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Education and Other Journeys

The Self, the Other and Stanley Cavell's Moral Perfectionism

Rama Alshoufani

Doctoral Thesis in Education at Stockholm University, Sweden 2025

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Abstract

This dissertation has two aspirations. The first one is to highlight specific problems in education and trace their philosophical roots. It points out a tendency in the way we think about and approach education to see it in terms of its instrumental goal rather than its meaning and place in our lives. This approach renders education a reductive and customised concept that exists for the achievement of certain assumed and predetermined ends. To fulfil these ends, educational planning principles rely on assumptions that defuse the complexity of the human experience and overlook the concept of the other. This thesis argues that these problems, which are the reliance on fixed ends and the dismissal of the notion of the other, have roots in the Western philosophical grounding of education.

The second aspiration is to present the concept of education as a journey: an alternative non-instrumental approach to education based on Stanley Cavell's concept of Emersonian Moral Perfectionism. It is an approach that views education as a perpetual, open-ended journey of growth and transcendence that we embark upon together with the other. Through overcoming the notion of fixed ends and placing the other in a neighbouring position on the same level as the self, education as a journey illuminates a way out of the aforementioned problems of education. It does so by, first and foremost, focusing on changing the way we think about and coexist with the concept of education, before we start to consider solutions and applications. Through exploring Cavellian ideas like nonconformity, romanticism, justice, lostness and the ordinary, this dissertation explores the perfectionist concept of education as a journey.

This dissertation concludes by suggesting that this journey is always taken on a vehicle of hope: a hope, especially for those who feel powerless, silenced, unseen or unheard in education systems, that it is possible to navigate the difficult condition of education. Embarking on this journey is a process of planting a seed of gradual and soft revolutionary change —a process of finding hardness in the soft and power in the invisible and silent.

Keywords: *Journey, Education, Philosophy, Perfectionism, Cavell, Self, Other.*

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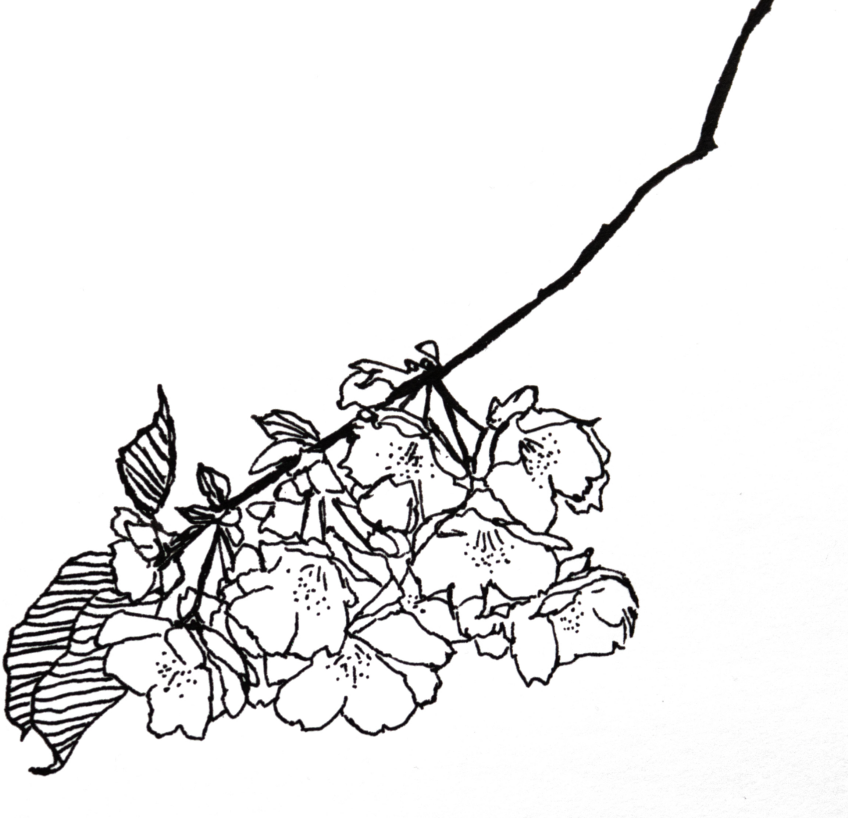
To those who resist no matter how many times they are buried.



Please bring strange things.
Please come bringing new things.
Let very old things come into your hands.
Let what you do not know come into your eyes.

(Ursula Le Guin, Initiation Song from the Finders' Lodge)

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Prologue: Losing the Light, Finding the Way

'What is wrong with education systems?' I recall the exact moment when I thought about this question for the first time. I could not have been more than 10 years old. I remember wandering alone on the playground of my primary school during a break period and feeling my boredom and frustration creeping deeper and deeper into my soul. That moment remained present in my memory, perhaps because it was the moment I became aware of my otherness. Even though I was a child with a huge appetite for knowledge, someone who spent most of her childhood rummaging through her father's large home library and enthusiastically challenging herself with difficult novels, history books and science magazines, I had a halfhearted relationship with school. For a long time, I could not understand why my school experience left me so unfulfilled despite my love for knowledge. I always knew that, unlike for me, education systems worked for many of my peers, and with time, I realised that there was a pattern that differentiated me from most of them. They were generally students that had no severe difficulties with focus, no major challenges with starting and finishing tasks, they were naturally strategic learners who knew how to prioritise what to focus on in each lesson, they knew how to organise their day and instrumentalise their studies for the purpose of passing exams. Most importantly, most of them were able to treat school like an obligation, something that you do like a task and then move on with your life. It felt as if the way education systems worked was designed particularly for them, for a very specific type of learner. I, on the other hand, had none of those skills. In fact, I was the opposite. I had a great ability to quickly and critically grasp information but struggled with a severe lack of focus. I thrived in chaos and required novelty and creativity to learn. I had no perception of time and lacked any learning strategy, but I loved learning. I loved it deeply and profoundly. Most importantly, I desperately wanted my school experience to feel like a second home: a meaningful experience of excitement, wonder and fulfilment. I never wanted to treat it like a mere task. Despite all of that, I was able to be one of the top students in my class throughout primary and middle school, but that came with a deep sense of unrest and discomfort. Consequently, by the time I became a highschooler, my resilience dissipated and my

anxious relationship with school went dim and sour. I developed a deep sense of apathy towards the curriculum, my classroom, my teachers, and finally became that ghost of a student, who haunted her desk waiting for the 'task' of education to be over one day. I lost my way.

Years later, when I moved to Sweden and studied a master's degree in international and comparative education, I began to recognise many other factors that made students feel like ghosts in education systems. I understood that the concept of modern education is a particular phenomenon in human history, a historically structured political and cultural *construct* that is often weighed down by ideology. As someone who grew up in what is called a 'developing country', I was under the impression that what I struggled with as a child at school was the product of an under-developed education system. Yet, I later realised that despite clear differences between different systems across the world, there was still a certain level of hegemony that engulfed all of them. This hegemony could be genealogically traced to the historical and philosophical roots of education. When it was time to write my master's thesis, I told professor Klas Roth, who was also my thesis supervisor at the master's level, that I wanted to write about 'education as a personal experience'. Those questions that I carried from my childhood continued to haunt me; they were leading me through the darkness in search of a glimmer of light somewhere. Klas then paved the way for me to delve into the area of philosophy of education. I began by looking at the idea of self-worth from a Kantian perspective, and then I developed an interest in Aristotle and Levinas. My interest in looking at education philosophically made me realise that its problems are not limited to the way it is planned and structured but are also found in the way it is approached and considered. Levinas's criticism of ontology shone a flagrant light on the nakedness of education's scorn of the idea of the other. This was the first glimmer of something, an aha moment of some kind. Upon starting my doctoral studies, I began to feel that sense of unrest again. On one hand, the struggles that I always endured as someone who does not fit well into education systems seemed to inflate and suffocate me to an even greater degree at the PhD level, and on the other hand, I was braving the seas of finding my place in academic philosophy. I knew that I wanted to pursue a close study of the elements of self and other, and that I wanted to point out fundamental philosophical problems with the way we think about and approach education; and yet, I did not know where to anchor my work. I swam against the turbulent waves of dense philosophical texts, from Kant to Aristotle to Levinas to Der-

rida to Spivak to Deleuze to the realm of posthumanism. My mind was saturated with different concepts and perspectives, but I was still unable to find a home for what I wanted my PhD thesis to convey. I felt that I was a nomad, constantly dissatisfied and possibly unworthy of philosophy all together. And then came a time when I lost my anchor; the turbulent waves turned to a storm and I collapsed under its gust. I succumbed to a burnout that raged in my mind and tormented me for years. Then, one day, through my continuous attempts to find a way out of the labyrinth of my experience, I came across the work of Stanley Cavell. He told me, through his words, through his books, lectures and interviews, that finding myself dissatisfied with everything I say or write is a sign of being 'hooked' on philosophy, that my dissatisfaction meant that philosophy had found me. I was not unworthy after all!

Reading Cavell was like meeting a new friend. You engage in a conversation together; you agree on some things and disagree on others. Yet, you find certain foundational aspects to your way of thinking that draws a smile on your face and makes you want to see them and share a conversation with them again and again. I was instantly drawn to Cavell's reading of American transcendentalism, particularly, Emerson and Thoreau. This transcendental aspect of his work complemented all the elements that I had in mind for this thesis: A balanced approach of the concepts of the self and the other, an idea of education as an open-ended continuous journey that permeates the human condition, and also a moral outlook that emphasised the importance of seeing education as inseparable from seeking a condition of justice. The further I delved into the writings of Cavell and those who were inspired by him, the more I lived those moments of witnessing my own theories being affirmed. I was not solely seeking affirmation, but knowing that Cavell and Cavellians agree with me on a good number of my philosophical concerns was very encouraging. There were also other elements of Cavell's perfectionism that spoke to me philosophically, like his high regard for the ordinary everyday and romanticism, and his philosophical readings of film and literature. Finding these aspects of his work pleasantly took me by surprise; they complemented and completed my vision of what I wanted to say in my PhD thesis. These aspects allowed me to be the writer of my thesis not only as my academic self but as my whole self. My dissatisfaction with other works of philosophy was due to the fact that I felt like I needed to eliminate a great deal of my thoughts and fabricate a new persona as the writer of my text. However, what I found appealing about Cavell's work was that it allowed me to be myself; it not only gave an academic shelter to my romanticism but also took it as seriously as I

do. Through that encouragement, I dared to put forth my own concept of what I see education to be: a journey of perpetual discovery and rediscovery of the world and our place in it and a plea for the just existence of the self in company with the other.

Conveying the concept of education as a journey was a daring endeavour, and that is due to how cliché it might seem to be. These days, we often hear the word *journey* being thrown around everywhere in conversations, on television or social media. I was hesitant to pursue it due to its overused state; I worried that it would not be taken seriously. Then I realised that there is a reason why it is so prominent in our speech. I remembered how ancient it is, and how prominent it has always been in our human psyche. From the most ancient mythology and folklore stories to today's popular culture, the concept of the journey of knowledge is the story of humankind itself. Humans are storytellers by nature, and some of the best stories we have told throughout our history are stories of self-overcoming, stories of education as growth and transcendence. Therefore, I decided that instead of shying away from the idea of the journey because of its prominence, I must do the opposite: I must highlight it and give it the academic weight it deserves. Through Cavell's moral perfectionism, this academic enterprise was possible. I was finally able to convey a vision of education as a perfectionist journey: one that is averse to blind conformity and injustice; one that speaks to those of us who feel unseen, unheard, silent and silenced in education systems. This thesis suggests that change starts by questioning not what education is *for* but what it *is*. It urges us to ask the question 'how do we live our lives?' It encourages us to be uncomfortable with the status quo and unwavering in our ambition to change it even if the current condition seems too powerful and unshakable. What this journey offers us is hope as a powerful vessel that we sail on through the storms of lostness and disappointment in our current condition of education. And hope's greatest power is its ability to morph into resilience and eventually, one day, somewhere, somehow, it grows into a revolution.

Chapter (1): Setting Sail: An Introduction

'Even now, as the sap rises, so too the daffodils rise underfoot'.

(Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*)

A Beginning

It is easy to view the characteristics of education today as a 'given' without any further fundamental questioning. Indeed, unless you are someone who is directly concerned with studying the history of the idea of education, you could discuss it for decades without thinking about the particular historical and political aspects that have made education what it is today. I believe that unless we concern ourselves with seeing the condition of education as an extension of the philosophical and historical events that have shaped it, we cannot truly think about it as a concept or even rethink or reconsider it. There is a tendency today to address education as a *tool* for economic growth and prosperity, which proposes a stronger pull towards an interest in its instrumental goals rather than its meaning and place in our lives. Despite contextual differences and variations worldwide, the concept of education maintains a hegemonic aspect today. This hegemony is characterised by a fixation on reductive instrumentalism, which is interested in thinking about what education is *for*, rather than what education *is* or *should be*. It is this reductive version of education that I am discussing and critiquing in this thesis. There is also a significant focus on certain aspects of education, such as teaching, learning, schooling, curriculum, and policy, which results in the containment of the notion of education itself within these aspects.[1] However, if we think about education as a philosophical concept, as a specific historical, political phenomenon or

[1] Gert Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2014); Michael Young, *Bringing Knowledge Back In: From Social Constructivism to Social Realism in the Sociology of Education* (London: Routledge, 2007).

construct, we see a larger picture that allows us to detect how problematic a 'given' commonsensical view of education is. This thesis applies this conceptual and philosophical understanding of education.

In its pre-modern notion, education was 'a philosophical activity in the most extensive sense' and an inquiry into the nature of existence, belief, morality and justice that was not separate from scientific and factual pursuits.[2] In other words, it was part of our individual and social experience. Yet, in its modern form, education, as well as other subjects in the field of knowledge, has become a sub-divided, specialist-oriented and subject-limited inquiry.[3] Arguably, this shift reached its peak when education began to move away from its position within philosophy and steadily made its way towards becoming one of the social *sciences*.[4] Over the past century or two, education has become heavily influenced by disciplines and philosophical traditions that bestow huge esteem upon positivism and experimental design. The major impact of other disciplines such as psychology and sociology, and the rising popularity of the Anglo-American analytic tradition, consequently cemented an evidence-based approach in the field of education and social studies in general.[5] This development came hand in hand with a desire for rational planning, which placed a large emphasis on education policy.[6] Therefore, planning policies became increasingly crucial to the way education is viewed and understood, which meant that it also became weighed down by ideology. More precisely, it became anchored by neoliberalism as 'the predominant ideology of globalisation' that induces a global atmosphere where 'financial politics determine the course of all state sectors including education'.[7] This cemented a process that education has been going through for almost two centuries, one

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[2] Ansgar Allen and Roy Goddard, *Education and Philosophy: An Introduction* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: SAGE Publications, 2017), 13.

[3] Allen and Goddard, 13.

[4] Tomas Englund, 'New Trends in Swedish Educational Research', *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 50, no. 4: 384.

[5] Torsten Husén, 'Educational Research and the Making of Policy in Education: An International Perspective', *Minerva* 21, no. 1 (1984): 81–100.

[6] Daniel Sundberg, 'Evidence in the History of School Reforms in Sweden', in *What Works in Nordic School Policies?*, ed. John Benedicto Krejsler and Lejf Moos, vol. 15 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 103–125; Englund, 'New Trends in Swedish Educational Research'.

