, the compulsion was present in the events I experienced.

F. Moral value is expressed in recognising the obligations that one sees in the world.

Reading the conversation with Lucia, I do chastise myself because I know I was not always *unconditionally* there for her. I was frequently just doing my job, and sometimes, even worse, revelling in the drama of it all - enjoying the fact that I knew I had a good story to tell. The act of confessing this here is terribly embarrassing and shameful (I am struggling not to add caveats - ‘I felt this only very rarely’ etc...). But this in itself is important. My moral obligations to Lucia were *absolute*, they were not relative or contingent. By this, I do not mean that my obligations were not dependent upon my being her teacher; they were certainly contingent in this sense. What I mean is that, at the time, it was inconceivable that it would be ethical of me to revel in the drama of her situation. Again, there are no calculations to be done here, it is self-evident; and by ‘self-evident’ I don’t mean that I know it intuitively, as if intuition were some mysterious metaphysical faculty. If I were in a room and wanted to get out, I wouldn’t feel the need to say I *intuitively* knew I should exit through the open door. Intuition is simply an unnecessary *god-of-the-gaps*. Sometimes the ethical decisions might have appeared more complicated, but, to extend my analogy, that was simply because I wasn’t facing the door. Of course, I might be forgiven for revelling in the drama of it, but that doesn’t change the fact it was unethical. And for the brief moments that I was able to recognise my obligations, I could see the true value of Lucia.

G. Moral value is expressed in recognising the incompleteness of one’s judgments.

This thesis, as an act of confession, also reminds me of my faults and my shame serves, not only as a warning against me making the same mistakes, but also as a reminder of my imperfections. When I feel the embarrassment again, I can immediately recognise that I have been tempted to place too much faith in my own judgements. When I remember that I am a fool, I can approach life more humbly. This is clearly not something that happens once, but a continual ebbing process of my arrogance rising until it crashes at the point I remember my shame. This may sound more depressing

than it really is. Firstly, what used to be huge waves of confidence seem to become more ripple-like with time. Secondly, there is a great sense of freedom from responsibility when one recognises one's own stupidity. Thirdly, the recognition of one's insignificance, and the insignificance of one's judgements is a sure path to recognising the wonder of one's existence.

5.2 ...But when we hide this contingency behind a veil of our own expectations, we can only ascribe relative value to it.

In this section, I exemplify how different kinds of mistakes in our thinking can hide moral value from us by throwing a veil over the moral value of the world. These various mistakes act like filters that remove noise from our descriptions. However, more often than not, it is this noise that is most informative.

H. If we are to get a clear view of all the possibilities, we need to be able to find or invent, and see the significance of, *intermediate cases*. These cases bring to light how the narrative, and thus the expectations, can change as a result of a change in the state-of-affairs.

In order to nudge Matt out of his negative mind-set, Jonny and I offered a number of intermediate cases. Firstly, Jonny established the logic that Matt was using to *prove* that he was ‘the naughty one’: ‘do you think it’s because you’re in the IC, that they think you’re the naughty one?’ (This sentence also had the added benefit of distancing Matt from the judgement - *they think ...*) Then he tried to compare Matt’s behaviour with that of others in the mainstream: ‘But I’d say your behaviour is a lot better than most of the kids out there. Do you agree?’ After Matt was not obviously convinced by this, Jonny then compared his current behaviour to his past behaviour: ‘Well even just compared to when you were out there? In the last two months, just compared to what your behaviour used to be like...’

We can see the logic of how these intermediate cases work by placing them in a truth-table like the one used in the first half. The initial logic Jonny established for Matt was as follows:

If a student is in the IC, then they are naughty.
Matt is in the IC
Therefore, he is naughty.

If we take P as ‘A student is in the IC’ and Q as ‘they are naughty’, the truth-table for this argument would have to look like this in Table 5:

P/ not-P	Q/not-Q	Does this seem conceivable?
A student is in the IC	Then they are naughty	Yes
A student is in the IC	Then they are not naughty	No
A student is not in the IC	Then they are naughty	Yes
A student is not in the IC	Then they are not naughty	Yes

Table 5: A truth-table concerning the following propositions: ‘A student is in the IC’; and ‘they are naughty’.

Jonny then went about providing Matt with *intermediate cases* that would show that what appeared to be an impossibility, was not (Table 6). I shall input the Jonny’s second suggestion because it was more persuasive for Matt:

P/ not-P	Intermediate Case (R/not-R)	Q/not-Q	Does this seem conceivable?
A student is in the IC	And their behaviour has improved	Then they are naughty	No
A student is in the IC	And their behaviour has improved	Then they are not naughty	Yes
A student is not in the IC	And their behaviour has improved	Then they are naughty	No
A student is not in the IC	And their behaviour has improved	Then they are not naughty	Yes
A student is in the IC	And their behaviour has not improved	Then they are naughty	Yes
A student is in the IC	And their behaviour has not improved	Then they are not naughty	No
A student is not in the IC	And their behaviour has not improved	Then they are naughty	Yes
A student is not in the IC	And their behaviour has not improved	Then they are not naughty	Yes

Table 6: A truth-table concerning the following propositions: ‘A student is in the IC’; ‘their behaviour has improved’; and ‘they are naughty’.

This intermediate case disrupted Matt’s narrative, and showed him a different aspect of himself, *hopefully* encouraging him to choose to believe something more positive.

I have used Matt as the example here because his conversation exhibited the clearest example of *aspect* seeing. However, I could equally have chosen many examples where I had chosen to see the wrong *aspect*. What I think comes out from such examples is that there is often a *best* way of looking at things, a way that is more beautiful and more hopeful.

I. When we force a particular aspect on an object we impose our *self* upon it. If we impose a particular aspect, then we necessarily ignore the aspects seen by other people, and sometimes miss the point entirely.

The criticisms levelled at the IC were often grounded in the belief that we should have, in some way *fixed* the children. Marky, for example, didn’t stop swearing; he was considered to be malfunctioning and in need of fixing. We were often guilty of thinking in that way too. In the ethnography, I gave the example of the boy with ‘low self-esteem’. We initially believed this to be evidence of malfunctioning, and so we tried to correct it directly. In that situation, we viewed the child as a piece of a jigsaw puzzle that would not fit, rather than as a little picture in his own right. I hope that what is clear from the conversations, is that we largely managed to avoid thinking in that way. The children were ends-in-themselves and we mostly valued them as they were. The reason I wanted the conversations to be free-flowing was that I wanted to show the children as they were, without including any notion of teleology. ‘Treat the children as ends-in-themselves’ might sound like an obvious platitude, but external pressures on teachers can make it difficult. We were complicit in

the way in which Marky was forced to do the GCSEs, and consequently Marky was humiliated and further alienated. ‘Social mobility’ and ‘social justice’ look like very empty phrases when education has become a ritualised humiliation. I carry guilt for this because I didn’t challenge the situation or think about it deeply enough at the time. He should never have been entered for those exams. We were doing right by Marky when we were simply having an honest relationship with him. That is why I described Jonny’s making fun of Marky at the end of our conversation as ‘what was important’. His survival in school was only important insofar as he, and his Mum, felt it was an achievement. That is not to say that I believe that students should be allowed to do whatever they want. It was important that we challenged Marky for his behaviour, not because of the consequences, but simply because it was the right thing to do. On one occasion, for example, Marky refused to hand over his mobile phone after he had been caught using it in class. The use of mobile phones is morally unimportant in itself; what was important was that Marky was being deceitful, and that was a barrier to our relationship. It was important for the sake of our relationship that we challenged that, and not allow him back into the main room until he handed it over. (One could simply construe actions such as this as us *controlling* Marky, but I think that the key is the *spirit* in which we did it. We were not preventing him from coming back into the main room *to make him behave*; we were preventing him from coming into the main room to communicate that we were unhappy with the disrespect he had shown us. We were, as I describe later, making him feel safe.)

Weil (2005) describes the proper purpose of education as teaching the student how to pray. Whilst I would avoid her use of the explicitly religious term ‘pray’ in this context, I agree insofar as the proper purpose of education is learning and practicing how to direct one’s attention away from oneself. When Jonny made fun of Marky, it wasn’t because he was trying to make himself look good at Marky’s expense; it was because he was paying attention to Marky. When Marky finally handed over his mobile phone, it was because he was paying attention to us.

I decided not to include the pilot conversation I had with Lucia because I felt I had misused the opportunity, and was in some way using Lucia’s experience as a means to an end. In the conversation with Matt, I described how I felt like a ‘sordid director of the X-Factor’, in this particular conversation with Lucia I was even worse. Despite beginning the conversations without an explicit purpose, I still carried my biases. At that moment, I wasn’t paying attention to Lucia, I was paying attention to myself and treating her teleologically. Partially because of my missteps, Lucia divulged things I would not want included (even though she gave me permission to do so). I have made the decision not to include that conversation in this thesis because I am now, albeit a bit late, paying attention to her, and that is what my obligation to her appears to be. I cannot justify my decision any further; to do so would require that I divulge that which I do not think ought to be divulged. It is not philosophically unimportant, however, that I now confess the misdeed.

The constructivist picture offers one the possibility of sitting in judgement of another, and thus the feeling that one is superior to someone else, but it is entirely without basis. When, at the

beginning of the Autumn term in 2012, we felt that we had created an approach to behaviour management that ‘worked’, we came under the spell of a picture of *causation*; we began to feel powerful. Our knowledge, however, was entirely contingent. In the Autumn term of 2012, after a few months of (what we perceived to be success) we believed we had a superior understanding of the mechanics of children and we believed this knowledge gave us the right to blame others for not doing as we did. But we did not know what was going to happen in the future, however much we wanted to believe that we did. Again, as Biesta (2007) wrote, we only knew what had happened and nothing more. Fortunately, we were saved from hubris by Joan’s complete inability to act in accordance with any rules.

J. The solution to ethical dilemmas is to not deceive-oneself.

On several occasions, I have spoken of how the students may have been self-deceiving. I have never said that they *were* self-deceiving, only that they *might* be. — ‘Of course!’ one might say, ‘because we are not privy to that knowledge!’ But I don’t believe that this is a matter of *knowledge*, so much as the possibilities of sense. During the conversation, Lucia said the following concerning how she felt about Jonny and me telling her what to do: ‘...it is hard... it’s very hard to explain, and to say how to get out of that situation. Because *I didn’t know*. You don’t know until it smacks you in the face. You don’t.’ Compare this first-person sentence to a third person equivalent: ‘Lucia didn’t know how to get out of the situation.’ There are two mistakes that one might be tempted to make with these sentences. Firstly, one can believe that one has *knowledge* of one’s own state: *I know that I didn’t know*. This seems to suggest that I somehow observe my inner states and come to a conclusion. Reference to such inner knowledge is, again like with G.E. Moore’s notion of *intuition*, an unnecessary, nonsensical metaphysical step masquerading as a justification. It would be perfectly reasonable if we simply use *know* in a similar way to *remember*, but the phrase, *I know that I didn’t know*, is not some form of consultation of inner facts, but a denial, the opposite of a confession. It is not an observation, but an expression of a lack of guilt. The third-person equivalent cannot be an expression of not feeling guilt, nor a vindication-by-proxy. Thus, the second mistake is not to notice that the first-person sentence is an avowal, and the third-person equivalent is an observation. Because the third-person sentence is an observation, it is a contingent and relative statement; it cannot be *absolute*, and therefore it cannot concern anything *moral*. Looking back, there is a sense in which Lucia felt the need to vindicate herself, but the tone of her voice suggested she was not doing so in a desperate attempt to deny something, but simply to explain it. I feel no malice towards Lucia for her behaviour towards us, and am content that no injustice was done by her to me. At times, she behaved appallingly according to what, to use a legal expression, ‘the man on the Clapham Omnibus’ might think. But the knowledge that is hidden from me is not some form of inner feeling but the totality of her experiences. How could I possibly judge her without that knowledge?

In the parallel section to this in the first half, I briefly discussed various things that have been written about authority, and it is appropriate to mention it again here with respect to self-deception. I cannot deny that, as a teacher, I have myself sought authority; though I am not proud of it. Now the only sense of authority I would like to aim for, though know I could not achieve, is the authority described by the quotation from the sermon on the mount that I added to the section concerning Joan: ‘The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.’ My interpretation of *authority* here is simply that it means someone who describes things accurately, insightfully and truthfully. Jonny and I would always try to speak to parents and the students as honestly as possible, as exemplified by the earlier conversation with Lucia; often this would involve people hearing things that they found uncomfortable. Jonny was much better at this than me, much braver. He could tell parents the most uncomfortable truths, but in such a straight and confident manner that they accepted them without complaint. This kind of authority is dependent only upon the truth of that being said. I ought to have been unconcerned as to whether I had authority in the sense of being obeyed, so long as I was truthful. As I described in the ethnography, the irony of this was that the less I cared about being obeyed, the more frequently I was – being unconcerned about having the wrong kind of authority, provided me with the right kind of authority. The key to this was being confident, and the confidence came from knowing what one would do in any given situation, and believing that that course of action was the ethical one. This requires close attention to the various possibilities inherent in a situation and careful contemplation of the ethical merits of one’s possible responses. However, there were obviously occasions when this wasn’t true; such occasions were frequent in the case of Joan. It was strange that Joan asked me, ‘can I swear?’ at the beginning of the conversation given she had finished school and she never took much notice of me anyway. It shows, I suppose, how little attention Joan paid to cause and consequence. The teacher-pupil relationship was simply a matter of the roles we took up rather than the power we had. And reading the conversation back, and as difficult as it might be to believe, she didn’t swear as much as she often did.

Especially given my description of the conversation with Joan, the reader could be forgiven for being unsure about my claims to not being a relativist. My contention, however, is that the rules of the language-games, and the rules governing the use of moral terms, are sovereign. All other facts, observations and hypotheses are subject to these rules, and no individual can choose the meaning of a word.

As mentioned in the parallel section in the first half of the thesis, this section concerns *what we have left* now that everything else has been cleared away, and what we have left is, I believe, the ethical *spirit*.

K. The persuasiveness of the consequentialist's justification relies in part upon the attractiveness of their conception of the consequences. Unfortunately, there is little agreement about what these consequences ought to be. (We cannot say it is necessarily true that [X is better than not-X])

The people who I heard either criticise or indeed praise the IC (ln.10-20) did so consequentially. They were judging the IC according to certain consequences that they perceived the IC to be achieving or not. I shall take the examples given in the ethnography for Table 7:

Example	Assumed aim (X)
1. 'They just let the students do what they want' (ln.10)	... the students being <i>controlled</i> .
2. 'You call them to help you, and it never makes any difference; the child is exactly the same the next lesson' (ln.10-11)	... the students being <i>controlled</i> .
3. 'All the children in the IC are going to fail their GCSEs' (ln.11-12)	... the students getting good exam grades.
4. 'Those children would have been better off just being excluded' (ln.12-13)	... the students being 'better off'
5. 'The IC is a success because we have increased attendance' (ln.18-20)	... the students going to school more often

Table 7: Concerning various implied aims of the IC

The philosophical question is this, would it be *possible* to say that not-X is preferable to X? In each case one can think of intermediate cases that would render not-X preferable. For examples 1 and 2, it would be preferable that the students learnt self-control, rather than simply being controlled. For example 3 is a little harder to argue, but one can make the case that there are things more important than 'good exam grades': being happy or not being humiliated. Example 4 is very vague, too vague to elicit anything meaningful from it. We would need to know *how* exactly they would have been 'better off'. Example 5 is much easier to dismiss; it is not difficult to imagine a student finding being at school more seriously painful than being elsewhere. We can see that the logical relationship that one might have believed existed does not. My issue is not that these were not genuine criticisms - there was truth in all them. However, they were not justifications that should have taken priority over other moral considerations. I could not have, said, for example, 'I am justified treating the students unkindly because it would lead to more control'; or, 'I am justified risking a student committing suicide, because it would lead to better exam grades'.

When I have failed to logically analyse the implications of what my bosses have told me to do, I have been taken in by arguments that looked like they were logical when they were not. Throughout my career, I have been fooled by my bosses telling me how *important* it was to do such and such, without really questioning the meaning of the word *important*. 'You've got to get her to come into school; it's so *important* that her attendance improves.' But there is nothing necessarily moral in attending school in itself. I remember being chastised by a boss for the low attendance of one girl. I said, 'you've really got to turn up to school'. 'Why?' she replied, 'I've got three weeks before my

exams, we all know I'm going to fail; when I'm in class, I just mess about because I get bored and hate it. Why should I turn up?' And it is entirely possible that she was absolutely right. I cannot say with any conviction that she was right, I do not think I knew her well enough; to simply take her word at face value would have been condescending; I needed to *understand her*.