[7] Michael A. Peters and Marek Tesar, 'Philosophy and Performance of Neoliberal Ideologies History, Politics and Human Subjects', in *Contesting Governing Ideologies: An Educational Philosophy and Theory Reader on Neoliberalism*, ed. Michael A. Peters and Marek Tesar, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2017), 2.

in which it became more and more a subject of governance.[8] As early as the 19th century, even moral education was made to be a tool to 'produce a well-governed and productive citizenry rather than a morally perfect people'.[9] This is how the idea of education in service of the state or country above all was established. In the 20th century, the question of governance became more about economic welfare, which made education even more anchored by politics, policy planning and, later, by managerial models as well. However, it is fair to say that education has always harboured a political essence. After all, there was a time in history when education was, in many ways, a colonial project. A quote from the German Enlightenment thinker Johann Gottfried von Herder comes to mind here: '[T]he barbarian rules by force; the cultivated conqueror teaches'.[10] Education was at the heart of colonialism. Explorers, scientists and missionaries flocked to the seas aboard imperial ships to learn about the colonised lands as well as 'teach' their people what was considered to be the 'civilised' culture and religion. The knowledge that was acquired through conquest and colonisation, as John Willinsky puts it, was made to 'legitimate the political and cultural domination of imperialism'.[11] This colonial legacy is what mass schooling as of the 19th century was built upon. Traces of this legacy remain today in schools and universities. Many scholars argue that these institutions continue to push for an agenda of Western intellectual supremacy that comes forth today candy-wrapped in the rhetoric of neoliberal knowledge economies.[12] With that comes a certain understanding of the concept of education that is reductive, instrumental and plagued with consensualism or what I will refer to later as 'conformity'. Furthermore, the way policymakers approach education seems to have found its way into the media narrative about education and has seeped into the public's perception of it, particularly when the planning of education ceased to be a question of policy alone and became an issue of management. Arguably, instrumentalism

[8] Allen and Goddard, *Education and Philosophy*, 153.

[9] Allen and Goddard, 155.

[10] As cited in John Willinsky, *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End* (University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 89.

[11] Willinsky, 3.

[12] For example see: Marjorie Johnstone and Eunjung Lee, 'Education as a Site for the Imperial Project to Preserve Whiteness Supremacy from the Colonial Era to the Present: A Critical Analysis of International Education Policy in Canada', *Whiteness and Education* 7, no. 1 (January 2022): 1–17; Gifty Oforiwaa Gyamera and Penny Jane Burke, 'Neoliberalism and Curriculum in Higher Education: A Post-Colonial Analyses', *Teaching in Higher Education* 23, no. 4 (May 2018): 450–467.

possesses a certain inevitability that makes it unavoidable, especially in systematic learning domains. It, however, becomes a problem when there is an unbalanced focus on the instrumentality of education at the expense of its non-instrumental role.

My aim in this dissertation is to conduct a philosophical investigation of certain theoretical and political aspects that I understand to be the main problems with education today. Then, I suggest a way to think about and approach education that could remedy some of the ailments that such problems cause in our experience with education. I start my argument by establishing how the dominant neoliberal approach to education and educational planning reduces education to an instrumental tool for economic prosperity. This reduction comes dovetailed with an emphasis on a principle of rational planning of education, which renders it an evidence-based practice that is factually understood, mathematically measured, and systematically evaluated by the criteria of productivity, performativity and efficiency. A reductive and customised approach to education tends to rely on assumptions to defuse the complexity of the human experience and reach fixed ends. However, I argue that this instrumentalist interest in fixed ends and its dependency on assumptions are not the result of these neoliberal practices. The neoliberal paradigm generates a rabid version of these issues, but it is not the cause of them. That propensity belongs to the tradition of Western philosophy itself. The notion of a preoccupation with fixed and final ends has roots in the Western philosophical grounding of education. Therefore, I single out two intertwined problematic traits of education's philosophical foundation. The first is Western philosophy's passion for fixed ends and logocentrism, and the second, which is driven by the first, is its universalised and unified notions of subjectivity, which leads to a dismissal of that which is other. After discussing the two problems of education, I put forth the idea of 'education as a journey' as a non-instrumental approach to education based on Stanley Cavell's concept of Emersonian moral perfectionism (EMP). To do so, I discuss the concept of education as the journey of the self and then as a journey that we take alongside the other. I then go into more detail about how this idea could aid us in education. Stanley Cavell argues that EMP carries two main themes: the first is that the human self is 'always becoming, as on a journey' of education and cultivation;[13] the second is that we embark on this journey together with the other who is present as the figure of

[13] Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 26.

the friend.[14] Under the umbrella of these two major themes, I discuss prominent concepts within EMP like the self-world relationship, lostness, finding our voice, acknowledgement of the other, nonconformity, justice and conversation as a transformative exercise. Therefore, I could summarise the aims of this dissertation as the following:

I. Defining what I hold to be two intertwined problems of education today, which are embodied in the dominant instrumental and rational planning principle that has been fortified by neoliberal policies. These problems stem from the philosophical grounding of education, and they are 1) the reliance on fixed ends and 2) the dismissal of the notion of the other.
II. Presenting the concept of education as a journey as a non-instrumental approach to thinking about and considering education. This concept is based on Stanley Cavell's perfectionism, which he calls Emersonian moral perfectionism.

These aims guide the process of this thesis with the intention of addressing those of us in education systems (students, teachers, researchers, mentors, leaders, etc.) and inviting us to see education as a perpetual process of growth that extends outside of the defined systems we work within. It intends to allow us to re-evaluate the way we consider fixed ends and inspire us to rethink the way we approach education as an enterprise with specific aims. Education as a journey grants us the freedom to envision our education as an endeavour, as the education of the human soul.[15] This understanding may seem to broaden the idea of education to a grand holistic concept that fuses with the journey of life itself; yet, in that, it does not intend to inflate education to an intangible mercurial inaccessible concept. The idea of education as a journey rather aspires to encourage those within the system to adopt an approach to education beyond the walls of the educational institution and see it as not merely a series of subjects but as a concept that permeates the entire human experience. In that, the journey invites us to take our idea of education to the ordinary and everyday of our daily existence—to finding educational value in uncanny places. This text also seeks a vision of education that does not provide facile claims of 'solutions' to the historically, politically and economically complex

[14] Cavell, 27.

[15] Naoko Saito, *The Gleam of Light : Moral Perfectionism and Education in Dewey and Emerson*, American Philosophy Series, 99-2152256-6 ; 16 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 141.

problems of education. However, it rather points out the way to how we can deal with our difficult condition of education and seek knowledge through a hopeful open-ended journey of self-reliance and self-overcoming that we embark upon together with the other. The aforementioned also portrays the contribution that this thesis seeks to achieve. There have been many recent efforts to introduce Cavellian ideas to the subject of education. Some of them discuss concepts of knowledge and learning in relation to his ordinary language philosophy and the Wittgensteinian and Austinian side of his work. Some others focus on a more transcendental approach through his Emersonian and Thoreauvian ideas as well as his commentary on film and literature. However, what this thesis seeks to do differently is to take the concept of the perfectionist journey and make it the central notion of the argument. It focuses particularly on the transcendental side of Cavell's work, but at the same time, it continuously borrows from many different aspects of his scholarship. The other contribution of this thesis is its focus on pointing out the way forward in dealing with the difficult condition of education today, rather than providing a clear-cut, engineered solution to the problems of education, which, as I will argue later, are not so easily solvable. It provides a way to a remedy to help us through a condition that we may not be capable of changing in our lifetime but that we are obligated to deal and live with. This perspective does not mean that this thesis is an invitation to passivism. It is rather an invitation for planting a seed, an idea of a perfectionist way to deal with a difficult and tragic condition in an unjust world. A seed, if nurtured well, grows and carves its way through the soil to emerge from Earth's womb towards fresh air and warm sunlight. Therefore, this text argues for an unconventional form of application; one that is not as technical and instrumental as we are used to in the field of education but rather one that is romantic and driven by hope in its belief in the power of planting an idea and nurturing it through conversation.

Education Today: An Overview of Previous Work

It is not uncommon to witness education today being described as in a state of crisis. Of course this description can be carried out from different viewpoints. However, one of the most prevailing concerns about the nature of this crisis is the fact that education today is becoming more and more a staunchly technical and instrumental enterprise to the point of being depleted of its moral and aesthetic value. This concern is particularly dominant in philosophy of education, where it is feared that the unbalanced dependency on quantitative methods of reviewing, evaluating and planning education overshadows a more qualitative view of its aims and value. However, it is fair to say that some problems extend to qualitative methods as they exist today as well. In the next few pages, I will discuss these concerns as well as other related issues as argued by academics in the field of education, and more precisely, those who work within the area of philosophy of education, in which I believe this thesis belongs.

Gert Biesta argues that despite continuous discussions about how educational processes can be improved and made more effective and performative, there is, by comparison, little 'explicit' discussion about what is educationally good and desirable.[16] A reason for that, he continues, could be because such a holistic value of education might be considered too subjective to be *rationally* discussed. Therefore, instead of a more in depth discussion of education's means and ends, there is a tendency to shrug off the complexity of such an encounter and opt to rely on postulates and a certain 'commonsense'. This positioning, of course, ends up serving 'the interest of a particular group' and reproducing social inequalities.[17] Biesta also points out that this position comes hand in hand with a shift in the language that is available to educators—which has been occurring since the late 20th century—from the language of

[16] Gert J. J. Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* (Routledge, 2015), 15.
[17] Biesta, 15–16.

education to the language of *learning*.[18] This 'learnification' of education thoroughly depends on the assumption of a fabricated common sense and reduces education to the more systematic and individualistic concept of learning. It redescribes education 'in terms of an *economic transaction*', which renders the student or a pupil a consumer, who is a 'learner'.[19] A more holistic and perpetual concept of education became that of lifelong learning, whereby a teacher's role was redefined as a 'facilitator' of the learning process, and the responsibility of education was moved from being a right of the student and duty of the government as a provider to the learner's own duty.[20] This language found its home in policy documents as neoliberalism became more and more the dominant political paradigm of reform policies. With this reduction of education to a marketised and individualistic notion of learning, the focus on education as an instrumental tool intensified, especially with an increased interest in evidence-based practices in educational policies. It is important to point out that instrumentalism is not a product of neoliberalism itself, but it is inflated and fortified by it. The history and politics surrounding neoliberalism are complex issues, but this outsized interest in instrumentalism can be considered one facilitator of the dominant neoliberal worldview of society today.

Along with the marketisation of education, neoliberalism also brought about a shift from 'an emphasis on policy' to a focus on management, more precisely what is called new public management. Michael Peters and Marek Tesar argue that theories and models of this 'new managerialism' are used as both 'the basis and the instrumental means for redesigning state educational bureaucracies, educational institutions, and even public policy processes'.[21] This redesign is based on the decentralisation of management and encourages educational leaders to adopt practices from the private (corporate) sector. This means, of course, an education that is run like a business and fuelled by competition and reliance on performance metrics and standardised outputs (instead

[18] Gert Biesta, 'Against Learning: Reclaiming a Language for Education in an Age of Learning', *Nordisk Pedagogik* 23, no. 1 (2004): 70–82.
[19] Gert Biesta, *Beyond Learning : Democratic Education for a Human Future* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 19.
[20] Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, 16; Biesta, 'Against Learning: Reclaiming a Language for Education in an Age of Learning'.
[21] Peters and Tesar, 'Philosophy and Performance of Neoliberal Ideologies History, Politics and Human Subjects', 7.

of inputs or processes) to achieve a 'desired productivity agenda'.[22] This paradigm of 'performance management' is applied to both the institutional and individual levels, and it takes on a form of 'governmentality' that establishes a hierarchical and authoritative mode of management within educational institutions.[23] I understand this to be due to the power that it grants managerial boards, funders, the free market and state pressure over academics and educators. Another point that Peters and Tesar refer to in relation to neoliberal practices is that they 're-configure' the human subject into an individual consumer 'of very competitive public services that have been significantly re-structured, downsized and rationalized'.[24] To achieve its goals of productivity and efficiency, neoliberalism reshapes human subjects into 'self-interested economic subjects'.[25] With that comes a crumbling of democratic values as the idea of freedom is reduced and emphasised mainly through an economic view of individuality. This outcome not only allows space for political disavowal but also markets this very disavowal in a positive light.

To discuss this further, I turn to Mathew Clarke, who argues that education today is arrayed in a facade of depoliticisation alongside its disavowal of political responsibility. Clarke states that issues of politics and educational policy are inseparable due to 'the social and economic value [attached] to education and the inevitable requirement, given finite resources, to make decisions regarding its allocation'.[26] However, he clarifies that in the neoliberal political and policymaking discourses, education is presented as a construct that is valued by its technical efficiency and effectiveness in service of the economy. In

[22] Peters and Tesar lay out further details about how this management paradigm works and how it establishes a distrust between the education sector and the government and reduces its role in the process of educational planning managerially and politically. It also establishes a marketised notion of accountability that is based on 'assumptions' about autonomy, self-reliance and self-regulation. All of this happens at the 'expense of democratic value'. See: Peters and Tesar, 'Philosophy and Performance of Neoliberal Ideologies History, Politics and Human Subjects'.

[23] Peters and Tesar, 'Philosophy and Performance of Neoliberal Ideologies History, Politics and Human Subjects', 9–10.

[24] Peters and Tesar, 6.

[25] Peters and Tesar, 7.

[26] Clarke clarifies that policy and politics are two intertwined concepts that are normative rather than technical in the way that they are concerned with value. However, he construes that policy is about an authoritative allocation of value, while politics is about placing an emphasis on specific values. See: Matthew Clarke, 'The (Absent) Politics of Neo-Liberal Education Policy', *Critical Studies in Education* 53, no. 3 (October 2012): 297–310. He also references John Codd, by pointing out that 'policy is about the exercise of political power and the language that is used to legitimate [the political] process'. See: John A Codd, 'The Construction and Deconstruction of Educational Policy Documents', *Journal of Education Policy* 3, no. 3 (July 1988): 235–247.

other words, its political value is reduced to a technical one. Consequently, it loses its political normative value and its connection to issues of sociopolitical power.[27] Clarke affirms that this shift from the political to the technical is carried out by 'reframing political issues in economic terms through processes of commodification', which comes with the assumption and promotion of 'a broad consensus in relation to this economising agenda'.[28] This means that there is a demand for consensualism in education today towards the need to plan education and set up certain aims to define its function in a way that is based on what is good for the individual from an economic lens. This demand comes with an allegedly benevolent rhetoric of an education that strives towards quality for the sake of equality and equity. However, neoliberal politics and policies carry out this image of education in a depoliticising manner. This means that, as Wendy Brown argues, issues of 'inequality, subordination, marginalization, and social conflict, which all require political analysis and political solutions' are all defined as 'personal and individual' issues.[29] In that, these sociopolitical problems are depoliticised in a way that causes equality and equity in education to become what Clarke describes as, mere 'fantasies', which actually exacerbates these issues within education systems. Clarke argues that educational planners today use 'fantasmatic narratives' that 'involve promises of harmony and fullness', and thus, they create the idea that things are well and functioning. As a result they produce subjects who 'ignore, overlook, or forget the situated partiality and contingency of a particular discourse or practice'.[30] These fantasies are not about inducing an illusion but more about placing certain sociopolitical problems in the background, Clarke puts it this way:

> 'Fantasmatic logics are thus not so much about promoting illusions but more about backgrounding the contingent, fragmented, and incomplete nature of social reality in order to view the world as a well-structured, harmonious whole, thus blunting the latter's political dimension and reducing the likelihood of subjects engaging in resistant political practices...many neoliberal governance strategies can be read in this way'.[31]

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[27] Clarke, 'The (Absent) Politics of Neo-Liberal Education Policy', 298.

[28] Clarke, 298.

[29] Brown also states that these political issues can also be deemed as natural, religious, or cultural by contemporary liberal democracies. See: Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 15.

[30] Matthew Clarke, 'Talkin' 'bout a Revolution: The Social, Political, and Fantasmatic Logics of Education Policy', *Journal of Education Policy* 27, no. 2 (2012): 173–191.

[31] Clarke, 179.