One could also argue that the five aims in Table 7 are contradictory in many ways. One could potentially unite 1, 2 and 5 under the banner of 'control', but this could contradict 'making the students better off', and there is no logical connection with being controlled and 'good exam grades'. Even if we were to treat 3 and 4 as anomalies, and believe that 1, 2, and 5 did in fact describe the *just state-of-affairs*, one would find oneself in disagreement with many people. Of the descriptions of justice described in the first half, only those with a more authoritarian view of education, such as Kitchen (2014), would agree that *control* and the submission to the authority of the educator were central to the *just state-of-affairs*. If I were tempted to describe a just state-of-affairs, it would be different for each student. Perhaps for Matt, the power-games and forcing a degree of submission was important (for example, Matt spoke of learning good *habits*), but for Lucia it was unthinkable. In fact, Lucia's feelings about school only improved once we'd removed all our authority over her. Our attempts to impose our authority upon her were very damaging. For Joan, any attempt to control her was impossible, and Kitchen (2014) offers no suggestion as to what we ought to do in such situations. Equally, any entirely *progressive* description of the just state-of-affairs would be equally impractical. When we ignored the power-games and we did not insist that the students did as we asked, communication with them was often completely meaningless because, as described above, there was no shared concordance. Such a broad-brush approach to the concept of a *just state-of-affairs* is not only impractical but also, I would suggest, immoral. Any such ends-driven approach cannot hope to describe justice with the nuance and respect for individual dignity that moral obligation requires. (It goes without saying that I subscribed to no explicit *aims* for the IC, since I believed that what we *ought* to be doing could not be abstracted, or generalised to any concrete degree that would have made it meaningful. I must admit I was often tempted by aims, and would often *play the game* with my bosses or inspections, but when I did so, I was lying.)

L. The persuasiveness of the consequentialist's justification also relies upon the relationship between the cause and effect (i.e. the rule that connects the two) being inviolable, thus creating a certainty about the consequences that can be used to justify actions that might otherwise be considered immoral. There can be no such inviolable rule.

My second reason for believing that, *I am justified in doing Y because it will lead to X* is a logically unsound argument, is that it requires that *X* necessarily leads to *Y*. That is to say that there is no possible case when something that is in the set *Y* is not also in set *X*. As a result, again, one cannot justify ignoring other moral concerns on the grounds of the relationship between an identified antecedent and a predicted consequence. Of course, we are not in a position to predict the future of

society, or even the actions of students with any kind of certainty. We might be able to come up with *possibilities* and these possibilities might be based on experience and past regularities in the outcome of language-games (for example, Jonny was able to predict that Marky would not want his daughters to ride Motocross bikes), but these predictions are not evidence of a law-like understanding of human nature. As a result, nobody can say, with any degree of confidence what would have happened had Jonny and I acted differently. If we had been tougher with the children, perhaps they would have behaved better, or perhaps they would not have; if we had imposed our will upon Lucia, perhaps she would not have tried to kill herself, but equally, she might have done. The lives that we have not lived are unknowns, and as a result, it makes no sense for me or anyone else to judge someone else for what *might have been the case had they acted differently*.

Perhaps someone might say that things may have been more predictable had we known more about the lives of the children, and to a degree, I agree with this – I am, after all, arguing for the moral importance of *paying attention*, but Hayek (2012) was correct in his belief that since it is impossible for anyone to know the movements and motivations of every person in the society, the idea that one could manipulate even a small part of it with the intention of causing a particular result is nonsensical. This is equally true for any single individual. There is no way that we could have known all the movements of the children throughout their days, and any kind of algorithm with predictive value would surely have had to take into account the movements of, not only their family but also, their friends. We could not have predicted the precise nature of Marky's brushes with the law because we simply could not have enough information. It is not morally virtuous to pay attention *because* it will help us predict the future; it is simply morally virtuous to pay attention.

M. The scientific outlook is important because the criteria of correctness for saying that something is *inconceivable* must lie outside one's self; it must necessarily involve things that are beyond the scope of the will, otherwise we would simply be talking in a private language.

As I have explained, to say that something is inconceivable is not an individual's decision, but describes the situation in which an individual finds themselves. For an action to be inconceivable it must not be recognised as part of a shared practise. I have described how a course of action might move from being inconceivable to conceivable, but in our dealings with Lucia, things happened the opposite way around. Initially it appeared entirely justifiable to us that we should challenge her in the same way in which we challenged the other students. However, it quickly became clear that we were doing something quite unjustifiable. Initially, when challenged, Lucia would shout and scream and cry and throw things, but she would never get to the point where she collapsed and gave in, as did the other students. This was because Lucia was not fighting for her right to do what she wanted, she was literally fighting for her life. We only fully realised this when she stopped fighting and tried to kill herself. We did not understand that at the time, and my feelings of guilt concerning our dealings with her are carefully measured. To this day, I cannot say I understand Lucia's situation, because I have

nothing to compare it with in my own experience. What I am aware of is that there was injustice in her life, the like of which I hope I never understand, and to which I unknowingly contributed. When the prospect of justifying our approach became inconceivable, it was not due to any choice on our part; it was simply because we began to see things differently.

The reason why my guilt is measured with regards Lucia, is that I simply did not know, and did not understand what was happening, and as soon as I did, I changed my approach. A moral action cannot rely on unknowns, either in terms of the future consequences or in terms of the present. I do however, feel guilty for my behaviour towards Lucia and towards all the students, in some senses. This is because I know that there were occasions when I was grumpy, when I was lazy, when I was self-obsessed, when I did not pay them enough attention. Imagine one gets in the car, turns the key and then pulls away, only to feel a bump and discover that one has ran over a little kitten that was hiding under the car. One cannot possibly believe that one ought to have checked under that car for the kitten (although one might from now on) but one might feel that one contributed to the death in other ways: perhaps one was feeling angry about something, and so was not paying attention to one's surroundings as one normally would and so missed a clue about the kitten that they otherwise would have spotted, for example. The feelings of guilt are because one was angry, and that is correct. The feelings of guilt aren't for the murder of the cat but for one's lack of virtue elsewhere that contributed to the murder of the cat. The truth is that one rarely acts perfectly, and so when unexpectedly bad consequences follow one's actions, one naturally feels that one could have been better, and thus feels guilty. Therefore, what was *always* inconceivable was that I should be lazy or self-absorbed. What changed was what that *meant*, and over that I had no control.

N. A belief in the necessity of causation imposes a particular aspect upon someone else; it is as if we disbelieve that they are capable of seeing more than one aspect of something, and thus deny their humanity.

When I imposed an aspect upon Matt and Lucia in the situations described above, I *objectified* them. I saw them as tools for me to use. The only other metaphor I can think of to explain concerns the typography of the London underground. There was an extraordinary exhibition in the London Design Museum about it, and it changed my way of looking at it entirely. It went from a functional and familiar font, to a work of art. There is a similar sense in which one can look at one's students, not as (dis)functional and familiar, but as fascinating compositions. To do this, however, requires one to *let go* of one's concern about consequences: not be concerned about criticism from management, not be concerned about exam results for their own sake etc.

The opposite of this view is the consequentialist's picture of justice. It requires that the behaviour of individuals is determined. If it is not determined, then there could be no possible grounds for devaluing other moral considerations in favour of achieving certain consequences. It

requires that the students had no choice but to behave according to certain laws-of-nature. If this were the case, then it would make no sense to talk of moral responsibility at all. Not only do I believe this picture to be philosophically mistaken, it would also remove all that is wonderful from teaching. This paradox is at the heart of the criticisms aforementioned: If those criticising us felt that the grounds for such criticism was our failure to achieve our aims, then that assumes that we knew what our aims were and how to achieve them, which assumes that the behaviour of the children and ourselves was predictable. And if it were predictable, then it was determined. And if it were determined, then it could never have been any other way, in which case nobody can be held responsible for it. Not only would it make no sense for me to be held morally responsible, but it would also make it illogical to hold the students morally responsible. On the one hand, I despise the idea of *judging* the students, I do not feel I am in any position to do so; on the other hand, I also despise the idea of not treating them as if they were moral beings. If the determinist picture were the case, how many of the wonderful things about our relationships would be lost? It would make no sense to laugh with Matt about the shame he felt for blaming someone else for farting, or for his panic about the questions I asked him, or the fact that he often broke things without realising etc. It would make no sense to laugh at the funny things that Marky or Joan did; neither, would it make sense for us to have feared what Lucia might do, or celebrate with her the fact that she was now happier. It would only make sense for us to be cold technicians. The Islamic scholar Averroes interpreted Aristotle's *Poetics* as saying that tragedy is the art of praise and comedy is the art of blame, neither of which can exist in a determined universe. Even if determinism were not a philosophically mistaken position, I would live in wilful ignorance of it. And nobody could tell me I ought to do otherwise. As much as for any other reason, determinism is too ugly a way of looking.

O. The language-game we find ourselves playing depends upon the way we look at objects, the aspects that we see. Different aspects entail different expectations and possibilities (of which there can be many - hence they can often be vague).

During the conversation with Matt, I wrote that Jonny tried to 'get him out of that mindset', by which I meant that Jonny and I believed Matt was being fatalistic in expecting to be considered the naughty one. Jonny was trying to show Matt a different 'aspect' (Wittgenstein, 1967) of the situation. He was trying to draw Matt's attention to a narrative that suggested he ought not be so fatalistic. It could have been that Matt was being self-pitying, and that he knew that there were other ways of looking at the situation (i.e. he had *chosen* an aspect that he knew was incorrect, i.e. he was deceiving himself); but it could also have been that this was what he genuinely expected. In a sense, this knowledge *is* hidden from us, though we may be able to draw out clues.

There appears to be something of a contradiction implied by my statement that 'Justice is that which is expected'. Consider the following proposition concerning Matt:

A. 'I will be treated as the naughty one.'

Assuming, for a moment that (A) is a genuine expectation and not a belief (although, for the record, I believe it was self-deception), then it appears I am saying that by expecting to be treated as the naughty one, Matt perceives that to be just. But what I am arguing, is not that it is therefore just for anyone to treat Matt as the naughty one, but that Matt would see no cause to complain about it, if he were. From the outside, the idea that Matt would perceive such prejudgement to be just is terribly sad. By looking at the conversation, we can see that this is a discordant narrative; it is clear that Matt does perceive it to be unjust that people treat him in such a way:

'But do you still think of yourself as the naughty one?'

'No, but that's what other teachers see. Because I've been in the IC for a long time, so they assume that I'm the naughty one out of the lot.'

Thus, what at first seems to be an expectation (in the sense of *knowledge*) is in fact a hypothesis, a belief, and this changes the situation quite considerably. Were (A) an expectation rather than a belief, for it to be part of a concordant narrative, Matt would either have to consider it correct that he be treated as the naughty one, or he would have lost hope. Consider the Simone Weil quotation with which I finished the first section...

At the bottom of the heart of every human being, from earliest infancy until the tomb, there is something that goes on indomitably expecting, in the teeth of all experience of crimes committed, suffered, and witnessed, that good and not evil will be done to him. (Weil 2005, pp.71)

Matt, at a fundamental level, still expected 'good and not evil' would be done to him. Lucia, on the other hand, at various points during her time with us, did genuinely lose this expectation; she lost hope. The result of which was that she tried to kill herself.

Weil's quotation continues:

The motive which prompts a little boy to watch jealously to see if his brother has a slightly larger piece of cake arises from a much more superficial level of the soul. The word justice means two very different things according to whether it refers to the one or the other level. (Weil 2005, pp.71-72)

We can see these two different levels here. Matt's sense of injustice was the equivalent of the 'larger piece of cake' (though it is not my intention to belittle his concerns) where Lucia's (before she lost her sense of injustice entirely) was much deeper. I would argue that the difference between these levels is the difference between a belief and an expectation. A belief is *chosen* in the sense that it is an expectation based on a particular *aspect* amongst many that one has picked. Matt could have chosen a different aspect as his focus, but he did not. Lucia, when she was at her worst, simply could not see any other aspects, and thus had no choice but to expect the worst.

As a result of my time in the IC, I have developed more sensitive and nuanced expectations with regards students with SEMHD. It strikes me that the value of the research of Visser or Holt is the skill with which the knowledge is communicated - it makes the imponderable (described in §2.2)

ponderable. My knowledge of the students was not always, for me, expressible, and frequently not on the tip of my tongue. The school often asked me to write ‘strategy sheets’ discussing how teachers in the mainstream should deal with the students that returned from the IC. These would often be looked upon with scorn by the other teachers, and understandably so. With these little research projects, I was not expressing the nuanced expectations I had built up, instead I was trying to provide a series of rules for someone else to follow. It was a thankless task given that there were always many possible consequences to each move. I was always more helpful if I was given a particular scenario (or language-game) because then I could imagine the possible responses of the child and suggest appropriate actions. Jonny and I used to carefully prepare for a whole variety of possibilities, especially if we thought that a child might lose their temper: If we do X, Y might happen, in which case we will do Z, or A might happen, in which case we will do B. One cannot work the other way around, and say ‘I want to achieve X and therefore I will do Z’. One cannot be *prescriptive*, one can only be *descriptive*, and think of as many different eventualities as you can and plan for as many of these eventualities as you can. The more eventualities you come up with, and the more plans you have for those eventualities, the better prepared one is. This form of scenario planning is vastly improved by research, because the research prompts one to think of more eventualities (more intermediate cases) and more plans. As Biesta (2007, pp.20-21) writes:

... research cannot supply us with rules for action but only with hypotheses for intelligent problem solving. Research can only tell us what has worked in a particular situation, not what will work in any future situation. The role of the educational professional in this process is not to translate general rules into particular lines of action. It is rather to use research findings to make one’s problem solving more intelligent.

Clearly, however, one cannot and will not always be able to plan for every occurrence. There were a variety of occasions I had to trust others. For example, Lucia spoke of how she was often upset that I had to pass on my safeguarding concerns about her. And I cannot say I necessarily always recognised the ethical importance of the safeguarding procedure. It could sometimes seem like a system that was there to protect the adults from legal repercussions. When this safeguarding procedure was in the hands of people I trusted, however, I trusted it. There was one particular safeguarding officer in the school, a kind person who always had the children’s best interests at heart. She knew Lucia well, and would do anything for her. It was, as described by Sosa (1991) and Sockett (2012), the virtue of this person that enabled me to trust her, and thus the system, even though I was not certain it was what was best for Lucia. In the conversation with Lucia, I used the phrase ‘from a professional point of view’ as a shorthand for this, though I am not sure that this is entirely accurate. It would have been more accurate to say that I trusted the safeguarding person’s (professional) experience, and ability to be ethical over and above my own. I cannot deny that there is a sense in which I was grateful that the safeguarding procedure was there, and perhaps this could have been lazy of me had I not put in a great deal of thought about what to do regardless. Sometimes, when one is faced with a seemingly more virtuous course of action that is also beneficial to oneself, one might feel

confused and feel that one has acted less ethically. The key to unravelling such confusions is to be willing to endure the loss of what one gains by acting ethically. In this case, by following the safeguarding procedure, I was submitting myself to the knowledge of a person I considered more ethical than I, but it was also the case that I saved myself the trouble of thinking myself. I did the thinking anyway, so this confusion did not arise.

The conversation with Joan offered me a wonderful example of philosophico-grammatical rules stretched to their limit, and because of this, it perfectly exemplified many of the tensions surrounding rule-following, namely, how can a sentence be following a rule, if any sentence can be made out to accord with a rule?

P. By attempting to fix the identity of someone or something, one displays a ‘contempt for the particular case’. One denies other possibilities, and forces a particular way of looking at something.

When we asked Matt about his expectations for the next year, he said it depended upon the timetable he was given. He had an expectation that he would not be given a good timetable, and therefore he would have a bad year. The narrative in his head would have been something like the following:

1. He expects to get a ‘bad’ timetable
2. He takes this as a sign that they don’t care about him and don’t want him to succeed;
3. He feels bad;
4. He misbehaves;
5. Things go badly for him.

All this is entirely conceivable, and in one sense this seems to contradict what I was saying because his expectations were already bad, so surely he should have been ok with what happened. The problem here is not Matt’s expectations so much as Matt’s interpretation, his chosen *aspect* concerning what those events would mean – i.e. proposition 2 in the above narrative. Jonny, understanding the way Matt would perceive things, was keen to persuade him that everything would be ok regardless of the timetable he got. What we both wanted was that Matt *come to terms* with having a bad timetable. Seligman’s (2002) *positive psychology* describes this situation well. The general idea is summarised below:

The pessimist sees the causes of failure and rejection as permanent (“It’s going to last forever”), pervasive (“It’s going to ruin everything”), and personal (“It’s my fault”). These habitual beliefs are just that, mere beliefs. They are often false, and they are often inaccurate catastrophizings. The main lesson of cognitive therapy is that this way of thinking can be permanently changed- even in severe depressions. Mild depressives can usually change it without therapy.