The phenomenon of demanding consensus in the way that education is viewed and approached morphs into a demand for an agreement over the necessity to plan it, and specifically for that planning to be 'rational'. Scholars in the field of education have expressed their worry about this outcome for several decades. For example, in their book *Becoming Critical*, which was published in 1986, Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis argued that instrumental rationality reduces education and, particularly, educational curricula to 'products, appearing in the form of schemes of activities, teaching ideas, subject-matter content and textbooks'.[32] The dominance of the 'calculation of means and ends' in education was a concern even at that time.[33] Paul Standish argues that the principle of rational planning stands as one of the characteristics of our modern times.[34] In a world where education is undertaken on a wide systematic scale, the idea that there must be specific aims of education to invest in has become fixed to the point that questioning it could be considered to border on political irresponsibility.[35] Indeed, the aims of education is another topic that educators and philosophers of education have been fascinated with for a long time. As Kevin Harris points out, analytic philosophers, like R. S. Peters and P. H. Hirst, believe that discussing the aims of education is important because it is an attempt at pinning down desirable qualities that education should be concerned with and seek to develop.[36] However, he reminds us that even Hirst and Peters, who championed an instrumental endeavour in their search for the aims of education in the 1970s, had to come to the conclusion in the end that education was a very fluid, complex and politically and historically rooted concept.[37] Today, the main concern when it comes to the aims of education is the fact that they are viewed and implemented from a very instrumental perspective as a technical process of means and ends. And of course, it is not philosophers of education who may believe that education's end should be moral autonomy or happiness who are deciding these aims. Harris argues that we need to pay attention to the role the state plays in setting those aims and consider who is really defining the aims that end up being

[32] Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis, *Becoming Critical: Education Knowledge and Action Research* (Routledge, 1986), 14.
[33] Allen and Goddard, *Education and Philosophy*, 28.
[34] Paul Standish, 'Education Without Aims?', in *The Aims of Education*, ed. Roger Marples (London, UNITED STATES: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 40.
[35] Standish, 40–41.
[36] Kevin Harris, 'AIMS! Whose Aims?', in *The Aims of Education*, ed. Roger Marples (London, UNITED STATES: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 3.
[37] Harris, 2.

adopted in educational practices. The reality is that the means and ends of education today are decided based on neoliberal standards of performativity and efficiency and they often rely on evidence-based practices and the measurement of outcomes. Paul Standish criticises the reliance on 'quantifiability', 'observable behavioural outcomes' and 'systemisation' in the principle of rational planning that is dominant in education.[38] He argues that instrumentalism is built into the system to the point that we actually only teach what we can test. This instrumentalism uses a discourse that is 'inflicted' with *scientism*, which 'attempts to apply scientific principles and procedures in dealing with questions which fall outside the scope of science as commonly understood'.[39] The problem with this is that it fails to meet the complexity of both education as a concept and the experience of the human subject. Standish suggests that not all criticism of the instrumental/ behavioural approach is effective as it tends to be like 'a sword to the head of the Hydra', you cut one and two grow in its place. You behead 'behavioural objectives', only for 'competence statements' and 'learning outcomes' to grow in its place. Therefore, he suggests other approaches to criticism that he considers more profound or fruitful: one is questioning the motivation of the planners via a close look at the language they use, and the other is looking at the means-ends dynamic in education. This thesis focuses more on the latter and highlights the importance of pondering over the questions, who decides on the aims of education, and for whom? We could also shed light on the fact that educational aims that are seen as valuable through instrumental evaluations and processes are universalised based on assumptions about the subjectivity of the other. Many in the philosophy of education suggest non-instrumental ways of reconsidering education that stretch beyond what is measurable and beneficial for the state economy. Issues like autonomy, moral and social commitment, happiness and aesthetics are large themes in these types of discussions, especially amongst the proponents of liberal and progressive education or, for example, Kantian and Aristotelian scholars. To mention a few examples, Scholars who discuss education in relation to the ethics of responsibility like Sharon Todd, who is heavily influenced by Emmanuel Levinas, argue for a consideration of education as a fundamentally ethical encounter that involves responsibility towards the

[38] Paul Standish, 'Educational Discourse: Meaning and Mythology', *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 25, no. 2 (1991): 171–182.
[39] Standish, 171.

other.[40] Paul Smeyers is another philosopher of education that criticises instrumental and evidence-based approaches to education. He dedicates a large portion of his work to discussing educational research, its nature, method and role. He advocates for a reflective and philosophically grounded research that steers away from fixed and universalised notions of the world.[41] Another example is Tyson E. Lewis, who looks at education as an aesthetic experience that is inherited through acts of teaching and learning.[42] A recent work by Sharon Todd also delves into this aesthetic view of education by considering it as an embodied experience.[43] Some philosophers of education seem to tread lightly on an ambiguous line between instrumentalism and non-instrumentalism when they still argue that education needs to have a set of specific aims, but they make those educational aims generic or based in morality, like cultivating rational autonomy, moral seriousness or social justice.[44] On the other hand, there are good philosophical grounds to the idea of questioning the notions of aims and fixed ends in education all together. Both Paul Standish and Naoko Saito, whose work I reference a great deal in this thesis, use Deweyan and Cavellian perspectives to question the notion of means and ends that are external to the educational process and whether education should or could truly have a set of ultimate aims without rational assumptions.[45] Klas Roth draws on Cavell and Kant to argue for the possibility of making ourselves efficacious and autonomous in education without a set of predetermined fixed

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[40] Sharon Todd, *Learning from the Other: Levinas, Psychoanalysis, and Ethical Possibilities in Education* (Albany, New York: State University of New York (SUNY) Press, 2003), https://sunypress.edu/Books/L/Learning-from-the-Other2.

[41] Paul Smeyers and Marc Depaepe, eds., *Beyond Empiricism: On Criteria For Educational Research* (Leuven University Press, 2003); Paul Smeyers, 'The Relevance of Irrelevant Research: The Irrelevance of Relevant Research', in *Educational Research: Why 'What Works' Doesn't Work*, ed. Paul Smeyers and Marc Depaepe (Dordrecht ; [New York]: Springer, 2006).

[42] Tyson E. Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education : Theatre, Curiosity, and Politics in the Work of Jacques Rancière and Paulo Freire* (New York, NY: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2012).

[43] Sharon Todd, *The Touch of the Present : Educational Encounters, Aesthetics, and the Politics of the Senses* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2023).

[44] For discussions about rational autonomy as the aim of education see John White, *Education and the Good Life: Beyond the National Curriculum* (Kogan Page, 1990); Aharon Aviram and Avi Assor, 'In Defence of Personal Autonomy as a Fundamental Educational Aim in Liberal Democracies: A Response to Hand', *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 1 (February 2010): 111–126. For a discussion on moral seriousness and social commitment as educational aims see Richard Pring, 'NEGLECTED EDUCATIONAL AIMS: Moral Seriousness and Social Commitment', in *The Aims of Education*, ed. Roger Marples (London, UNITED STATES: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999). Also, see Larry Nucci and Robyn Ilten-Gee, *Moral Education for Social Justice* (Teachers College Press, 2021) as a more recent example of a discussion about moral education and social justice.

[45] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*; Standish, 'Education Without Aims?'

ends.[46] They all suggest that education is an open-ended enterprise that harbours intrinsic value and in which each end is in itself a new beginning. In the next chapter, I will discuss this concept in further detail and argue for a Cavellian non-instrumental notion to think about and consider education beyond the limitations of rational planning and fixed ends. The Cavellian idea of moral perfectionism addresses the problem of means and ends in education as well as the issue of the other. However, before I go further, I need to introduce the work of Stanley Cavell and showcase why his work has the potential to help us work out a good way to think about and consider education.

Who is Stanley Cavell?

Stanley Cavell is often described as one of the most brilliant and prolific American philosophers of our recent history. He is most known for his significant interpretation of Ludwig Wittgenstein, his work on scepticism and ordinary language philosophy,[47] as well as his literary and film criticism and his special contribution to American transcendentalism through his unique engagement with Emerson and Thoreau. His work is involved with language,

[46] Klas Roth, 'Making Ourselves Intelligible—Rendering Ourselves Efficacious and Autonomous, without Fixed Ends', *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 48, no. 3 (September 2014): 28–40; Klas Roth, 'Stanley Cavell on Philosophy, Loss, and Perfectionism', *Educational Theory* 60, no. 4 (August 2010): 395–403.

[47] Ordinary language philosophy historically arose as a reaction to an effort in academia, especially in logical positivism, to construct an 'ideal' language that claims to represent a more accurate and precise description of reality. Those who oppose the ideal language project consider that its non-ordinary nature is counter-productive and that ordinary language is perfectly capable of fulfilling its purpose in academic writing and usage. The rise of logical positivism also questioned forms of knowledge that extend outside of scientifically formalised systems, which questioned the position of philosophy in our lives and culture. It also undermined everyday life and its 'expressions' as a 'source of meaning and orientation to human existence', see: Espen Hammer, *Stanley Cavell: Skepticism, Subjectivity, and the Ordinary*, 1st edition (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 2–4. This prompted many philosophers like Austin and Cavell to defend the philosophical importance of the ordinary. The early ordinary language philosophers mostly based their work on the later Wittgenstein, specifically his book *Philosophical Investigations*. See, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953). In his work on the idea of the ordinary, Cavell heavily returns to Wittgenstein as well as J. L Austin. See, Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1958).

morality, epistemology, aesthetics, philosophy of mind as well as political philosophy. Yet, Cavell, as Russel Goodman describes him, 'occupies a curious position in all the fields in which he works'.[48] Cavell has always been a philosopher that is hard to pin down to a specific category or tradition. He comes from the analytical philosophy tradition, yet seems to perpetually endeavour beyond it and bridge his work with continental philosophy. He also resists the 'pregiven styles, camps and orientations of current academic philosophy'.[49] There is always a sense of rebellion about Cavell in his approach to academia, philosophy and literary value as well as in the way he writes and considers texts. Perhaps it is due to the Western tradition's love for categorisation and criteria that the interdisciplinary, traversing and maverick nature of Cavell's work has made him almost a philosophical nomad. His style led to a certain avoidance of his work and a 'regrettable undercirculation' of his ideas;[50] of course, there are other reasons that his critics cite as well, which I will discuss later. However, very few can deny Cavell's prominence and importance, and to his readers and followers, his work offers a sense of needed nonconformity to academic norms and provides rewarding intellectual growth. Richard Rorty writes in praise of Cavell: 'We philosophy professors are lucky that one of the great writers of the century came among us, and left behind a description of our habits that we might never have formulated for ourselves'.[51] This subchapter aims at establishing an account of some of Cavell's main concepts and areas of interest. This endeavour will hopefully aid this dissertation's readers with establishing a basic understanding of Cavell's work, which many of the concepts discussed in this text are rooted in.

Cavell takes special interest in the idea of scepticism, which he describes as 'the opening gesture of modern philosophy, in Descartes, continuing in Hume and in Kant', which was a response and also a preparation for the 'trauma' that the revolutionary science of the era (starting from Copernicus, Galileo and Newton) brought forth.[52] While the scepticism of Descartes,

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[48] Russell B. Goodman, ed., *Contending with Stanley Cavell* (Cary, UNITED STATES: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2005), 3.
[49] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, x.
[50] Garrett Stewart, 'The Avoidance of Stanley Cavell', in *Contending with Stanley Cavell*, ed. Russell B. Goodman (Cary, UNITED STATES: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2005), 140.
[51] Richard Rorty, 'Cavell on Skepticism', in *Contending with Stanley Cavell*, ed. Russell B. Goodman (Cary, UNITED STATES: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2005), 20.
[52] Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 1.

Hume and Kant pays attention to the knowledge of the external world, Cavell, following Wittgenstein and J. L Austin, focuses on scepticism as inherent in our everyday use of language. He is critical of what he considers to be an arrogant approach in philosophy to 'chronically' separating itself from what Wittgenstein calls the ordinary or the everyday use of language.[53] This seems to be a view of the Cartesian *Meditations* as a philosophy that is done from the abstract point of view of a shut-in philosopher sitting in his study in isolation from the interactions of daily life. This sole focus on external world scepticism to find theoretical grounding leaves the ordinary of the everyday and our use of language vulnerable to scepticism. This means that, according to Cavell, scepticism asks us to 'forgo' our judgement of 'what calls for, or tolerates, change in our ways of thinking and wording the world'. He continues:

> 'The skeptic tells me what I ordinarily "believe" (for example, that the "world" "exists" as "my" or "our" "senses" "inform" me or us of it); he replaces my ordinary, the very vulnerability and inarticulateness of it, its inhabitability'.[54]

Cavell considers this to be a 'scandal of philosophy', especially when it comes to its connection to scepticism of the other. It is important to point out that unlike Descartes, Cavell does not refute scepticism; he does not seek to build a foundation to knowledge that could protect us from the threat of scepticism. Instead, he suggests that scepticism is inevitable; it is rather significant for questioning truths and challenging the 'ossification of common sense views', especially those related to conventions and issues of injustice.[55] Therefore, the best way to confront its threat is not to refute it but to make peace with the limitation of human knowledge (human finitude) and the uncertainty of our existence, as well as understand the inherent uncertainty and ambiguity of language and meaning as a way to escape the trap of despair and nihilism. Cavell's accounts of scepticism are an invitation for us to engage more deeply with the conditions of human existence and communication. Hannah Vandegrift Eldridge argues that philosophical scepticism is a form of general epistemic rationalism that seems to have morphed today in the 21st century

[53] Cavell, 134.
[54] Cavell, 134.
[55] Hannah Vandegrift Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations: Hölderlin, Rilke, and the Poetics of Community* (Cornell University Press, 2015), 27.

into a 'scientism that divides the world into an all-or-nothing of certain (rational) knowledge'.[56] She continues that while Cavell is not the only philosopher or scholar who challenges dominant models of rationalism, what makes his work special is that he combines 'an account of language's challenge to narrow rationalisms' with 'an account of the necessity (and necessary failure) of the yearning for certainty of which assorted rationalisms (epistemology, behaviourism, scientism) are the most intellectually sanctioned expressions'.[57] Cavell's argument is also against professional (academic) epistemology and the way it is taught and considered. This is something that he discusses in the first two parts of *The Claim of Reason*, one of his most influential and complex books.

Cavell also rejects the notion of the 'criteria for our judgments of the world' as a concept that forms an understanding of something fixed to refute scepticism. In his reading of Cavell, Simon Critchley identifies criteria as 'the means by which the existence of something is established with certainty'.[58] In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell argues that criteria are specified through, and depends on, the way we use them within language and context.[59] Thus, they cannot be a 'solution' to scepticism. They simply fail to give us the desired certainty we seek. His discussion of criteria is based on Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, and unlike many other readings of this work, Cavell does not see Wittgenstein's account of criteria as attempting to refute scepticism; he rather sees 'the possibility of skepticism as internal to Wittgenstein's philosophising'.[60] He also discusses criteria in relation to our scepticism towards the other (other-mind scepticism) and points out the tendency of our everyday language to demand criteria pertaining to the other that allows the sceptic to confer a sense of fixation and certainty.[61] To me this is connected to the tendency in philosophy to look for fixation, which I will continuously

[56] Of course any discussion of scientism here does not mean an attack on science itself. See: Eldridge, 16.
[57] Eldridge, 17.
[58] Simon Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism', in *Contending with Stanley Cavell*, ed. Russell B. Goodman (Cary, UNITED STATES: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2005), 47.
[59] Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1979).
[60] Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism: The Carus Lectures, 1988* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 65.
[61] See Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*.

point out throughout this thesis. Scepticism demands knowledge, and knowledge as the antithesis of ignorance is the final end of the Western tradition of philosophy, especially when it aims at the 'truth' as a final fixed end.[62] This issue is extremely important when discussing and researching education due to the fact that our educational methods are saturated with a dependency upon epistemology, which as pointed out by Cavell, is rooted in demands for certainties and fixed notions of criteria. In *The Claim of Reason* he argues:

> 'When epistemology raises the question of knowledge, what it asks for are the grounds of our certainty. But we are reminded that what we call knowledge is also related to what we call getting to know, or learning, e.g., to our ability to identify or classify or discriminate different objects with and from one another. Criteria are criteria of judgement'.[63]

Referring to Wittgenstein's idea of judgement, he goes on to note that in modern epistemology, judgement and the way we word it in philosophy (I would say in education as well) are characterised by a focus on 'truth or falsity', which raises the question of how this distorts and limits human knowledge:

> 'The problem is to see whether the study of human knowledge may as a whole be distorted, anyway dictated, by this focus. The focus upon statements takes knowledge to be the sum (or product) of true statements, and hence construes the limits of human knowledge as coinciding with the extent to which it has amassed true statements of the world'.[64]

The demand for certainty is, in a way, fundamentally challenged by Cavell's view of scepticism and criteria. In this view, Cavell takes us into a place where we are, as Critchley puts it, 'denied both the possibility of an epistemological guarantee for our belief and the possibility of skeptical escape from those beliefs'.[65] This is of course difficult and stressful because the sceptic's fear of the unknown is human nature; it is a driving force to seek knowledge and defuse what is other and obscure. In relation to language, the sceptic 'fantasises language as a meaning-determining framework' that functions as a relief from exercising moral judgement. Thus, from having to 'declare a position from

[62] At times, Cavell seems to discuss scepticism as if it was a synonym of Western philosophy (or at least modernist philosophy from Descartes onward).
[63] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 16–17.
[64] Cavell, 17.
[65] Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism', 48.

which to judge (or speak)'.[66] He also argues that even ordinary language is not immune to scepticism and can be exploited by the sceptic to oppress its own 'ordinariness'; that is why ordinary language philosophy is in 'constant dialogue with scepticism'.[67] This possibility places a constraint but also leads to attempts to possess and dominate the other. In that, the sceptic places epistemology above an ethical consideration of the other. Cavell dedicates the fourth and last part of *The Claim of Reason* to discussing the issue of the scepticism of other minds. It is a rhetorically complex and dense part of almost 170 pages, which a lot of this dissertation's argument about the idea of the other emanates from.[68] In it, Cavell uses a few examples of parables and stories to illustrate that claiming such knowledge is similar to claiming knowledge of the minds of 'human guises', which have the 'bodies' of humans and human-like lively versions of automatons, golems or zombies. These guises look like ourselves but possess a completely different inner life from that which the self realises. This is found in the idea of the body as a guise or barrier of communication. These examples are used to develop a lengthy argument about how we cannot claim knowledge of the other, and that knowledge of other minds remains insufficient. He also relies on the example of the sensation of pain to argue about our inability to truly know how the other experiences their feelings. Cavell argues that our intention towards the other should not be that of an attempt to *know* but to *acknowledge*. In this as well as other writings, he also discusses what happens when we refuse acknowledgement and why we do so. This is particularly illustrated in his commentary on Shakespeare.[69] Cavell's notion of acknowledgement extends to the self. He argues that our ability or failure to acknowledge the other is tightly related to our ability or failure to understand ourselves and recognize the finitude of our human self-knowledge. Epsen Hammer argues that this 'reinstating' of these ideas in 'a notion of selfhood' is one of Cavell's main lifelong ambitions.[70] Acknowledgement is also tightly related to Cavell's argument about the instability of language and its vulnerability to scepticism. We seek certainty in language the same way we seek that certainty about the other. Yet, the fantasy of a language that can convey an

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[66] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 133.