The main skill of optimistic thinking is disputing. This is a skill everyone has, but we normally use it only when *others* accuse us wrongly. If a jealous friend tells you what a lousy executive or bad mother you are, you can marshal evidence against the accusation and spit it back in his or her face. Mild depressives make the same sorts of accusations to themselves, *about* themselves, many times a day.

You walk into a party and you say to yourself, “I have nothing to say. No one is going to like me. I look terrible.” When these accusations issue from inside, you treat them as if they were unimpeachable. But the automatic pessimistic thoughts you have are just as motivated and irrational as the ravings of a jealous rival. (p.115)

Seligman uses an ABC approach to describe such situations:

- A. Adversity - something ‘bad’ happens.
- B. Belief - you have a belief about something and this leads to...
- C. Consequences.

Seligman argues that by helping people to learn to control their ‘beliefs’ they can learn to control their actions. Jonny’s comment was disputing Matt’s negative beliefs about the consequences, and thus trying to persuade him to think more *positively* about the consequences. For Matt, this belief was more pervasive than his expectations about the timetable. In fact, his expectations about the timetable were neither here nor there, simply a foil for his negativity. He could have replaced ‘timetable’ with any other power that the school had over him. Seligman’s approach echoes that of Wittgenstein (1998, p.81): ‘The only life that is happy is the life that can renounce the amenities of the world. To it the amenities of the world are so many graces of fate.’ To be happy, Matt needed to renounce the amenities of the world, in this case, the school. Matt had a terrible habit of ‘catastrophizing’ as Seligman calls it, but, as can be shown by Matt’s final response about his expectation that he wouldn’t get into fights, he had improved in this regard - he just needed a little nudging.

Q. Language-games evolve. A concordance can be amended, details and intermediate cases given, that change the possibilities, but given the language-game as it is there are possibilities but also other descriptions that are inconceivable.

I cannot deny my pleasure each time I read back the conversation with Joan. She was exactly as she always was. I hope that the reader can see that there is nothing remotely *contrived* about that conversation, yet at the same time, during that conversation, Joan broke a great number of the rules that govern normal conversation:

- She interrupted continually
- She changed the subject mid-sentence
- She changed her story
- She was not apparently worried about whether what she said was true
- She did not seem to trust what we were saying
- She swore continually

Somehow conversation was still possible, and of all the conversations, it was the one that blossomed the most, and took on a life beyond my intentions. This was because Jonny, Joan and I had found comfortable roles within which we could communicate; we had agreed on a concordance. I

remember observing a drama lesson in which the teacher told the students that the main rule of improvising is to ‘say yes to the other participants’ – so whatever they decide to do, you agree and go with it. I would agree that in this case, Jonny and I had no choice but to go along with everything that Joan said; she was not going to do the opposite! But without some form of agreement, communication would have been impossible. Agreeing on a concordance enabled us to appreciate the characters of the children properly. With some of the children, the ‘never lose a battle’ approach was enough, and once the defiance of the children began to appear strange, the concordance was agreed upon and it was as if the barriers came down.

This obviously happened in a different way with Lucia and Joan, but it happened nonetheless. In all honesty, I never really felt I understood Lucia. There was so much that was hidden from me that I often could not empathise with her. Thus, the only method we had available to build the shared concordance was trial and error. The truth was what survived, to use a pragmatist refrain. These shared concordances were not something explicit; to have formulated and written them out would have been far too complicated given the innumerable contingencies involved. They evolved through practise, and through our continual efforts to get on with the children.

The circumstances were what dictated the possible concordances. As I wrote, anything goes so long as the circumstances and context are given that allow it to *go*. It would be inaccurate for me to say that what Joan said during our conversation *made sense*, in the everyday use of the phrase. For example, her suspicion that I might return from Spain with one arm was missing several of the intermediate steps that might have rendered it sensible. However, though individual propositions may be devoid of sense, there was still a narrative, a thread to our conversation that meant that we can say that we *understood* her. Whilst I was writing up the conversation with Joan, it was necessary to include unspoken details to enable a reader to follow the flow of what was going on: the girl with the multi-coloured coat that walked past; the boy who had a detention; her facial expressions. But neither did I want to put in too many details. Firstly, it would have slowed the rhythm of the conversation down, and the speed and tempo of the conversation is an important part of its meaning. Secondly, ambiguity, a lack of clarity, non-sequiturs, were all part of the meaning of what she was saying. Without these features, it would not have been Joan talking. Propositions that exist in closed systems, as envisioned by many analytic philosophers and scientists, do not exist in real-life. This conversation with Joan is the antithesis to such hubris.

Joan was always spectacularly discordant. A perfect example of this was when she concluded she was a racist. Broken down into propositions, her argument was something akin to the following:

1. My uncle said someone punched him
2. His lip went fat
3. A black man punched him
4. I’ve turned into a racist

This series of propositions was entirely unexpected for us. I grant that 2 fairly easily follows from 1; we can all imagine it being correct that someone is punched and their lip gets fat as a result. Perhaps the most glaring non-sequitur is the relationship between 2 and 3. It took Jonny and I some effort to establish what the intermediate propositions were in this case. They would have been something like this (and please forgive Joan her racism – knowing her, one would have to be particularly sanctimonious to call her a racist):

2. His lip went fat
 - a. Sometimes illnesses can be passed on by touch
 - b. Having a fat lip is an illness that black people have
3. A black man punched him

And the relationship from 3 to 4 was only slightly easier to establish:

3. A black man punched him
 - a. I am angry at the man who punched my uncle
 - b. The man who punched my uncle was a black man
 - c. I am angry at a black man
4. I've turned into a racist

The mistakes that Joan made here are myriad. Propositions 2a and 2b contain a category error, conflating a fat lip (an injury) with an illness caused by infection, not to mention the fact that fat lips on black people are not medical problems etc. What is most interesting, however, is that there was a concordance (however wrong) according to which Joan was speaking; there were links, or intermediate propositions (for her) between her propositions. I am proud of both myself and Jonny, that we always felt the need to find her concordance, to shuffle about our thoughts and adjust our zoom until we saw the aspect which allowed Joan to make sense. The real joy of getting to know someone like Joan is when we begin to understand, and can fill in those intermediate cases. Similarly, in the conversation with Marky, Jonny knew that Marky would not want his daughters to ride motocross bikes; he knew that there was an intermediate proposition there that I had overlooked.

The rules of the conversations, the concordance, often changed during the conversations themselves. Probably the clearest examples of this are in the conversation with Marky. It was as if the manoeuvres were accompanied by subtitles. Consider the following manoeuvres in Table 8:

Manoeuvre	Rule expressed
Marky sits down to take part in the conversation with his motorbike helmet on	I'm not going to abide by any normal expectations here – I'll do as I please because I'm Marky Radford.
I laughed at Marky	I know that's what you are going to do, Marky. I'm not bothered by it.
Marky says, 'for being a little shit' / 'for telling teachers to go fuck their mum'	I don't care what you think, and you're not going to make me feel bad for the things I've done.
I don't react	I'm not here to have a go at you.
'I didn't think I was going to last this long'	I'm changing the criteria of success – I deserve a different mark scheme to everyone else

Table 8: Concerning examples of rule changes during the conversation with Marky

And so on... Almost every sentence was an expression of a new rule, or a repetition of a previous rule that had perhaps been undone. The conversation with Marky did not ever get going because we were both too busy laying down the rules. It was the final rule change by Jonny that I wish we had started with:

‘Just one more question, Marky ... does your sister still fancy me?’

This question was specifically designed to up-end Marky and make light of the situation. Up until that point, we had not yet agreed on the rules. Marky’s faux angry ‘no!’ was his taking part in Jonny’s game. It was a return to how things used to be before I humiliated him with the GCSEs.

When Joan asked me for permission to swear, she did so because she expected not to be allowed to swear, but then I had told her that she could tell us exactly what she thought, ‘no holds barred’. As aforementioned, this was simply an expectation, it was not a rule that she thought would be enforced somehow. When Lucia spoke during the conversations she added in little flourishes to her speech that she didn’t normally use: ‘I liked to be the class clown *if you’d like to say.*’ She would not have normally used the phrase ‘class clown’ and certainly not with ‘if you’d like to say’ tagged on the end. Almost every contribution from her is peppered with a turn of phrase that was slightly unusual for her. It was as if she was adopting what she perceived to be a posh deportment for the purposes of my PhD research. The content of what she said was not different from what it normally was, just the delivery. Matt was equally under the impression that he had to somehow *play up* for my PhD to make me ‘look smart’. These were the students’ expectations, and the rules that they attempted to follow. With my little manoeuvres, my little commentaries, silliness, and Jonny’s contributions we tried to set their expectations differently, change the rules – not always successfully. I was not trying to change the rules for the sake of them being or acting in a certain way for my PhD, only because I thought they would be more comfortable that way. What it inadvertently demonstrated, was how one’s expectations are the rules that we are following.

R. To say that something is inconceivable, is to say that one does not know a game one would have to play in order to say or do something, i.e. one cannot place a particular move into a concordance. This is the nature of differences of opinion.

Outside the IC, one does not always afford others the time and effort that we afforded the students. And I would posit that this is what normally results in differences of opinion. As discussed in chapter 2, of course there are occasions when one simply cannot, however hard one tries, find a concordance to share with someone else. There were frequent occasions in the IC where Jonny and I felt like explorers meeting a previously ‘uncontacted’ tribe for the first time. However, I hope that it is clear from the above, that the correct approach was to *suspend judgement* where we did not understand rather than to pronounce it and declare the students wrong or immoral. In everyday

discussions, I am sure that I take the latter route rather than the former, but one cannot deny that it is the ethically less admirable route.

5.3 Education is learning to pay attention: an ethics of responding

In this final section, I use references to the ethnography to exemplify how we can go about un hiding moral value – that is learning to be virtuous.

S. Moral justifications are adverbial. The ethical concerns the *spirit* in which something is done.

In each situation where I feel I acted wrongly, it is not the action in-itself that was wrong, but the *spirit* in which I acted. In the situation with Marky described above, it was because I acted *lazily* and *cowardly* that I feel guilty. The ethical question is not whether we ‘gave him life chances’ or whether we made him more ‘socially mobile’; the question is, did we do what we did lovingly, kindly, selflessly? Perhaps it is true in a sense that we should have excluded Joan. I certainly feel that one of the reasons why we did not was because of a foolish sense of pride – we acted *proudly*. However, there was also the concern that we might have been kicking her out *lazily*, because we didn’t want to have to deal with her. Understanding that the ethical is adverbial does not necessarily make the correct course of action more obvious, but it does clear away that which is morally unimportant. Once again, we can see that it is the focus of one’s attention that is ethically important. If that focus is oneself (as in when one is acting *proudly*, or *lazily*) then one will be acting in the wrong spirit. If one is paying attention to another (and acting *humbly*, or *diligently*) then one will be acting in the correct spirit. When I brought up the death of Matt’s father, I felt bad because my focus hadn’t been Matt, it had been on my thesis and myself. In fact, it is a constant battle to ensure that this entire thesis is not being done out of vanity. The drawing of my attention away from myself and onto the world is the central value of my work. Wittgenstein said the following to Drury:

Bach wrote on the title page of his *Orgelbuechlein*, ‘To the glory of the most high God, and that my neighbour may be benefited thereby.’ That is what I would have liked to say about my work. (Drury 1996, p.130)

Again, I might eschew the explicit reference to God because it would undoubtedly be misunderstood by some, but if I could write this thesis to the glory of ‘that which is not myself’, or ‘to the glory of the world’ then I would be content. Of this, I am as yet uncertain that I am capable.

This adverbial nature of moral values causes difficulty in communicating them. We were dealing with the difficulties in communicating our ethical understanding to the children many times daily. As Lucia pointed out, often our role as teachers got in the way. We were most effective when we were just able to speak honestly, without being effected by the barriers created by our social roles. I hope it can be seen from the conversations that we largely achieved that. I wrote of how I felt it was important that Matt could laugh at us, and vice versa. Of course, we never stopped being legally responsible for the children, and thus our professional role was always intact, but I do believe we were successful in finding ways to be comfortable and honest and open. This allowed us to have

straightforward conversations in which we communicated our ethical understanding to the children. Much of this was not done directly, for all the reasons outlined. Far more often it was done through laughing and joking. Again, the comment by Averroes, that comedy is the art of blame, and tragedy is the art of praise, expresses perfectly and succinctly the process of communicating ethical understanding; both blame and praise are best communicated through narratives (however short) and their genre. Throughout the conversations there are demonstrations of this. Jonny made a joke about Matt taking the back off the books during the conversation; I made a joke about him being distracted by a pencil; indeed Matt laughed at me for asking him why another student was behaving as she was – I deserved it, it was a silly question; we both laughed at Marky for wearing his motorbike helmet – the suggestion being that it was slightly unusual; we spent much of the conversation with Joan laughing at her, not maliciously but in so doing we communicated the various occasions when she wasn't making any sense. We didn't really laugh at Lucia at all, but she laughed at me when I put the coffee cup in front of the camera. Each laugh was a little piece of ethical communication - the sharing of a concordance.

T. The logical form of ethical judgements can be expressed as follows: Given situation X, response Y is a more virtuous than Z. (Moral terms are learnt in a similar way to colour terms.)

I find it useful to ask myself, when trying to recognise what is the most ethical course of action, 'which course of action is the most admirable?' In formulating the question like this, I can perceive the situation as if it were external, and remove the temptations to self-deceive. This is similar to a point made by Adam Smith (2010) in *A Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith, 2010). Smith argues that morality is inherently social and society provides us with the means by which we are able to reflect upon ourselves:

'I divide myself, as it were, into two persons... The first is the spectator, whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavour to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view. The second is the agent, the person whom I properly call myself, and of whose conduct, under the character of a spectator, I was endeavouring to form some opinion.' (p.113)

Weil (2005) described two senses of injustice: 'Every time that there arises from the depths of a human heart the childish cry which Christ himself could not restrain, 'Why am I being hurt?', then there is certainly injustice.' (p.72) and 'The motive which prompts a little boy to watch jealously to see if his brother has a slightly larger piece of cake arises from a much more superficial level of the soul.' (p.71). The difference between these two levels, is in my view, a matter of choice. In the latter, one is firmly *choosing* to pay attention to oneself; in the former one has no choice – the cry is instinctual. When I, as a teacher, have got upset with the children then I was wrong if I ever perceived it to be an *injustice* because I cannot, in all honesty, say that the cry came from the bottom of my heart. It may well have been an expression of 'I am unhappy with you; you have not acted as I

expected', but this does not indicate an injustice. I do, however, believe I have been party to committing two injustices to the children: firstly, in attempting to enforce the school rules on Lucia, and secondly, in enforcing the GCSE exams on Marky. In both cases, my guilt exists because I failed to pay attention to the children closely enough. In Lucia's case, I missed the signs that she was in deep pain, and in Marky's case I avoided looking out of fear of the battle I might have to fight with the SLT if I did.

In our conversation, Lucia said, 'I never used to hate you but I used to despise how you used to make me do the things that I didn't want to do, like sit down and do my work or, I'm not allowed to go there, I'm not allowed to go here, but you end up, and you realise, "they're only doing it for your best interests".' I don't know whether Lucia was at any point deceiving herself, either previously, when she 'despised' us, or during the conversation, but if I take her at her word, it is entirely possible that her understanding of the situation changed as time went on. Previously, she may have interpreted our attempts to make her do what she didn't want to do as being *unloving*, for example, and thus she felt morally justified in protesting. As time went on, her understanding of the meaning of those actions might have changed until they meant 'they are acting in your best interests', and thus she no longer felt the same moral justification. Again, assuming there was no element of self-deception on Lucia's part, this is not a matter of *belief* in the sense of Lucia hypothesising, it was simply what she understood, what she saw, and therefore, she might well have believed herself to be acting ethically. Similarly, I was initially quite convinced that I was entirely ethically correct in criticising Lucia's relationship with Byron. As time went on, my understanding of her situation became more nuanced, though not clearer! I am no longer certain that her relationship with Byron was wrong; though neither am I convinced it was right. My ethical understanding changed and by the end of our time with Lucia, I felt my obligation had shifted from being simple criticism, to highlighting concerns, but also celebrating the well-being that she felt because of the relationship. I do not feel guilty about my initial reactions, because that was my understanding at the time, and I acted in accordance with it. I perhaps feel I was a little naïve, but that is not, in itself, wrong.

My contention here is that the ethical is *recognised*, and that to deny it in any situation, is inherently illogical. The difficulty, I pointed out, is that the ethical can only be *shown*, and not *said*. This is a tricky point to exemplify precisely because it can only be *shown*, but I believe that the example in the following section demonstrates it well.