[67] Stephen Mulhall, 'Stanley Cavell's Vision of the Normative of Language:Grammar, Criteria, and Rules', in *Stanley Cavell*, ed. Richard Eldridge, Contemporary Philosophy in Focus (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 79.

[68] See Part Four of *The Claim of Reason*: 'Skepticism and the Problem of Others'. It consists of one giant chapter called: 'Between Acknowledgment and Avoidance'.

[69] See: Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*

[70] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 133.

assertive knowledge perpetually evades our grasp. Therefore, we must also *acknowledge* the instability of language and its vulnerability in the face of scepticism. Cavell does not consider acknowledgement as 'an alternative to knowing but rather as an interpretation of it'.[71] Therefore, knowledge is possible in the context of acknowledgement.

After *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell began working with notions of the self further through a more direct engagement with Ralph Waldo Emerson, and his work seems to begin to embrace American transcendentalism and romanticism in a way that noticeably changes the flavour of his philosophy. Cavell places emphasis on Emerson and Thoreau's empiricism, which entails taking philosophical interest in one's own personal experience in and of the world. He encourages us to 'educate [our] experience sufficiently so that it is worthy of trust', and dubs that as a moral practice.[72] Without this trust, without an interest in our experience or in finding words for it, we are to have no voice of our own. In his book *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (*CHU*), he presents his concept of Emersonian moral perfectionism (EMP) in which he lays out discussions of meaning, ethics and justice that are anchored in notions of the self.[73] I will not elaborate on this idea much in this subchapter as I will go through EMP in detail in later chapters. However, to provide a very quick summary, Cavell's idea of EMP considers the self to be in a constant state of growth and transcendence while being 'inherently in transition with itself' as it fluctuates between conformity and self-reliance.[74] Although Cavell defends the self's right to dissent from conformity to society's norms, he does not advocate for a withdrawal from that society. His idea of the cultivation of one's self-reliance and voice must happen in just conditions, and it is not an invitation for a self-involved version of individualism. In *CHU*, Cavell asks: What if the cultivation of our genius is countered by certain 'Utilitarian interests and Kantian obligations' in society? But also, what if this cultivation is necessary to a society's 'sense of responsiveness' to the conflict of interests and obligations within it?[75] In other words, Cavell is wondering how we could navigate the balance between the freedom of the self and that of others. To answer this

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[71] Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 8.

[72] Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*, Harvard Film Studies (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), 12.

[73] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*.

[74] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 134.

[75] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 26.

question, he suggests that one's freedom to find and cultivate their self-reliance can never be achieved in unjust circumstances. Thus, I see the responsibility to create a just world to be pivotal to self-transcendence in Cavellian perfectionism. Other Emersonians, like George Kateb, also highlight the democratic quality of self-reliance.[76] Kateb argues that self-reliance is 'a doctrine urging the elevation of democracy to its full height'.[77] He describes mental or philosophical self-reliance as a 'readiness to treat with sympathetic understanding ideas and values that have no sympathy for one another. In order to develop such understanding, one must try to remain not free of substantive commitments, but sparing of them'.[78]

Through his reading of Emerson and Thoreau, Cavell recovers an American romantic tradition that influences his later work in which he links romanticism to perfectionism and ordinary language. Cavell sees both romanticism and ordinary language to be responses to scepticism and the problem of the 'commonsense' in late modernism.[79] Romanticism for Cavell is a serious philosophical endeavour that brings 'the world back, as to life' through the quest of returning to the ordinary, the everyday.[80] This return to the ordinary in a transcendental process is one of descension rather than ascension; it is the process of viewing the world as it is in the here and now—seeing what is extraordinary in the ordinary and how the everyday is 'an exceptional achievement'.[81] This endeavour comes with a need for philosophy to be part of our daily existence, for it to be the 'education of grownups' that carries the potential of rescuing us from the apathy and nihilism that scepticism could bring us to. This sense of philosophising the everyday is also seen in Cavell's commentary on film. He argues that 'film exists in a state of philosophy: it is inherently self-reflexive'.[82] It deals with the question of acknowledgement as 'self-reflection'.

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[76] The Emersonian idea of self-reliance can be described as a project of never-ending growth that one takes upon oneself. Kateb describes it as 'a way for the self to be and to act in the world'. He also signifies that it is an idea that came out of Emerson's opposition to 'the social given' and the corrupt rule of religious institutions in his time. Self-reliance is a form of 'principled individualism' that negates a version of selfish individualism that harbours consumerism and 'economic self-centeredness' at its core. See: George Kateb, *Emerson and Self-Reliance*, New Edition (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 17–18.

[77] Kateb, 18.

[78] Kateb, 4.

[79] Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism', 38.

[80] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 53.

[81] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 463; Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism', 38.

[82] Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 13.

He finds a sense of moral urgency of transfiguration, shock, emotionality and intimacy in them that is not well acknowledged by traditional moral philosophy.[83] The films that Cavell takes interest in possess a sense of domesticity; they occur in the everyday of our human lives. Through his philosophical reflection on them, Cavell takes us to a state of mind where we become intrigued to see the philosophical in the daily and mundane. Cavell wished to make conversations about film as popular and normalised as those on sports. He wished he could see resourceful daily or weekly reviews of them in newspapers.[84]

As in the case of every philosopher, there is always a decent amount of criticism of Cavell's work. Before concluding this introduction to his philosophy, it is adequate to highlight some of that critique. Some of them are: his ambiguous relationship with traditional as well as academic philosophy, his rejection of pragmatism, the elitism of his idea of perfectionism, and what some claim to be his overemphasis of personal experience. I will not cover all of these criticisms, as that would make an entire separate thesis on its own. However, I would like to very briefly present two points of criticism that I find to be either generic—meaning that it is agreed on by many scholars including his devoted readers—or relevant to the scope of this thesis. These two issues are his style of writing and argumentation and his neglect of socioeconomic contexts. So, first, concerning the way he writes, it is well known that many find Cavell's style of writing and argumentation to be, as Richard Rorty calls it, 'heavy-handed'.[85] It is often described as dense, obscure and meandering as it can be frustratingly interpretive and exploratory rather than systematic and linear.[86] Complaints about Cavell's style also come from fellow philosophers and even from those who are considered to be his followers. In a commentary on *The Claim of Reason,* Richard Rorty argues that Cavell 'oversophisticates

[83] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 9.

[84] Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 39.

[85] Rorty, 'Cavell on Skepticism', 20.

[86] For example, in a review of *The Claim of Reason*, British philosopher Anthony Kenny harshly describes the book as 'a misshapen, undisciplined amalgam of ill-assorted parts'. See: Anthony Kenny, 'Clouds of Not Knowing: Review of The Claim of Reason by Stanley Cavell', *Times Literary Supplement*, April 1980, https://www.the-tls.co.uk/archive. In another, rather less harsh review, Anthony Lear writes: 'Cavell is deeply concerned with finding a philosophical voice. Unfortunately, this concern undermines him, for while much of the book is charming, there is much that is overwritten and self-conscious. Yet perhaps stylistic difficulty is the inevitable cost of having taken on the remarkable task of welcoming the poets back into the Republic and re-establishing a dialogue between literature and philosophy'. Jonathan Lear, 'Useful Skepticism; Author's Query', *The New York Times*, December 1979, sec. Archives, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/12/02/archives/useful-skepticism-authors-query.html.

his point'. He seems to suggest that Cavell goes through the work of too many scholars and argues over and over again to prove something that the majority of philosophers already agree upon, which is the importance of Wittgenstein and the fact that we should take his work seriously.[87] What Rorty points out is a common trait in Cavell's writing. When we read one of his texts, we are not being exposed to him alone but to the conversation he is having with multiple other philosophers at the same time. He takes us on a philosophical roller-coaster, as he presents different argumentative strands that continuously cross and interrupt one another while being knitted together comprehensively in his mind. We are often disappointed when we expect to eventually land on the ground where we initially started the rollercoaster ride, but we find no such ground in the end. This is why one might observe that Cavell 'rarely gets to the point'.[88] However, the followers of Cavell, although critical, are often charitable in their approach to this difficulty. Many argue that Cavell simply practises what he preaches. His way of writing is his own exploration of philosophy in the romantic language of the ordinary everyday; it is philosophy as an ongoing dialogue. This is what Michael Fischer means when he says that Cavell's style is a philosophical choice.[89] It is part of his endeavour to develop his own voice as a philosopher, and a dismissal of it means risking becoming 'tune-deaf' to that voice.[90] The issue of his style is one that Cavell is aware of; he does not attempt to justify it but nevertheless explains it. He states that there is a difficulty in the way that he sits and thinks, which leads to 'wording by intuition' rather than a technical use of language.[91] In other words, the way Cavell writes is simply the way Cavell thinks. Yet, it is this idiosyncrasy in itself that brings forth even more criticism towards his work. Stephen Mulhall explores how Cavell's interest in developing his own style has made him the victim of the charge of 'self-indulgence', which is often linked to his interest in modernist argumentations.[92] His overuse of parentheses is usually used as 'proof' of such a charge.[93] However, Mulhall argues that Cavell's prose comes from

[87] Rorty, 'Cavell on Skepticism', 20.

[88] Larry Jackson, 'A Different Path: Why Stanley Cavell Won't Get to the Point', *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (November 2015): 503.

[89] Michael Fischer, *Stanley Cavell and Literary Skepticism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[90] Jackson, 'A Different Path', 504.

[91] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 53.

[92] Stephen Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary*, 1st ed. (Oxford University PressOxford, 1999), xii.

[93] Paolo Babbiotti and Michele Ciruzzi ran a quantitative analysis of how much Cavell uses parentheses in comparison to a group of other philosophers, especially after what they define

his involvement in the quest of philosophy as on a quest of finding itself. He adds that his style is not to be viewed as 'purely idiosyncratic stylistic tics, but as manifestations of his conception of the cultural situation in which philosophy finds itself'.[94]

This leads me to the other point of criticism that is often directed at Cavell, which is that even beyond the issue of style, his language shows a 'reluctance to criticise his culture or to confront his society'.[95] Cavell's preoccupation with a modernist concern of philosophy as unravelling and rediscovering itself—especially when it comes to American philosophy—is seen to fail in addressing contextual political issues.[96] This characteristic of his is definitely something that aggravates materialists and postmodernists.[97] In his attempt to distance his view of perfectionism from materialism, he finds himself accused of

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as 'a growth of Cavell's stylistic perfectionism'. Their analysis shows that Cavell indeed records a very high use of parentheses, more than any other philosopher they analysed, even more than Wittgenstein and Austin. See further and closer inspections in: Paolo Babbiotti and Michele Ciruzzi, 'Doing Philosophy as Opening Parentheses: Quantifying the Use of Parentheses in Stanley Cavell's Style', *Inquiry*, December 2022, 1–28.

[94] Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary*, xii.

[95] Jackson, 'A Different Path', 508.

[96] One of my personal points of contention with Cavell lies in his philosophical project of 'America', which severely lacks a decolonial perspective of the USA (which Cavell continuously refers to as 'America'; something that in itself has problematic colonial and imperial connotations). Simon Crtichley points out exactly that in his commentary on what he calls a 'continual *continentalism*' in Cavell's work. He adds that, in his striving towards answering questions about what America (USA) means as a philosophical event and what place it occupies in philosophical discourse, Cavell can be seen to join a political philosophical tradition that imagines America as 'an infinite and empty space, as the wild, uncultivated, unpopulated resource for individual property and capital accumulation'. See: Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism'. Of course, the land of North America as a whole, which many Indigenous peoples refer to as 'Turtle Island', was not empty before European invasions. And the image of it being a utopia, a wild and empty land of opportunity ripe for the picking, a land of alleged idealistic democracy, and a symbol of a dream and a hopeful future is a colonial facade that not only continues to manifest in the rhetoric of American nationalism and Americanophiles but is also dangerously and uncritically normalised through many strands of American philosophy (or philosophy about America). However, this is not to suggest that Cavell has a utopian view of America. He rather, as Critchly points out, has an account of two Americas, a utopia and a dystopia, in which the latter is muddied with decline and nihilism. Yet, I would still insist that his view lacks an acknowledgement of the bloody past that America is built upon, which is perhaps not isolated from its dystopian condition.

[97] One may also perceive Cavell as somewhat old-fashioned and even humanist. He lacks a certain connection with postmodernism and poststructuralism. As pointed out by Paul Standish through discussing Michael Fischer, Cavell discusses the work of philosophers like Derrida on multiple occasions while still maintaining a certain 'reticence' towards poststructuralism. Richard Eldridge and Bernie Rhie argue that a comparison between Cavell and postmodernists like Derrida and Lacan may show the former's work as 'suffer[ing] from a strange aura of untime-

turning his back on socioeconomic affairs as well as being complicit in elevating 'the liberal free agent'.[98] Addressing issues of race is one of the things that his critics consider him to fail at. However, it is almost a well known fact for those who are familiar with Cavell that he indeed had a very clear anti-war and anti-racism stance as an individual.[99] Yet, that does not seem to translate as clearly to his texts, even though a careful consideration of Cavell would reveal many examples of his involvement with issues of social justice and equality. Perhaps this marks one of the limitations of the Cavellian and Emersonian project. However, in the way I and many others read Cavell, questions of politics and justice are found to be at the forefront of his work despite lacking the contextuality that postmodernism and poststructuralism demand. His multiple parables in *The Claim of Reason*, his discussion of Rawls and the social contract, the fact that he insists that his view of perfectionism cannot occur in conditions of conformity to injustice, and his idea of seeking friendship in the other, are all concepts that can be applied to socioeconomic concerns. Cavellians like Malhall come to his defence and argue that this criticism is 'largely misplaced' and dismissive of the real depth and refinement of his work.[100] He further construes that Cavell's philosophical choice does not mean that he is unaware of socioeconomic problems or that he disregards them as irrelevant or uninteresting. It rather means that he has chosen to focus on 'a different approach' that has its own 'virtues'.[101] He then gives the example of the Carus Lectures as evidence of Cavell's interest in issues that are undeniably political.[102] One of the main premises of this thesis is to show the potential in what Mulhall is suggesting. On more than one occasion, this thesis showcases how Cavell's philosophy can embrace issues of oppression, discrimination and inequality—not in the sense of giving solutions to them but as a way to deal with ineradicable hardship and stubborn injustice. Later in the text, I argue for the issue of criticising education's Western philosophical roots from within the Western

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liness'. However, they also clarify that one must also remember that 'poststructuralist antihumanism is itself but another (very sophisticated) expression of one of the deepest and most characteristic of human impulses'. Nevertheless, there is no denying that the human is a central idea for Cavell. See: Richard Eldridge and Bernard Rhie, eds., *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies: Consequences of Skepticism* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 5.