U. Being virtuous involves building certain expectations (as oppose to simply possibilities) of ourselves by repeatedly acting in a particular way, thus building a habit.

Throughout the entire ethnography, the importance of considering one another's expectations is manifest. Matt describes his primary school as being too lenient – he expected to get into trouble for things, but didn't. Both Matt and Marky had the expectation that they would be considered the

naughty one; in fact, to put it more accurately, both had the expectation that someone else would have the expectation that they would be the naughty one. Joan, for some reason, seemed to expect us to always be in the IC even after she had left the school. When Matt used to get himself into trouble in the IC, it was because he expected everything to go wrong. When I initially asked Matt a question, he was irritated with me (albeit jokingly) because I was asking him questions he was not expecting. Equally, I was asking him questions I had expected him to be able to answer with ease. Matt also describes how he developed the ‘habits’ of behaving. A habit can also be seen in terms of expectations. One does what one expects to do, even when one is not aware that one expects it.

A good habit, a virtue, is the moral aim of all our actions, because a habit, by its nature, does not involve conscious thought, by which I mean thought of oneself. A habit is done almost unconsciously. As can be seen from my ethnography, I did not develop many good habits, but at least I am now able to see that a little more clearly.

V. The correct spirit can be seen as being described by Simone Weil’s concept of *attention* – self-less looking, the giving of oneself entirely to the expectations and preoccupations of another.

Weil (2005, p.232) describes attention as ‘effort without desire (not attached to the object)’. Attention is to make something, or someone else the subject of one’s actions; to make something or someone else the centre of one’s cosmos. To do so with desire would not be to relinquish oneself as subject. Maintaining such an outlook is not easy, however. There seems to be a danger here that one feels as if one always ought to have thought about things more, and that this is a never-ending obligation. I see no way out of this. This is a truth, in a sense, of teaching, but also of our moral life. Our obligations are never-ending; there is always more that we can do. In a short story called *the requirements of love*, Tolstoy (2001) calls this truth an ‘abyss’:

A person may not find in himself the strength and determination to jump into this abyss, but those who are sincere ... in their conscience cannot avoid fulfilling this duty. You can decide not to make this sacrifice, but if you want to fulfil the requirements of love, you must give your whole life and not deceive yourself. (p.177 - 178)

But then he offers us some hope:

But this sacrifice is not as awful as it seems, because the bottom of humanity’s need is not as deep as it seems. Perhaps we respond to its call like the young boy who hung all night from the edge of the well, clinging only with his hands. When at last he fell, terrified of the deep water he imagined in the well, the boy discovered that, only two feet below him, the bottom of the well was dry. (p.178)

It can be a disheartening feeling, to recognise that we must always be somewhat wrong, that there must always be something we could have done more ethically. But one can also consider it to be like the trials of a 100-metre sprinter. The sprinter’s objective is to run *quickly*, and each time to run *more quickly*. The sprinter knows that they will never reach the ultimate goal of taking no time at

all to complete the race, or completing it at the speed of light, but I cannot imagine sprinters often succumb to despair because of this; instead they give themselves humbler targets to achieve. When considering our own ethical behaviour, we often forget that we are limited, hence my inclusion of the quotation from *Babette's Feast* at the end of the ethnography. Whilst we cannot deny the ethical obligations that we face, neither should we forget that life is merciful.

And when considering the ethical obligations of others, of other adults or of other students, we should clearly do so in the light of our own shortcomings. Of all the moral concepts, *blame* and its associates, *condemn*, *reproach*, *tell-off*, are (in most circumstances) the ones I cannot abide, and believe have no sensible use outside discussions concerning God. To *blame* someone, is to hold them responsible for the consequences, and thus relies, not only on the *blamer* having a knowledge of causation that we cannot have, but also the *blamed*. The kind of knowledge we would need to logically hold another responsible in such a way is that of the *intellect* as described by Pierre-Simon Laplace (1902). We are not in the position of this intelligence and we cannot comprehend all the forces by which nature is animated, nor their respective situations. Thus, to blame someone for something (in the sense of saying that they have *caused* it) is logically incoherent. However, I do not wish to legislate for language, and thus I would not suggest that 'I blame you!' is necessarily a meaningless phrase; I simply do not think it can sensibly refer to anything to do with *causation*. Neither, do I ever refrain from *telling-off* students. –So what *can* these phrases mean? – Quite simply, they can mean, 'I am unhappy with you; you have not acted as I expected'. This is a perfectly meaningful expression (as opposed to 'I am unhappy with you; you have not acted as I *wanted*', which is quite different and churlish).

6. CONCLUSIONS

I begin this final chapter by summarising the key points made in the previous five chapters. Then, I give a brief outline of further areas for study. I finish with a final observation.

6.1 The Myth of Sisyphus

When I began teaching, nearly fifteen years ago, I wanted to change the world. I thought I would be *that* teacher that had *the* conversations with students that changed their lives. I thought I would be that teacher that would connect with the bad'uns and turn them into good'uns. I was also an idiot. This idiocy has caused me a great deal of pain and disappointment.

Sisyphus is probably most famous as the subject of Albert Camus' (2005) essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Sisyphus was condemned by the gods to forever repeatedly push a huge rock to the top of a hill, only to see it roll down to the bottom again. Camus uses this punishment as an analogy for the human condition. He portrays Sisyphus as the absurd hero who hates death and realises the futility and meaningless of life, but is nonetheless content. 'One must imagine Sisyphus happy', Camus writes.

I think Camus is wrong. Sisyphus is, in fact, the archetypal idiot. (Interestingly, the etymology of the word idiot is 'idios' meaning *private person*.) In the Greek story, Sisyphus was a king of Ephyra, and by all accounts was a dreadful human being. He was avaricious and a terrible liar. He killed people merely to maintain power. His punishment was not simply the whimsy of the gods, it was a perfect reflection of his life. Sisyphus was pointlessly pushing rocks up hills long before he was condemned to do so. I read Sisyphus, not as a sad story about the absurdity of the human condition, but as a warning for us not to make the human condition absurd.

Take one example from the myth: Sisyphus attempted to cheat death by chaining death up. Can there be a more absurd aim than to cheat death? Sisyphus' life is a catalogue of hubris, a series of attempts to impose himself upon the world in defiance of everything that he truly knows. The simple truth is that Sisyphus was responsible for his own pain.

And a similar (though less murderous) hubris was the source of my idiocy. Throughout my teaching career, I condemned myself to rock pushing; despite what I told myself, I wasn't actually working to emancipate anyone, or for the benefit of others; I was working to impose myself upon the world. My frustration stemmed from my not feeling that *I* had *changed* anything. My anger stemmed from the fact that I was unable to form the identity that I wished to form, because I was unable to achieve the aims this desired identity required. To dissolve this anger, all that was necessary was that I recognise my *true* obligations, and thus live according to my *true* identity.

I was discussing a related matter with a class of fourteen-year-olds recently; we were discussing the following two propositions and Hume's belief that an *ought* does not follow from an *is*:

1. My desk is messy.
2. Therefore, I ought to tidy it up.

I asked the students whether they believed proposition 2 followed from proposition 1. One boy summed up my entire thesis when he said: 'It isn't necessarily the case that your desk is messy and *therefore* you ought to tidy it up, but it is necessarily true the other way around. You ought to tidy up your desk, and *therefore* it must be messy.' Another student made a similar point when we were discussing whether an economic monopoly was necessarily a bad thing. We discussed the various attempts to define a monopoly and one student pointed out that whether a company had a monopoly was neither here nor there, what was important was whether the company was engaged in 'economic bullying'. The point in each case is the same: Our ethical obligations are sovereign. They come first, and everything else follows from them. To attempt to impose one's own ideas, to throw a veil of one's own expectations over the world is idiocy (in its original sense): it is to lead a *private* life.

This sovereignty of ethical obligations is so because it is built into the rules that govern our language-games. Conceivability is given to us by our experiences of these games, what actually happens, in actual cases. This in turn provides us with first-order rules that provide us with reasons *why* we might act in a particular way given certain circumstances. However, given that the rules of language-games are not fixed, which is due to the changing nature of the world and our ability to see one thing *as* something else. Such first-order rules do not constitute *moral* justifications. A moral justification is a second-order rule, a rule upon a rule: e.g. Do as you would be done by; Act according to that maxim which you would have everyone follow; I could not consider such an action to be virtuous etc. Moral values are, as such expressed *adverbially*.