[98] Stewart, 'The Avoidance of Stanley Cavell', 141; Paul Standish, 'Education for Grown-Ups, a Religion for Adults: Scepticism and Alterity in Cavell and Levinas', *Ethics and Education* 2, no. 1 (March 2007): 75.

[99] Jackson mentions Cavell's participation in anti-racism committees, his involvement in launching a program in black studies at Harvard as well as his writing about the Vietnam War.

[100] Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary*, 188.

[101] Mulhall, 189.

[102] The Carus Lectures are those that are included in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*.

tradition itself. The same goes for relying on the modernism and humanism of Cavell to deal with the modernist and humanist condition of education. This way of working with Cavell is possible and has been done. I mention here the example of a recent article by Bhrigupati Singh titled: 'What Comes After Postcolonial Theory?', which argues that Cavell's 'trajectory of writing suggests ways of remapping geographies of thought, in ways that could be significant for what comes after postcolonial theory, as a path yet to be found or retraced'.[103]

Finally, I would like to point out the two ways in which scholars approach the work of Cavell, as I see it. These could also be considered the two sides of Cavell's scholarship. The first is the side of ordinary language philosophy, especially his discussions of Ludwig Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin. Some scholars who mainly work with this perspective include Sandra Laugier, Alice Crary, Stephen Mulhall, Richard Eldridge, Cora Diamond, Stanley Bates, and Martin Gustafsson.[104] The second side of Cavell's work is his perfectionist and transcendental perspective. Some scholars who take interest in this perspective are Naoko Saito, Paul Standish and Russell B. Goodman.[105] In addition to these two main perspectives, there are also those who took particular interest in Cavell's political philosophy like Andrew Norris, or his work on film and literature like Áine Mahon (Áine Kelly) and Andrew Taylor.[106] However, these ways of

[103] Bhrigupati Singh, 'What Comes After Postcolonial Theory?', *Sophia* 62, no. 3 (September 2023): 577–606.

[104] For chapters written by Stephen Mulhall, Richard Eldridge and Stanley Bates, see: Richard Eldridge, ed., *Stanley Cavell*, Contemporary Philosophy in Focus (Cambridge University Press, 2003). For chapters by Sandra Laugier, Alice Crary and Cora Diamond, see: Goodman, *Contending with Stanley Cavell*; Alice Crary and Sanford Shieh, eds., *Reading Cavell* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006). For further examples, also see: Sandra Laugier and David LaRocca, *Television with Stanley Cavell in Mind* (University of Exeter Press, 2023); Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary*. For work by Martin Gustafsson, see: Martin Gustafsson, 'Perfect Pitch and Austinian Examples: Cavell, McDowell, Wittgenstein, and the Philosophical Significance of Ordinary Language', *Inquiry* 48, no. 4 (August 2005): 356–389; Martin Gustafsson, 'Familiar Words in Unfamiliar Surroundings: Davidson's Malapropisms, Cavell's Projections', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 19, no. 5 (December 2011): 643–668.

[105] For chapters written by Naoko Saito, Paul Standish and Russell B. Goodman, see: Naoko Saito and Paul Standish, *Stanley Cavell and the Education of Grownups* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012). Also see: Russell B. Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[106] Andrew Norris, *Becoming Who We Are: Politics and Practical Philosophy in the Work of Stanley Cavell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Andrew Norris, ed., *The Claim to*

approaching Cavell are usually intertwined, considering that his writings on issues of scepticism, romanticism and transcendence are dovetailed with his ordinary language philosophy. Therefore, scholars like, for example, Standish and Goodman as well as Eldridge have published work discussing and unifying both of the main two sides that I mentioned earlier. Therefore, although this thesis heavily focuses on the transcendental aspect of Cavell, it was not only inevitable but also necessary to explore his work on scepticism, criteria and ordinary language to lay a solid foundation of his concepts of self and other that are the main components of my discussion of education as a perfectionist journey.[107]

Chapter Outline

This dissertation consists of six chapters. In this introductory chapter, I have introduced the aims and premise of my research. I then went through what philosophers of education have addressed in regards to the condition of education today: their discussion of the neoliberal dominance in the way we view and approach education and convey efforts to address education through issues of morality, justice and ethics. I then put forward works that question the need for having aims of education and introduced Stanley Cavell as the philosopher that I follow in this thesis. I have provided a summary of Cavell's work in a way that hopefully familiarises this text's reader(s) with the philosophical foundations of what will be discussed further in later chapters.

Community: Essays on Stanley Cavell and Political Philosophy (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006); Andrew Taylor and Áine Kelly, eds., *Stanley Cavell, Literature, and Film: The Idea of America* (Oxford, UNITED KINGDOM: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012).

[107] In this thesis, I rely a great deal on the work of Naoko Saito and Paul Standish, particularly in relation to the transcendental aspect of Cavell's work. I do not focus on the Wittgensteinian side, not because I do not appreciate or value it, but simply because I was brought to Cavell through transcendentalism, and it has remained my focus, my 'port of call', if you will. Also, after months of exploring the academic literature on Cavell, I quickly came to the conclusion that the Wittgensteinian aspect of his philosophy is widely and thoroughly explored and appreciated by Cavellians. It was much harder to find literature that focused primarily on his Emersonian thesis. So, this thesis is an attempt to explore the possibility of putting the focus mainly on this transcendental Emersonian project. In the end, this is not a thesis about Cavell but one about a specific Cavellian idea.

In chapter 2: Education and its problems, I discuss the philosophical roots of the problems of education today. I particularly recognise two main issues, which are Western philosophy's enthusiasm for fixed ends and its dismissal of the problem of the other. I begin my discussion by addressing the concept of the rational planning of education and how it is plagued with instrumental postulates that undermine the subjectivity of those who go through education systems. I elaborate further on the issue of the aims of education and how it is related to the philosophical issue of means and ends. Finally, I introduce the concept of the other and why it challenges the philosophical grounding of education.

Chapter 3: The Perfectionist Journey, works as an introduction to Cavell's idea of Emersonian moral perfectionism (EMP). I clarify that it is a process of self-overcoming and self-reliance that does not seek a final end. It is not a theory but a philosophical outlook or tradition that is founded in an open-ended list of text. In this chapter I also explore the main features of EMP like nonconformity, the struggle for intelligibility, and romanticism. Then, I convey the idea of education as a journey as an approach that is grounded in EMP and sees education as a process of continuous growth in expanding circles occuring in the here and now of the ordinary.

In chapter 4: A Journey of the Self, I first explore the world-self relationship and draw on Cavell's romantic arguments about the idea of understanding our place in the world as part of our journey. Then, I examine the concept of lostness and how the perfectionist journey starts from a place of crisis that pushes us to reawaken to our position and encourages us to go through a transfiguration and transformation. I then discuss the notion of the Cavellian voice through Cavell's engagement with film. I highlight how finding our voice is one of the most important elements of the perfectionist journey of the self in education.

In chapter 5: A Journey with the Other, I convey that the journey is not taken by the self alone but it is always accompanied by the 'other'. I address the Cavellian idea of the other in detail mostly through drawing on *The Claim of Reason*'s fourth and final part. Through this, I bring attention to two parables from his book to explore the concepts of knowing the other and seeing the human as human. I then expand further on the ideas of acknowledgement and human finitude. Then I discuss the concept of friendship in EMP and the high regard that Cavell places on having perfectionist conversations with the other as a friend.

Finally, chapter 6: Braving the Seas: Education in Light of Emersonian Moral Perfectionism focuses more on education. In it, I re-evaluate the condition of education today again, but this time, in the light of EMP. I explore how ideas of shame and apathy can manifest in education systems that fail to acknowledge the subjectivity of students and teachers. I then lay out how the concept of education as a journey can aid us in surviving this condition. I explore the importance of justice in education and the value of nonconformity for the sake of the self and the other. In this chapter, I also identify teachers as being on a journey of their own and attempt to identify an idea of the perfectionist teacher. Finally, I explore the aesthetic and romantic value of education as a well as the importance of text and literature in any Cavellian approach to education.

Chapter (2): Education and its Problems

‘I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing’.

(An account of Socrates in Plato’s *Apology*)

‘You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view… until you climb into his skin and walk around in it’.

(Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*)

I argued earlier that education is heavily anchored by politics and governance, which makes the dominant neoliberal paradigms of today very prominent in the way we think about and approach education. This neoliberal view has left us with a staunchly instrumental approach to education in the 21st century. However, the susceptibility of education to being further drawn towards instrumentalism through a principle of rational planning is deeply rooted in its philosophical grounding as well. In this chapter, I argue that education today is entrenched in a philosophical tradition that facilitates the normalisation of an unbalanced reductionist view of knowledge as a means to a fixed and predefined end. Furthermore, I clarify why this view is problematic, how it makes education an enterprise designed for a specific type of learner and how it excludes that which does not fit a universalised notion of subjectivity: that which is other.

The Rationality and Planning of Education

The neoliberal impact on education today is clear and undeniable. It nourishes a strong competition-based educational model and a return to quantitative empiricism as the benchmark for educational policy. The brisk growth of technological advancements and knowledge economies in the 21st century has been an added factor that imposes a sense of urgency for immediate results and adaptive changes. This sense of urgency brings about what Gert Biesta calls a 'measurement culture', which aims to reduce education to an evidence-based practice that can be factually understood through measuring its outcomes and their correlated inputs.[108] Within this culture of measurement, *effectiveness* is the instrumental value that is used to express the ability of bringing about what is deemed 'desirable outcomes'.[109] This perspective prompts a quest taken on by policy-makers and national educational reforms for detecting 'what works' in order to increase what they deem effective.[110] In light of this current reality of education, the questions that come to mind are what counts as 'working' and 'effective', for whom and according to whom? For the proponents of the instrumental notion of 'what works', the answer to these questions is the application of even more enhanced evaluation tools and specialist knowledge. The plea here is for the instrumental approach of evidence-based educational planning to be dominant in order to continuously test and analyse these pre-

[108] Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, 10–11.

[109] The use of measurements in education is demonstrated in policy-makers' interest in international and comparative studies. The most prominent studies today are PISA (the Programme for International Student Assessment), TIMSS (the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), and PIRLS (the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study). These worldwide studies are developed by international organisations and cooperatives, and they rely on standardised testing to measure students' performance in particular subjects like mathematics, reading and science within a certain age group. These studies are taken as an indicator of school effectiveness; thus, they are adopted as the barometer for 'what works' by policy-makers and national educational reforms. See Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, 10–14; 'PISA - PISA', accessed 7 October 2022, https://www.oecd.org/pisa/; 'TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center', accessed 7 October 2022, https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/index.html.

[110] Ian Sanderson, 'Is It "What Works" That Matters? Evaluation and Evidence-based Policy-making', *Research Papers in Education* 18, no. 4 (December 2003): 331–345; Gert Biesta, 'Why "What Works" Won't Work: Evidence-Based Practice and the Democratic Deficit in Educational Research', *Educational Theory* 57, no. 1 (February 2007): 1–22.

suppositions to develop better ways to turn hypotheses into productive applications.[111] Paul Smeyers argues that what is strange about this plea for what is supposedly 'well-designed' studies is that it is aware of the many elements that need to be taken into consideration to solve a problem in education; yet it ignores them.[112] Therefore, it intentionally underestimates the complexity of what it is trying to analyse. Furthermore, it also assumes that a scientific and technical approach is always the answer to any challenge regarding the human experience. This argument is built upon reductionist notions of the complex experience of knowledge and of reality in general. Paul Standish argues that we need to consider and question to what extent a favourable stance towards rational planning is influenced by the scientism and technicism of our modern times.[113] He clarifies what he means by *scientism* as 'the tendency to treat all manner of things as if they were the appropriate objects of empirical and systematic investigation', and he defines *technicism* as the assumption that 'all difficulties are in principle to be overcome by a technical solution'.[114] At this stage of the argument, it is necessary to clarify that criticism of instrumentalism is not an attempt to label it as a futile or an adverse notion. As I mentioned earlier, instrumentalism is inevitable and unavoidable, especially in systematic learning domains. However, practising caution and constant reflection concerning the extent to which factual and instrumental approaches dominate our relationship with education is crucial.

Today, the idea that education is an essential tool for the prosperity of humankind persists as a ubiquitous mantra. Yet, an almost similarly familiar idea is how it is not fulfilling its purpose in one domain or another. A fair amount of research within and outside of academia is dedicated to drawing attention to problems and proposing solutions. However, the majority of these solutions and the questions that underlie them function within a notion of education as means to an end.[115] In many cases, the solutions in question create a cycle of planning and assessment that breeds certain standards for learning processes, students and teachers alike. These standards usually focus on what is technical

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[111] Sanderson, 'Is It "What Works" That Matters?', 335–336.

[112] Smeyers, 'The Relevance of Irrelevant Research: The Irrelevance of Relevant Research', 14.

[113] Standish, 'Education Without Aims?'

[114] Standish, 41.

[115] See Roth, 'Making Ourselves Intelligible—Rendering Ourselves Efficacious and Autonomous, without Fixed Ends'; Standish, 'Education Without Aims?'

and (ac)countable at the expense of what is intellectual, moral, critical, creative, personal or even situated.[116] That is not to say that research that raises red flags in regards to this cycle of planning, assessment and standardisation is absent. On the contrary, there has been continuous discussion about how education should serve more overarching goals that extend beyond economic prosperity. Many domains within the humanities and social sciences argue for a need to expand on the aims of education by considering issues of ethics, morality and social justice.[117] In my introduction, I mentioned examples of philosophers of education who have written on these topics. After all, criticism of the instrumentalisation of education towards standards that are preoccupied with competitiveness and measurable outcomes is not uncommon. However, there is arguably a general acceptance—even within these discussions—of the idea that education serves specific predefined aims.[118] Even issues of the value of education are often oriented towards discussions of its aims and goals. It is not unusual to see questions about the nature and definition of education drifting towards a discussion about what education is *for* and how we can set up good *aims* or argue for moral, ethical and just educational *ends*. This tendency to accept the finality of educational ends is significantly linked to a research environment that regards a high value to positivism and empiricism. Consequently, educators become preoccupied with technical solutions that aspire to specific final ends rather than grounding themselves in more complex and in-depth questions about knowledge. Allen and Goddard argue that the high status that is regarded to 'the empirical reality of education' today is due to a reliance on humanist modernism, which fails to provide the needed depth to justify education as something *beyond* its practice and techniques.[119]

In many ways, modern education is a particular phenomenon; it is a historically and politically structured *construct.* We have many different philosophical, cultural and systematic approaches to education around the world today, and yet, there is still a level of hegemony that engulfs them all. This hegemony is dominated by Western thought, which is particularly prevalent, simply due

[116] Matthew Clarke and Anne M. Phelan, *Teacher Education and the Political : The Power of Negative Thinking* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; Routledge, 2017), 60.
[117] See: Roger Marples, ed., *The Aims of Education* (London, United States: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999).
[118] Atli Harðarson, 'The Teacher Is a Learner: Dewey on Aims in Education', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50, no. 5 (April 2018): 539.
[119] Allen and Goddard, *Education and Philosophy*, 134.

to the immense 'success' of Western imperialism.[120] Therefore, education struggles with similar if not the same theoretical problems that ails Western philosophy itself because it is dominated by a Western philosophical grounding. Despite the philosophical revolutions that dismantled Western philosophy's humanist dogma of modernity since Nietzsche, education is arguably still a very humanist, specifically modernist, endeavour.[121] It functions within a modern realm of efficiency where means lead to what is presupposed to be humanity's desirable ends. With that, the human subjects themselves become means in what very often feels to them like an economic machine. Modernity undeniably brought along a lot of what we consider to be *good* things. Today, it is hard to imagine our lives without the many medical marvels, technological achievements or even legal and social freedoms that modernity has bestowed upon us. Yet, modernity exists with its fair share of problems that contribute to a long history of humans brutalising both human and non-human subjects.[122] The seeds of these problems can be traced back to the origin story of modernity as it existed in intellectual movements that date back to the 17th and 18th century, particularly to what we know as the Enlightenment, which brought about a more rigid notion of rational humanism. The Enlightenment replaced the more relaxed and open humanism of the Renaissance with a decontextualised and purely rationalised notion of the human experience.[123] Drawing on Stephen Toulmin, Allan and Goddard lay out an example of this by discussing the

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[120] See Willinsky, *Learning to Divide the World*.

[121] The major philosophical works that are often labelled as postmodern (although it is a contested definition), which have come about since the mid-19th century, broke down the dominant knowledge, practices and narratives of the age of Enlightenment (the period between the late 17th century up to the early 19th century). It arguably all started with Friedrich Nietzche, who questioned the foundations of Western metaphysics, ontology and epistemology and criticised notions of being, truth and morality. His work, along with Sigmund Freud's critique of consciousness and Karl Marx's critique of political economy, paved the way for immensely significant postmodern and poststructuralist work that continued to question the foundations of philosophy and with it, the place of subjectivity and truth in our intellectual practices. To mention a few: Martin Heidegger's work on being and pre-ontology, Michel Foucault's genealogy, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, Gilles Deleuze's difference and repetition and Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of the other and many more. Later, we also witnessed the rise of posthumanism, which continued to break free from the fixed notions of humanism by looking at the concept of subjectivity and agency beyond anthropocentrism and paying attention to nonhuman agency. For further reading, see: Thomas de Zengotita, *Postmodern Theory and Progressive Politics: Toward a New Humanism*, Political Philosophy and Public Purpose (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019); Robert C. Solomon and David L. Sherman, *The Blackwell Guide to Continental Philosophy* (Oxford, UK ; Blackwell Pub., 2003); Carol A. Taylor and Christina Hughes, eds., *Posthuman Research Practices in Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016).

[122] Allen and Goddard, *Education and Philosophy*, 100–102.

[123] Allen and Goddard, 103.

idea of individuality in Montaigne (who lived and worked in the 16th century) and Descartes (who is often regarded as the father of modern rationalism). For Montaigne, an individual understands his individuality 'in relation to a world of other independent persons with whom he [has] commonalities of experience'. In contrast, Descartes's individual is 'trapped in his own head'; thus, his individuality is a 'purely intellectual phenomenon'.[124] This example foreshadows not only a problematic path for modernism's commitment to an abstract and rational endeavour after certainty but also a flawed relationship with concepts of subjectivity and 'the other'. In its attempt to contain the human experience within a theoretical and rational framework, the humanist modernist foundations of education rely on postulates pertaining to subjectivity, which are undeniably underlain by notions of the finality of ends. Jacques Derrida describes Western philosophy as 'logocentric', which means that it functions based on the possibility of a final end or truth.[125] In that, it confers a sense of primacy to objective truth and presumes the existence of an absolute true knowledge.[126] The problem with this is that in its desire to reach *logos,* or an ultimate true knowledge, Western philosophy often overlooks the endless possibilities of subjective meaning.[127] Its enthusiasm for *truth* allows stable categories of thought as well as unified and universalised notions of subjectivity. Consequently, it facilitates a system of thought that fosters postulates and relies on presupposed assumptions about reality. This further puts the idea that education must serve specific predefined aims in question; yet, at the same time, explains its prevalence. One of the aspects of modernism is also the substitution of the transcendent *truth* of God with another archetype of an apotheosised truth like reason, science or humanity in itself. It can be argued that this placement of science and/or reason as a sanctified dogmatic truth is felt in the way evidence-based educational planning is approached today.[128] The same goes for postulates of the *common sense* of humanity or culture, or what Peters and Besley refer to as 'metanarratives' that legitimise our institutions

[124] Allen and Goddard, 103; Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
[125] John Coker, 'Jacques Derrida', in *The Blackwell Guide to Continental Philosophy*, ed. Robert C. Solomon and David L. Sherman (Oxford, UK ; Blackwell Pub., 2003), 265.
[126] See: Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
[127] Coker, 'Jacques Derrida'.
[128] For a discussion about why truth cannot be a goal of inquiry in education see: Klas Roth, 'Some Thoughts for a New Critical Language of Education: Truth, Justification and Deliberation', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 35, no. 6 (July 2009): 685–703.

and practices.[129] They add that 'education is not merely one of the institutions that have been shaped or legitimated by the dominant metanarratives; at the lower levels, it has been instrumentally involved with their systematic reproduction, elucidation and preservation, and at the higher level, it has been concerned with their ideological production, dissemination, and refinement'.[130] The reality is that in many ways, in order for evidence-based practices to determine and test effectiveness, their desirable ends are—in many ways—based on assumptions. What counts as 'working' and 'effective' is assumed and, in particular, built upon laying aside the challenges that *other* minds pose to the planning process. Therefore, the whole cycle of planning, assessing and standardising is bound to leave many individuals behind, and it creates education systems that are designed for specific types of learners and educators. Donald Davidson argues that when faced by the 'knowledge of other minds', many philosophers turn to a reductionist approach that flattens that knowledge in a way that it becomes absorbed by a primary self-knowledge or sometimes a basic knowledge of an external reality.[131] In his influential work 'Three Varieties of Knowledge', Davidson states:

> '[T]he Cartesian or Humean skeptic about the external world holds that it is all too obvious that we can get along without knowledge of the world of nature...The skeptic about other minds is equally convinced that we can get along without knowledge of other minds'.[132]

The idea of other minds potentially poses a strong challenge to education's modern humanist foundation. The other is a concept that is entangled with notions of meaning and subjectivity; and it possesses a tremendous historical and political dimension. It ties directly to the questions that keep raising them-

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[129] Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley, *Building Knowledge Cultures : Education and Development in the Age of Knowledge Capitalism* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 42.

[130] Peters and Besley, 42.

[131] The expression: 'other minds' is an Anglo-American term. Davidson specifies three types of knowledge, particularly empirical knowledge, which are: knowledge of our own minds, knowledge of other minds, and knowledge of an external reality. He argues that we often tend to reduce one or two of these types into a single primary type, and asserts that the history of philosophy from Descartes to the present is marked by the failure of reductive proposals of knowledge; and if this problem is no longer discussed today, it is because it has been deemed 'intractable'. See Donald Davidson, 'Three Varieties of Knowledge', in *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[132] Davidson, 'Three Varieties of Knowledge' 4.

selves in the course of this text, which are: who decides on the aims of education and for whom? I find the discussion of the other to be essential to the idea of means and ends in education. Therefore, in this chapter, I seek to raise a few issues that take an organically established position in my thoughts when I think about the education of today. These issues may seem to beg different questions and perform on different ontological and epistemological levels. However, they are arguably deeply connected, and together they provoke a demand for an alternative approach. The first issue is the idea of the end of education, which underlies the principle of rational planning and its tribe of instrumental technicist paradigms that are, in many ways, deemed essential for our modern life. An encounter with this issue peels the veil off of the assumed reality within which education tends to function. I argue that it is a universalised reality that is based upon unified notions of subjectivity, which leads to the adoption of reductive and exclusionary approaches to knowledge. Therefore, it is a reality that is naturally challenged by what is 'other', which is the second issue that I would like to raise. Problematising these issues sheds light on why we need to pay attention to the way we think about and approach the idea of education today and sets in motion an attempt to consider an alternative way.

Means, Ends and Aims

The tendency to view education as a technical process of means and ends creates a somewhat reductive notion that allows us to think about it mainly in terms of teaching, learning and curriculum.[133] Elevated attention is given to education when it is reduced to a notion that is mainly (or perhaps only) represented by these aspects. Therefore, regardless of efforts to also consider a broader image, like education as a human right or as social and cultural reproduction, the main focus is still on instrumental goals. Gert Biesta argues that the dominant discourses of education today are turning away from questions about the purposes of education and instead focusing on 'how to effectively

[133] Deborah Osberg and Gert Biesta, 'Beyond Curriculum: Groundwork for a Non-Instrumental Theory of Education', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 53, no. 1 (January 2021): 57–70.

accomplish particular educational outcomes'.[134] This focus renders education in a state of dis(re)pair and leads to an understanding of education that fails to address the complexity of the human condition in modern times.[135]

Regarding education as a technological process and an *instrument* towards a specific fixed set of ends implies that these ends are external to the process, and this idea potentially disregards the value of education as an end in itself. In his influential book *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey argues against aims of education that are 'imposed from without'.[136] He argues that when the aims of education are external with only an instrumental connection to its means, the activities within the process of education become a mere necessary evil towards rigid and statically imposed aims.[137] A preoccupation with ideas such as performativity and effectiveness as the aim of an educative process could potentially hinder the 'freeing activity' that education could be. Dewey further opposes the idea of an ultimate final end/aim and reminds us that only persons have aims, not an abstract idea like education. Paul Standish makes a similar argument when he states: 'To ask for the aims of education may be like asking for the aims of a town'.[138] He points out a 'grammatical oddness' in asking about the aims of Aberdeen for example. A town contains multiple entities, practices and projects that have their own purpose and intentions and cannot be summed up by an overarching aim. Some may argue that the aim of a town is the mission statement of its council, but Standish suggests that this implies an inappropriate prejudicial favouritism for a particular group.[139] I argue that this is especially crucial when this group is in a position of power, which mirrors the detrimental potential of viewing technical aims that are imposed by decision makers, policy planners and educational management as *the* aims of education.

While Dewey problematises aims that are imposed from *without*, he argues that true aims are those that belong *within* the educative process. In other words, they are the ends-in-view of activities in the process. They are tentative, hypothetical and mainly useful for organising activities; thus, they are in

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[134] Osberg and Biesta, 58; Biesta, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*.

[135] See Osberg and Biesta, 'Beyond Curriculum', 58.

[136] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education : An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 100–110.

[137] Dewey, 106.

[138] Standish, 'Education Without Aims?', 41.

[139] Standish, 41.

a state of constant change and revision throughout the educational process.[140] These types of aims are ends and means at the same time, as every end becomes means for the next end. Dewey finds the distinction between means and ends to be functional rather than metaphysical—means and ends portray the same reality.[141] What we call means is the next action towards a temporary end, which itself becomes the means for the next anticipated temporary end. In *Democracy and Education,* Dewey states:

> '[T]he external idea of the aim leads to a separation of means from ends, while an end which grows up within an activity as plan for its direction is always both ends and means, the distinction being only one of convenience. Every means is a temporary end until we have attained it. Every end becomes a means of carrying activity further as soon as it is achieved. We call it end when it marks off the future direction of the activity in which we are engaged; means when it marks off the present direction.'[142]

This consecutive dance of means and ends within the educational process brings forth what Dewey calls the 'principle of the continuity of experience';[143] it is a representation of *growth* through education; or—in better terms—it is the process of growth itself. This makes education a continuous process that goes on without a final fixed end—it is one with growth. The idea of education as growth implies a trajectory that is not linear or goal-oriented, but one that exists as a *whole* that expands infinitely in all directions.[144] Naoko Saito argues that this whole is 'not of an absolute totality, but a whole that always leaves room for infinite space, the realm of the unknowable and the uncertain beyond the existing reach of our knowledge'.[145] In that, it is a 'constant process of conversion', which cannot be entirely grasped by 'the language of standardisation, quantification, and moralisation'.[146] In her book *The Gleam Of Light*, Saito draws our attention to the closeness between the Deweyan concept of growth and the Emersonian idea of perfection. She clarifies that Dewey describes ends as tentative concluding points that compose a new beginning of 'a further state of affairs'.[147] Similarly, the path of perfection for Emerson

[140] Harðarson, 'The Teacher Is a Learner', 542.
[141] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 75.
[142] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 106.
[143] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 35.
[144] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 76.
[145] Saito, 77.
[146] Saito, 3.
[147] John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 1925, 85; Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 76.

moves in expanding connected circles, 'once we think we have completed a circle, another yet unattained horizon awaits us'.[148] In *Circles*, Emerson writes:

> 'The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary picture is repeated without end. It is the highest emblem in the cipher of the world...Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon, and under every deep a lower deep opens. This fact, as far as it symbolises the moral fact of the Unattainable, the flying Perfect, around which the hands of man can never meet, at once the inspirer and the condemner of every success, may conveniently serve us to connect many illustrations of human power in every department. There are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volatile. Permanence is but a word of degrees'.[149]

Through this naturalistic perspective of growth, Emerson illustrates a holistic moral approach, a sense of transcendence where nothing truly ends because ends in themselves are new beginnings. Saito bridges Dewey with Emerson in the light of Stanley Cavell's Emersonian moral perfectionism to illuminate a space for us to see education beyond the standards of the dominant structures of our times. Following this idea of 'growth in expanding circles', Cavell describes 'having a self' as endlessly moving from one final self to the next one, seeking to attain an unattained self.[150] It is a process that is marked by 'goallessness', which is what characterises Emersonian perfectionism as a process of perfecting the self while refusing the notion of a final perfectibility.[151] I think that Emersonian moral perfectionism is a good medium for exploring the theoretical possibility of an education without fixed ends. Klas Roth argues that in the Cavellian view of education, a human's relationship with themself and others is better understood in moral terms rather than epistemological ones. Yet, the Cavellian 'call for morality' is not made 'in the sense of fixed principles or finite ends or of knowledge as the basis for action; it is instead made as a 'a call for morality in terms of self-transcendence'.[152] Thus, EMP

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[148] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 78. Also see Emerson's original discussion in Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Circles', in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Major Prose*, ed. Ronald A Bosco and Joel Myerson (Harvard University Press, 2015), 152–163.

[149] Emerson, 'Circles', 152–153.

[150] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 76–78.

[151] Naoko Saito, 'The Gleam of Light: Initiation, Prophecy, and Emersonian Moral Perfectionism', in *Stanley Cavell and the Education of Grownups*, ed. Naoko Saito and Paul Standish (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 173.

[152] Roth, 'Stanley Cavell on Philosophy, Loss, and Perfectionism', 396.

offers a prospect for us to think about and approach learning as a deeply personal experience. It is a philosophy of self-intelligibility that pays attention to finding one's way instead of taking predetermined routes towards predetermined fixed ends. I will later come back to this idea and explain why I think it has the potential to provide us with an alternative way to think about and consider education.

The Emersonian view of growth as an open-ended expansion cannot be questioned in terms of 'growth towards what?' or 'what is the end of growth?'. This type of questioning, as Saito argues, demonstrates 'a presupposition that there are certain definable moral sources and foundations that we can ultimately strike'.[153] In other words, a reality that is built upon the finality of ends is one that requires assumptions about the viability and validity of those ends to actually exist. Therefore, if the idea of final ends is a mere myth that does not truly exist in nature, then when we place it as a building block of our education systems, we are manufacturing a reductive and limited construct that is fated to be defective and exclusionary. This reductive reality is exactly what an education that is built for standardisation is structured upon. However, I argue that the assumptions and postulates that underlie education do not only concern instrumentalism, which philosophers of education are often critical of, but they also plague a lot of the non-instrumental solutions that they argue for. I mentioned earlier that one of the shortcomings of an education that relies on the finality of ends is underestimating the endless possibilities of subjective meaning and the issue of the other, which I think is an idea that tends to be underemphasized even within arguments that advocate for a non-instrumental approach.

[153] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 79.

An Assumed Reality and That Which is Other

Many philosophical movements adopt a concept of 'education of the whole' as a way to oppose and resist the 'narrowness' and over-specialisation of instrumental education.[154] It is a concept that varies in its applications; many of these are not void of aims but tend to argue for a holistic and generic educational aim like rational autonomy, self-fulfilment, happiness, or moral and social commitment, to mention a few. Yet, these seemingly alluring ideas are not exempt from mishaps or distortions. The tendency to slip back into the trap of the essentiality of closed conclusions is a prominent issue with these types of approaches because they remain faithful to totalising notions of rationality. The idea of autonomy as an educational aim is a good example of that.[155] Other concepts with notions that can mirror the idea of self-transformation and growth as education are charged with similar degenerations. *Bildung* for example is a concept that enjoys a fair amount of favourability in western and northern Europe as an idea that focuses on growth and self-overcoming. Yet, it is continuously criticised for harbouring a problematic individualism, a tendency towards universalism, elitism and a naive faith in progress.[156] These criticisms and similar variations of them seem to be a common feature in many holistic approaches and other applications of education for the whole person.[157] Particularly, a tendency for universalism and totalitarianism, in addition to problematic concepts of the self, seem to be prominent distortions. Therefore, I find a discussion about subjectivity and notions of the self, the other, and the self in relation to the other to be crucial.