For the teacher, then, no justification of a particular course of action that relies upon a specific definition of consequences can ever take precedence over whether one considers an action to be virtuous or not. Thus, no appeal to the creation of a *socially just* society can override a concern with being kind, for example. The effect of all this is that the prime concern of the teacher must be to *pay attention* to the students, over and above everything else, and that means removing one's own prejudices and selfish concerns from one's thoughts and interactions. Educational research obviously has a place in terms of challenging the way in which we look at things, providing intermediate cases that open us up to new possibilities, but no research can *say* anything that can tell us what we *ought* to be doing. It can, however, *show* us a better way of looking at things.

And the thing I find most wonderful, and that I hope the ethnography shows, is that it was my students that explained this to me - not directly of course, but in their own way. I was able to let go of my desire to *change* them, to find a *solution* to the *problem* of their behaviour. Of course, this is not to say that I did not have obligations to my students in this regard. We enforced our behaviour

policy, we gave timeouts and suffered the abuse, but I'm not sure there was any *point* to it as such, beyond simply spending time with them, paying attention to them. But that *was* the point. *This* was my obligation.

When we can see things with a humble heart, an apologetic heart, a meek heart, a merciful heart and a pure heart we can see things at their most beautiful. This does not necessarily mean seeing things that please us, or that make us feel happy. It means witnessing the *reality* of the thing, and valuing it as it is. In *the Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis (2000) describes a visit to the foothills of heaven where the grass is painful to walk upon and leaves are too heavy to lift. This is, I believe the reality of truly *paying attention*. When we pay attention to our students, it is necessarily painful if they are in pain. This is more than empathy, because to look at someone empathetically is to see their lives in terms of our own. To pay attention is to remove ourselves from our thought entirely. I gave various analogies to describe this way of looking: seeing a jigsaw piece as a picture in its own right; suddenly witnessing the typography of the London Underground as a work of art rather than functional; it is the ability to be able to imagine something as being worthy of being placed in a glass cabinet in a museum, just as it is; it is the view seen by a fearless child. In this way, the ethical is also concerned with the aesthetic. I made, and make, no claims to being able to pay attention in this way, except for perhaps the briefest moments, but I do believe it is the right way of looking.

And thus, if one thought that there was something Sisyphean in teaching those students, one would be wrong. Working with these children was certainly no punishment, and if I ever viewed it as such, I was culpable. I did not have to force or 'imagine' myself to be happy. I needed to *allow* myself to be happy by simply revelling in the delights of spending time with such extraordinary people. I thank God for those students. They showed me my limits, but more importantly, they made me accept them. They told me to put down my rock. I was weary and burdened, and they gave me rest.

6.2 Further questions

The most obvious further question concerns whether someone else, another teacher, would also find this philosophical method useful. This would require that someone else undertake the same investigation I have described, or that someone else, in a similar situation, reads this work and finds similar intermediate cases, or similar solutions to their own anxieties and uncertainties regarding their teaching. It would not, I believe, be particularly sensible to undertake such an investigation in anything other than the first-person, given the central importance of *self-deception* and the subjectivity of *inconceivability*. It would, however, be interesting to know whether what has provided clarity for me, provides clarity for someone else.

I believe that most of the questions that this thesis has provoked are practical ones: how should a school govern itself if not against outcomes? Outcomes are a consequentialist justification, and thus

not moral. I am not suggesting that outcomes are irrelevant, as mentioned previously, observations of regularities inform our expectations and thus are *relatively* useful. However, I firmly do not believe that reference to outcomes is of any moral importance, and thus should not be the primary method of holding school accountable. Schools and politicians concerned with education tend to have absorbed (what I would consider the worst) practices of business and banking to govern themselves. There are four major areas that I explore further:

1. How can teachers be supported in taking a virtue, as opposed to an outcomes based approach to education?

How can teachers develop good habits? In my own teaching experience, most of these things were learnt from (were *shown* in) the actions of other teachers, but I do believe that teacher training and professional development in schools has something to offer. The work of Fenstermacher (2001) and teacher ‘manner’, and the associated studies (for example Fallona (2000)) is of great relevance here. The work of Macfarlane (2004) that uses real-life, messy case studies to investigate the ethics of higher-education teaching could also be replicated in the arena of secondary education.

2. Is there a method of holding schools accountable that is more in line with a virtue approach?

In the UK, schools are currently held accountable by a collection of measures relating to exam grades and inspections. There is very little acknowledgement of the importance of virtue (and indeed the logic which stems from it). Would it be possible to create a system of accountability that took the virtues into account? The University of Birmingham held a conference in 2014 entitled ‘can virtue be measured’. This would appear to be an appropriate place to start, even given my immediate misgivings about the possibility of *measuring* virtue as such. Instead, perhaps the pseudo-business models of education could be replaced with something more akin to the kinds of judgements made in law courts, relying on precedent and analogy rather than consequences. This could well involve a school being held to account for the fulfilment of a contract concerning the students, and with the local community, rather than against arbitrary targets. My starting point would again be the work of Macfarlane and his research into integrity, (for example, 2004; 2007; 2009) and Biesta’s work into the importance of reclaiming the language of education (2005), the tension between scientific and democratic control over education (2007) , and the importance of teacher judgement (2015).

3. The psychology of expectation.

What gives rise to certain expectations? Why do some expectations force themselves upon us more strongly than others? To what extent are we responsible for our expectations? Personal construct psychology suggests that the way in which a person anticipates events determines the form of their psychological processes (for the original theory see Kelly, 1991; for the application in practice see Winter, 1992). Attachment theory appears to offer a correlation between past events and current

perceptions of events. (For a clear introduction to the original theory see Bowlby, 1988; For more practical implications see Goldber, Muir, & Kerr, 1995; Holmes, 2001). I have described the role of expectation in guiding the *function* of communication, and thus it would seem worthwhile to refer to the work on communicative function and its analysis of the conditions under which behaviour is exhibited (LaVigna and Donnellan, 1986). The role of positive psychology, specifically in managing our expectations seems important here (Seligman, 2002, 2006). I do believe I have provided a theoretical framework within which the myriad psychological approaches can be combined.

4. An investigation into the possibility of virtue-politics.

This is a more philosophical investigation. How could we create a politics of education that is not based on outcomes, but on politicians and teachers acting virtuously? The starting point here would obviously be the work of the many liberal scholars. It would be negligent to remove reference to correlations entirely from such a politics but there should be, I would argue, a statistical element to this, in terms of where statistics and statistical models begin to fail us. I would begin by looking at the work of Taleb (for example 2016).

I also think it would be worth researching the connections between Noddings and Weil. Noddings (2013, p.8) refers to Weil's notion of attention in her work, referring to it as *engrossment*, but Noddings then partially dismisses the idea on the grounds that there are different kinds of attention. I think that this is based on a slight confusion concerning what Weil was talking about. Noddings also found difficulty with Weil's thought due to its frequently religious tone. I think that this misses the point somewhat, and I hope that by putting the work of Weil in the light of Wittgenstein's philosophy, we can bypass apparent contradictions and difficulties in her world-view. Within Wittgenstein's philosophy, the religious language becomes another form of language-game, and in that light, we can see the meaning of the words in terms of *expectations*, and *ways of looking* (as per Phillips 2001).

6.3 A final observation

The world has changed irrevocably since I began this PhD: the Arab spring; ISIS; the rise of nationalism and isolationism; its consequences in terms of Brexit and the election of Trump. Throughout all this, I have become more convinced of the importance of the ideas expressed herein: The IC, with its extreme and wonderful characters, was the world in microcosm, and the dangers of failing to pay attention are being realised beyond the walls of our centre. When the children of the future learn of our times, what questions will they ask? Will they be like today's school children, who read and listen in bafflement about the twenties and thirties and how the world coasted to war? I believe that the work of Weil and Wittgenstein offers an alternative possibility. The current danger is

such that nothing short of a revolution will suffice, but it must be a revolution of attention, a loving reorientation.

The purpose of this thesis was not to provide a political philosophy, and it was written in the belief that we already know what is true and what is kind. Its purpose was to identify and to remove the crust and gunk that has built up around the faucets of political and educational thought, particularly concerning students with SEMHD; crust and gunk that has been deposited by years of subtle (and not-so-subtle) egoism, and that prevents the truth from flowing clear, that precludes us from speaking honestly and kindly. Only once this gunk is removed, can the truth, of which we have all been aware since our wordless infancy, be manifest, be *unhidden*, and we can bravely step into the sunlight.

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