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[154] Paul Standish, 'Postmodernism and the Education of the Whole Person', *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 29, no. 1 (March 1995): 123.

[155] Standish, 'Postmodernism and the Education of the Whole Person'.

[156] Claudia Schumann, 'Aversive Education: Emersonian Variations on "Bildung"', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 51, no. 5 (April 2019): 489.

[157] See Naoko Saito and Tomohiro Akiyama, 'On the Education of the Whole Person', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, July 2022, 1–9 for a discussion of examples from Japan of some applications of education of the whole person and some of their 'miseducative' features. Saito and Akiyama follow their criticism by reworking an alternative way based on Cavell's Emersonian moral perfectionism.

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that the principle of rational planning heavily relies on an assumed reality that is based upon unified notions of subjectivity. However, this dependency on assumptions goes beyond being a blind-spot of a single rational principle; it is a fundamental issue in the philosophical grounding of education in general. Thus, stemming from a universalised notion of subjectivity comes the challenge of the 'other', which confronts even some philosophies that attempt to free themselves from excessive methods of instrumentalism and standardisation. I say this because I think that even when many philosophical approaches toward education claim to be inclusive of the idea of the other and sceptical about the justification of their postulates, they still fall short. Many non-instrumental approaches to education lack a deeper consideration of the other, and by that, I mean a consideration that expands to what is viewed as unfathomable and invisible about human subjectivity. Donald Davidson puts it aptly when he says: 'It is striking the extent to which philosophers, even those who have been skeptics about the possibility of justifying beliefs about the external world, have put aside these doubts when they have come to consider the problem of other minds'.[158]

This issue of the other can be traced back to Western philosophy's dependency on convictions and assumptions. The *other* poses questions about the justification of those convictions in a world that is, as Davidson puts it, 'independent of our minds' and 'containing other people with thoughts of their own, and endless things besides'.[159] In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell construes: 'Skepticism meant to find the other, search others out with certainty. Instead it closes them out', in that we 'withhold' ourselves from an 'attunement' with the other, with their words and expression of their condition.[160] This search for certainty that discloses the other and relies on assumptions was labelled by Emmanuel Levinas as deeply rooted in the ontological foundation of Western thought. Levinas argues that ontology is 'not accomplished in the triumph of human beings over their condition but in the very tension where this condition is assumed'.[161] Further, he points out how this tendency creates an approach to knowledge that is dependent on universalism. He argues that since

[158] Davidson, 'Three Varieties of Knowledge', 206.

[159] Donald Davidson, 'The Problem of Objectivity', *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie* 57, no. 2 (1995): 203.

[160] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 84–85.

[161] Emmanuel Levinas, 'Is Ontology Fundamental?', in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan Theodoor Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi, Studies in Continental Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 3.

Plato, Western philosophy has understood the being and reflected on the particular 'with reference to the universal'.[162] Cavell calls this claim of speaking 'universally' of the discovery of the bases of existence, 'the arrogance of philosophy'.[163] In a way, any discussion of desirable outcomes of education, even those that advocate for a non-instrumental education are at the risk of the universalism trap, especially when it comes to assumptions about the subjectivity of the human subject in education (pupils, teachers, other educators). Davidson asserts this idea by arguing: 'The philosophical conception of subjectivity is burdened with a history and a set of assumptions about the nature of mind and meaning that sever the meaning of an utterance or the content of a thought...from questions about external reality'.[164] It is that which is external and outside of our self and our grasp of the world that seems to bewilder us and make us long for finality. Afterall, it is human nature to keep asking the big questions even when we know that some answers are impossible. We naturally possess an anxiety about what is incomplete and unknown to us; it is an anxiety of what is other. Therefore, when we cannot accept that other as it is, we might be inclined to reduce it to something that is more familiar and closer to the self. In *The Trace of the Other*, Levinas describes Western philosophy as 'struck with a horror of the other that remains other'—hence, its fixation on disclosing the other and categorising its attitudes in an attempt to defuse its otherness.[165] He deems our inherited philosophical thought as forever returning to its own self-consciousness as he sees Western philosophy to be a tradition of thought that starts from the self first, then moves to the outside world afterwards.[166] Therefore, this tradition thinks of the other as an entity that should be a reflection of the self—thus, something to be worked out and deciphered in order to rid it of its otherness. This approach conveys a tendency to dominate the other as a way to relieve us of the discomfort of facing the other qua the unknown.[167] The Levinasian concept of the other challenges reductive approaches to education via being first and foremost an inquiry into metaphysics and ontology. It questions the foundation of our thinking about existence and provokes us to consider that which is outside of ourselves and

[162] Levinas, 1–5.
[163] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 3.
[164] Davidson, 'Three Varieties of Knowledge', 218–219.
[165] Emmanuel Levinas, 'The Trace of the Other', in *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 346.
[166] Levinas, 346.
[167] Levinas, 346–347.

our way of thinking about the world. It reminds us that there is always going to be another way to think about and understand knowledge and education.

Levinas describes the Other as the 'radical alterity' that always exists outside of the self and always remains other. He uses the word 'Other' with a capital 'O' to refer to the absolute other.[168] An 'I' and an 'Other' do not form a totality, but they come in proximity to each other in a face-to-face encounter. This confrontation does not bridge the difference between I and the Other but maintains it. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas says:

> 'The Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign; his face in which his epiphany is produced and which appeals to me breaks with the world that can be common to us, whose virtualities are inscribed in our nature and developed by our existence'.[169]

The Other is a totally strange entity; it cannot be moulded and altered into something that resembles us and our common sense. Its presence has an 'incomprehensible nature'.[170] Therefore, our encounter with it can invite anxiety and a fear of that which we do not understand. Cavell elaborates on this anxiety in his work on the idea of scepticism. He argues that a lack of knowledge about something is a cause of worry for the sceptic, and this worry demands certainty about the other, which ultimately leads to a desire to dismantle and possess the other's otherness. Yet, there is no way to fulfil the sceptic's desire to know the other with certainty, and, at the same time, scepticism is something that cannot be refuted. To deny it is to deny human nature—what makes us human.[171] So how do we deal with this? Cavell suggests that we are to live our scepticism. In other words, we are to embrace our limitations when it comes to our knowledge of the other. He puts it this way: 'my ignorance of the existence of others is not the fate of my natural condition as a human knower, but my way of inhabiting that condition'.[172] Therefore, scepticism of other minds only becomes a problem when we try to convert the way we ex-

[168] Throughout this text, I use the word 'other' without capitalisation as a general use term, except for when I am specifically talking about the Levinasian Other with a capital 'O', as it is written in the references I use.
[169] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity : An Essay on Exteriority* (Dordrecht: Kluver Academic, 1969), 194.
[170] Levinas, 195.
[171] Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism', 48.
[172] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 432.

perience the human condition into a theoretical or intellectual (epistemological) problem.[173] This would prevent what Cavell sees as the solution to this dilemma, which is replacing our attempt to *know* the other with *acknowledgement*. The acceptance of our limitation pertaining to the other is the acceptance of our human finitude. Cavell shares this concept with Levinas who argues that the other is beyond the self's finite knowledge. However, the two philosophers come to disagreement when it comes to the finitude of the other. While Cavell considers the other to be a finite entity like the self (in fact he builds a lot of his concept of other-minds on this point), Levinas sees the other as an infinite alterity.[174] This discussion of (in)finitude is something that I will come back to in more detail later in chapter 5. However, what I believe to be useful to mention in this chapter in regards to Cavell and Levinas is that they both agree on the importance of 'conversation' with the other. Levinas says that the strangeness of the Other is not to be viewed negatively but to be seen as an invitation for discourse. The proximity of the face of the Other demands a conversation. This concept is the basis of Levinasian ethics, which places ethics over ontology and an infinite transcendent Other over a totalising self. The face of the Other, in its naked exposure and vulnerability, has an 'ethical presence' that tempts violence and 'imposes itself without violence' at the same time.[175] This means that a possibility of violence arises the moment we encounter the alterity of the Other, but the ethical possibility of nonviolence also emerges at the same time. If we are to really simplify this idea, we could say that the core of Levinasian ethics is in the nonviolence that takes space where violence could have taken place in an encounter with the face of the Other. In that, the self has a responsibility towards the other. It is a peaceful responsibility, in spite of the difficulty of that encounter, which has a disturbing nature.[176] Paul Standish puts it this way: 'The face *qua* face reveals to me an unfathomable interiority and vulnerability that both teaches me and is in need of me, and a distance from me that is immeasurable, imposing on me an absolute responsibility'.[177] Therefore, the interaction with the other and the ethical obligation that it carries is in itself a continuous education, and it is a

[173] Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism', 48.
[174] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*.
[175] Levinas, 219.
[176] Levinas describes the experience of proximity to the Other as traumatic, as it shakes the ego of the subject and has implications on identity of the self. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* (Dordrecht, NETHERLANDS, THE: Springer Netherlands, 1981).
[177] Standish, 'Education for Grown-Ups, a Religion for Adults', 79.

component of the processes of growth and perfection that I briefly discussed earlier.[178] Growth—especially in the Emersonian and Cavellian sense—is not purely a self-serving endeavour. For Emerson, self-reliance requires an awareness of the other, and perfection 'depends upon the other', especially in the figure of the *friend*, who poses a challenge to the self and brings to light new, perhaps better, possibilities.[179] One of the main characteristics of Cavell's Emersonian moral perfectionism is an emphasis on conversation and friendship with the other, which is an idea that has huge educational significance. In the Cavellian concept of the other, the acknowledgement that gives space to a conversation allows us to understand ourselves through attempting to understand as much as we can about the other. In a Cavellian mode of education, becoming self-aware, self-conscious and gaining self-knowledge is closely tied to self-intelligibility, which is our ability to acknowledge and express our condition. Yet, it is a notion that is not separate from acknowledging the intelligibility of the other and making ourselves intelligible to them. Understanding the limitations of our knowledge towards the other is understanding our own limitations, and evoking conversation and sympathy with others is part of our journey in life. This perspective goes hand in hand with understanding the limitations of language and its vulnerability to scepticism. So, if the basis of acknowledging the other lies in the self, what is this basis? In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell dabbles with a hypothetical idea of an 'outsider', one who exists completely outside of human nature, outside of both the self and the other. He thinks that maybe only this outsider is capable of truly seeing this basis in a purely objective manner. However, Cavell eventually arrives at the idea that this outsider exists in each of us. He imagines something in us that is able to escape the human self and give us a perspective from which we can see our self, from the same proximity in which we see the other:

> 'I also came to think that if there is an Outsider he is in me, in each of us. That confirms the idea that there is that in us that is capable of escaping human nature, here still expressed mythically. The myth speaks —beyond that of my standing in specific relations to myself — of the possibility of my gaining perspective on myself. I can, for example, sometimes gain a perspective on my present pain. It still hurts; I still mind it; it is still mine; but I find that I can

[178] As I will refer to later, near the end of this chapter, this also includes the relationship to things (intangible ideas) that are involved in the interactions between humans. The 'relation to the Other runs through the relation to things'. See: Standish, 80.

[179] Standish, 84; Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Self-Reliance', in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Major Prose*, ed. Ronald A Bosco and Joel Myerson (Harvard University Press, 2015), 127–151.

handle it. I do that by grasping it, as though I am no longer incredulous of it, or superstitious'.[180]

This perspective allows us to *see* our own *self*, to realise that perhaps we have 'not met' it yet, and let the knowledge 'come over' us; it gives us the opportunity of 'taking interest' in the self.[181] I see this idea in connection with that of nextness, which Cavell discusses elsewhere. Nextness is not merely pertaining to an encounter with an exterior other, it also applies to our encounter with the unfamiliar that is within oneself as well. It is about encountering otherness within as well as without: the outsideness inside the familiar.[182] The other is also myself—which is next to my current self—on the road to perfection, and they are both within me; it is what Thoreau calls *doubleness*, and it is a sign of life itself.[183]

The idea of interaction with the other as a continuous education in itself includes not only the individual-to-individual or the human-to-human relationship but also the things in between. Standish argues that it is hard to see the obligation to the other as applicable in reality if it does not include the relationship to *things* like language and other intangible ideas that are involved in the interactions between humans. Therefore, the other is not to be understood only through the obligation towards human beings but also through the 'things we interact with and the way we word the world'.[184] I must add here that, so far, I have been discussing these ideas in relation to the human subject. I am aware of this limitation and fully acknowledge that this discussion could withstand an expansion to include non-human subjects as well. Whether it is in relation to non-human animals or things in our material world around us, or certain concepts like the environment and the natural world, a discussion of our relationship with the other needs to reach a point of including the non-human as well. If I am to engage in this investigation into non-human agents, I would like to do it in a way that falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I prefer to pursue it as a future academic endeavour rather than forcing an immature account of it here.

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[180] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 433.
[181] Cavell, 434.
[182] Saito, 'The Gleam of Light: Initiation, Prophecy, and Emersonian Moral Perfectionism', 179.
[183] Saito, 179–180.
[184] Standish, 'Education for Grown-Ups, a Religion for Adults', 80.

Now that I have introduced the two main concepts —fixed ends and the other—that I find to underlie the problems of education today, I can move on to discuss an alternative approach that has the potential to mend what I find to be the major gaps in our consideration of education today. To do so, I turn to Cavell's Emersonian moral perfectionism (EMP), which I think balances the ideas of self and other very well in its notion of growth and self-overcoming. Through EMP, I return to an ancient idea in which I find a lot of wisdom and space for creativity and deep contemplation about a balanced, non-instrumental approach to education. That idea is 'education as a journey'. However, before I do so, I must fully introduce EMP and its main characteristics that make it my theoretical approach of choice.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed what I find to be the two main philosophical concepts that underlie the problems of education today, which are fixed ends and the problem of the other. The issue of instrumental postulates in educational planning has roots in the philosophical grounding of education and is connected to Western philosophy's logocentrism and enthusiasm for *truth* and *final* fixed ends. This approach normalises the idea of predetermined fixed aims in education and renders it restrictive and exclusionary, especially for those who have different educational needs. As an alternative view, I laid out Naoko Saito's discussion of Deweyan growth and how the true aims of education are those that are ends-in-view and are internal to the educative process, which can be ends and means at the same time as each end is the means to the next end. Through bridging Dewey with Cavell and Emerson, Saito argues that education as growth does not take a single path but rather expands infinitely in all directions in expanding circles. This view cannot be grasped by the language of standardisation and quantification as it does not allow space to consider education beyond the limits of fixed ends. I then introduced the idea of Emersonian perfectionism as a process of perfecting the self in education while refusing the notion of a final perfectibility, which challenges instrumentalism. I also discussed how reliance on assumptions and fixed ends

in education fails to address the complexity of the human condition and undermines subjective meaning, which dismisses that which is other. I elaborated on how this reliance is a fundamental problem in the philosophical grounding of education in general and went through some arguments of how the problem of the other has always been a source of anxiety and scepticism in Western philosophy. This anxiety leads to a desire to defuse, muffle or even ignore the other's otherness instead of accepting it as it is. Then, I introduced the Cavellian idea of the other through a comparison with the Levinasian other and defined their differences and points of agreement. While both agree on the moral obligation towards the other and that knowledge of the other is beyond the self's human finitude, they disagree on the (in)finitude of the other. Finally, I conveyed that through the concept of Emersonian moral perfectionism, Cavell presents a balanced deliberation of the self and the other, which I think is significantly valuable when considering a non-instrumental holistic approach to education.

Chapter (3): The Perfectionist Journey

'Underneath the inharmonious and trivial particulars, is a musical perfection, the Ideal journeying always with us'.

(Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Experience*)

Stanley Cavell's Moral Perfectionism

When we encounter the word 'perfectionism', we often associate it with the way it is used in our daily normal discourse, which has more of a psychological than a philosophical dimension. We describe someone as a perfectionist when they hold themselves to very high standards and aim for flawless excellence in what they seek or do. In that sense, perfectionism is usually understood as a personality trait, which could come with praise on some occasions but is more often viewed from a negative angle. However, in philosophy, perfectionism has a different meaning that can be argued to be both close to the ordinary meaning while, at the same time, vastly different from it. Rather than aspiring to a final fixed state of excellence, perfectionism in its philosophical sense is a continuous process of self-overcoming. However, this is not to be taken as a definition of perfectionism or what a moral theory of perfectionism could specifically mean. In *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (*CHU*), Stanley Cavell argues:

> 'Perfectionism, as I think of it, is not a competing theory of the moral life, but something like a dimension or tradition of the moral life that spans the course of Western thought and concerns what used to be called the state of one's soul, a dimension that places tremendous burdens on personal relationships and on

> the possibility or necessity of the transforming of oneself and of one's society'.[185]

Perfectionism for Cavell is not a specific theory or doctrine, but it is more of an open-ended theme or topic. It does not need to be 'fully formulated' and is more descriptive rather than explanatory.[186] Cavell emphasises the open-endedness of his idea of moral perfectionism, by stating: 'Not only have I no complete list of necessary and sufficient conditions for using the term, but I have no theory in which a definition of perfectionism would play a useful role'.[187] Cavell named his notion of perfectionism, *Emersonian moral perfectionism* (EMP); it stems from a Wittgensteinian tone and is passionately based on an Emersonian perspective with a Thoreaudian inspiration. It is a dimension of the moral life that is not interested in drafting a teleological or deontological moral theory but rather focuses on highlighting the question of 'how do we live our life?'. In that, it underlies how we come to understand the way we value things in life rather than suggesting what ought to be morally valuable. Perfectionism as it is argued from the Cavellian perspective of EMP (as I will be referring to it from now on) is a perpetual pursuit of 'perfection as perfect*ing* with no fixed ends' and a process of transformation, self-realisation and self-overcoming.[188] Stemming from the Emersonian idea of expanding circles, Cavell illustrates the *self* as continuously moving from one final state to the next one. Life is a strive to attain the *flying Perfect*, the unattainable.[189] It is a process of *nextness* and *goallessness*, which endeavours to attain the unattainable self by moving from one final state of the self to the next in endless expanding circles. This does not mean that there is indeed a certain unattainable self that we strive towards but never arrive at, it rather means that 'having a self' is a process of 'moving to, and from, nexts'.[190] Every move from one next to another, which happens perpetually, is what 'having a self' is, and recognising our unattained self is 'a step in attaining it'.[191] For Cavell, each state of the self is final; yet, its finality in itself is the starting point of moving towards the next final self. Therefore, we can say that the Emersonian

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[185] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 2.

[186] René V. Arcilla, 'Perfectionism's Educational Address', in *Satnley Cavell and the Education of Grownups*, ed. Naoko Saito and Paul Standish (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 150.

[187] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 4.

[188] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 51–53.

[189] Emerson, 'Circles'.

[190] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 12.

[191] Cavell, 12.

perfectionist tradition is perfecting the self while refusing the traditional notion of 'a' final perfectibility that we usually find in moral theories. Here we cannot help but wonder: why then use the term perfectionism all together? Cavell was not oblivious to this linguistically paradoxical feeling to his term. In *CHU* he states: 'Emersonian Perfectionism does not imply perfectibility—nothing in Emerson is more constant than his scorn of the idea that any given state of what he calls the self is the last'.[192] He continues to mention that he kept the word 'perfection' for multiple reasons. The first of which is to depict the idea that in its infinite movement from one state to another, each state (circle, according to Emerson) of the self is final. Furthermore, he justifies his usage of the term by stating that it is a struggle against 'false or debased perfectionisms' and 'moralism that fixates on the presence of ideals in one's culture and promotes them to distract one from the presence of otherwise intolerable injustice'.[193] EMP is a statement against *conformity*, which is often demanded of us by society, religious ideals, forced moralities, authority and so on. I understand it as a state of stillness, a halt in the circles of nexts. Working in aversion to conformity is a concept that Cavell draws from Emerson's 'Self-Reliance'.[194] He describes Emerson's writing in this text as an 'aversion to society's demand for conformity' and 'consent'.[195] Conformity is the state of our failure to be self-reliant; it is a standstill of the self that does not move to the next. It is when we fail to make ourselves 'intelligible' to ourselves by having no thoughts of our own while mainly attuning to imposed ideas of human society. Conformity presents an image of us being what Emerson calls 'bugs' or a 'mob', or what Nietzsche calls a 'herd'.[196] Cavell masterfully puts it as the following: 'The worst thing we could do is rely on ourselves as we stand—this is simply to be the slaves of our slavishness'.[197] In *The American Scholar*, Emerson starts his essay with a fable about God's division of 'man into men', which he goes on to explain—as I understood it—how our holistic being is divided into parts of us, into roles in society.[198] This makes us metamorphose into a *thing* or many things. Emerson draws a picture of us becoming walking body parts rather than a whole: 'a good finger, a neck, a stomach,

[192] Cavell, 3.
[193] Cavell, 13.
[194] Emerson, 'Self-Reliance'.
[195] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 37.
[196] Cavell, 47.
[197] Cavell, 47.
[198] Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'The American Scholar', in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Major Prose*, ed. Ronald A Bosco and Joel Myerson (Harvard University Press, 2015), 92.

an elbow, but never a man'.[199] What our own conformity does to us is make us become the tool or instrument of the role we embody rather than that role in itself. Emerson continues: 'The priest becomes a form; the attorney, a statute-book; the mechanic, a machine; the sailor, a rope of a ship'.[200] Cavell argues that what Emerson is referring to here is what happens when 'no thought is our own'—it is what he calls conformity.[201] The division of the self, Emerson says, is an obstruction of the soul that renders us 'unborn'. Self-reliance is a matter of self-consciousness, which in itself is a matter of our awareness of our existence. If we fail to recognise our conformity, if we fail to be conscious of ourselves, we fail to recognise our own humanity; thus, we become unborn. And in order to be born (again), Cavell states, we must become averse to our conformity.

In its allergy to conformity, even a conformity to morality itself, EMP is seen as an anti-moralist tradition. Cavell concludes this to be one of the reasons for its 'homelessness' in the realm of modern philosophy. Another reason would be its antipathy to 'the present state of things'.[202] EMP is not satisfied with reform, it demands a full transformation of things. Cavell argues that 'human existence stands in need not of reform but of reformation, of a change that has the structure of a transfiguration'.[203] In the case of education, this means going beyond the concept of educational reform towards a more fundamental transfiguration and transformation of the construct of education as we understand it. EMP is also a way to take responsibility in the demand for justice by not being silent and unthinking and conforming to presupposed values and universalised moralities. Therefore, EMP harbours within it strong theoretical seeds for much-needed revolutionary changes in education, which could reach far beyond 'solutions' towards fundamental changes from the ground up. Its rebellious character is something that we, in my opinion, desperately need in education today. It comes from the way the Cavellian idea of moral perfectionism, as Cavell puts it, 'precedes, or intervenes in, the specification of moral theories, which define the particular bases of moral judgments of particular acts or projects or characters as right or wrong, good or bad'.[204]

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[199] Emerson, 92.
[200] Emerson, 92.
[201] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 45.
[202] Cavell, 46.
[203] Stanley Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein*, University of Chicago Press ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 26–27.
[204] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 2.

It 'reconceptualises morality itself', which allows for change that surpasses the limitation of most moral theories.[205] This is important and necessary for rethinking education beyond mere reforms.

In his constitution of Emersonian perfectionism, Cavell also discusses the idea of justice as essential to the cultivation of our self-reliance. In *CHU*, he argues that the matching of judgments and principles of justice should exist in balance with reflective judgement, which allows for space to depart from a 'strict compliance' with our society's compromised principles.[206] In other words, Cavell is inviting us here to part with our complacency (conformity) with society's conventions of justice if we are to find them dysfunctional or defective. We often live alongside and by certain cultural and societal criteria that we conform to unquestionably—and perhaps even unnoticeably, while there might be times when we grow sceptical of them. Yet, we often witness how such doubt may arise in casual everyday conversation but quickly dwindles and disappears out of indifference, unquestionable conventions, convenience or cognitive dissonance (to use the psychological term here). This is how strong our conformity can be pertaining to socially and culturally normalised injustices. An example that comes to mind is of norms that are related to our political view of the world and our nationalistic tendencies, which are often weaponised by politicians to push citizen concessions with certain agendas. We also embody this unquestionable approach to conventions in the way that we think about and approach education. Our idea of what education is and what it is for is bound to be influenced by society's norms and, at times, by a few decades of certain educational policies that find their way into the public's perception. What detaching ourselves from our strict compliance to society's conventions of justice means is that we become able to distinguish morally questionable issues that are made to be normalised in our daily lives. Through its emphasis on self-reliance and self-intelligibility, Emersonian perfectionist thinking cultivates an 'enactment of change and departure'. When I run out of justifications for that which I find to be unjust in society's conventions, I can no longer comply without a sense of shame. Thus, I am to show and acknowledge that change is needed.[207] In that, I live in 'promise' of making myself intelligible as 'an inhabitant...of a further realm', which I recognise

[205] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 157.
[206] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxvii.
[207] Cavell, 112.

myself and also others to belong to.[208] Recognising not only the intelligibility of oneself to others but also the intelligibility of others to oneself is something that a moral theory must demand. This element of 'making oneself intelligible' is what Cavell considers to be EMP's contribution to 'thinking about moral necessity', as he puts it;[209] thus, it is central to the conversation of justice. Emersonian perfectionism is not a moral tradition that claims 'the right to goods', but it is rather a claim of freedom or 'the good of freedom'. So, it is fair to say that it does not share the same world view as materialist theories. It does not disregard the role of goods in the social order and the construction of institutions, but its notions of freedom or 'liberty' stem from fundamental philosophical ideas about justice that are more holistic than those coming from an economic perspective. In that, it raises the issue of the acknowledgement of our voices within the circumstances of justice and social order.[210] This focus is perhaps why EMP could be perceived as a philosophical perspective that pays attention to the silent and invisible. In this case, what is silent could be the consent of members of society (myself or the other) who are trying to navigate their place within social orders and contracts. Cavell argues for the importance of including perfectionist claims in the conversation of justice.[211] Therefore, he rejects the elitism charge that some philosophers place on perfectionism. In CHU, he particularly refers to John Rawls's account of perfectionism in *A Theory of Justice*.[212] Despite his praise of many aspects of Rawls's theory, including its consideration for the concept of intuition, he opposes Rawls's assessment of Emersonian perfectionism as elitist and undemocratic. Cavell strongly disagrees with Rawl and argues that the Emersonian concept of perfectionism cares for the state of one's soul rather than the concept of human excellence. Moreover, the ideas of becoming aversive to our condition and ashamed of our conformity are elements that make it 'essential

[208] Cavell, 125.
[209] Cavell, xxxi.
[210] Cavell, 26–27.
[211] Cavell, 27.
[212] In his book *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls relies on Kantian ideas of universal understanding and the ability of people to make moral judgements from an objective, impartial perspective. It is a highly abstract version of a social contract theory that is described as 'justice as fairness' within an egalitarian liberal society where citizens relate to each other equally and discover principles of justice under fair conditions. Rawls identifies perfectionism as a teleological theory and suggests that it has a moderate form and an extreme form. In the moderate version, it '[directs] society to arrange institutions and to define the duties and obligations of individuals so as to maximise the achievement of human excellence in art, science and culture'. So, his notion of it is one that seeks maximisation towards fixed ends, which is of course at odds with the Emersonian and Cavellian concept of perfectionism. See: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1971).

to criticising democracy from within', according to Emersonian perfectionism.[213] This is a view of EMP that many scholars share. Naoko Saito describes it as 'a call to the potential nobility of the self...rather than the endorsement of political injustice'.[214] Stephen Mulhall also emphasises its importance for the condition of justice and democracy when he argues that 'in the absence of the sort of character perfectionism cultivates, the failures of democracy will become intolerable'.[215]

EMP emphasises self-overcoming by way of responsiveness as *conversation*. Therefore, words, voices, attunement and language are very important in Cavell's work. For him, certain relationships to words are inseparable from moral thinking, which mirrors a relationship between morality and life itself; one that does not fall under the categorization of reasoning.[216] As I mentioned before, it is neither teleological (focused on the maximisation of the good as a function of its end) nor deontological (based on the normativity of an action in itself as independent from its consequentialism). The strong emphasis on language comes from Cavell's interest in the work of the later Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin. It engages with what is called ordinary language philosophy, which aims at returning words to their everyday use. However, Cavell takes the concept of the ordinary to further include anything that we apply language to, e.g., other things in our daily lives, like ordinary practices and experiences. Stephen Mulhall argues that ordinary language for Cavell is a way to investigate the world and align with it and with other people; it is a form of self-knowledge.[217] The idea of the ordinary that Cavell draws from is underlain by the notion of the 'everyday' or what Emerson and Thoreau call 'the common, the familiar, the near, the low' as Cavell himself puts it in his book *In Quest of the Ordinary*.[218] He argues that the everyday is not just another topic that a philosopher chooses to either engage with or not, it is rather an idea that a philosopher is 'fated' or bound to engage with if they are to face what he calls the 'threat of skepticism'.[219] Cavell argues that Wittgenstein's approach to the

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[213] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 3.

[214] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 54–55.

[215] Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary*, 282.

[216] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 46.

[217] Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary*, 4–18.

[218] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 4.

[219] See, Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 171. Cavell's idea of scepticism is not about foundational beliefs (as it is in Cartesian scepticism); it is rather rooted in the idea of the ordinary and ordinary language philosophy. Therefore, the threat of scepticism for Cavell is its disruption of our sense of self and understanding of reality, as well as our capacity to find the language to

everyday views the *actual* everyday as an illusion that distorts our lives and suggests a practice of approaching that illusion 'intimately enough to turn it' into the *eventual* everyday.[220] I understand this to mean that we usually go through our day without thinking deeply about the mundane and ordinary things in our lives and the way the everyday words we use express our condition; thus, what we actually experience is an illusion. However, when we start to intimately ponder upon these mundane details and the way we use words, we might find something extraordinary in what we perceive as ordinary and dull in its normality. This process out of illusion is a transcendence that does not go up but down. It is rather a philosophy of *descent* that Cavell describes as leaving 'everything as it is because it is a refusal of, say disobedient to, (a false) ascent, or transcendence'.[221] It is a descent or a down-going 'into the uncanniness of the ordinary', which makes it a goal or something we are 'in quest of' rather than a ground.[222] In my thesis, I am more interested in this existential aspect—if you may call it—of the ordinary, rather than that of a linguistic argument. However, despite whether any discussion of EMP takes a linguistic turn or not, its relation to *words* remains intact. This is because EMP's home as a 'dimension of thought' is in a philosophical engagement with a set of texts. In the opening chapter of *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell declares: 'I have wished to understand philosophy not as a set of problems but as a set of texts'.[223] This means, as I understand it, that for him philosophising is not a matter of problem-solving but a practice of reading (and writing) text in a way that could aid us to live with problems, especially those that are either unresolved or unresolvable. Therefore, understanding what Cavell dubs as 'perfectionist texts' and how they inform the conversation of self-knowledge is key to understanding what EMP is.

'word' our reality. As such , in his discussion of scepticism, Cavell engages with questions about the conditions of knowledge, morality and communication. As I mentioned earlier, Cavell does not refute scepticism. One can say that refuting or accepting scepticism is not the point. The point is to point out the presuppositions in our foundations of knowledge and to position acknowledging the limitation of human knowledge as a way to counter despair. Also see a discussion by Stephen Mulhall on this topic in: Mulhall, Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary.

[220] Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America*, 46.

[221] Cavell, 46.

[222] Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism', 38.

[223] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 3.

The Perfectionist Text

Despite lacking a specific definition, EMP does enjoy certain themes or features, if you may call them, and we could say that nonconformity is one of them. However, before I embark on an attempt at describing further features or areas of interest of EMP, I must reiterate Cavell's caution against foreclosing its meaning. In CHU, Cavell emphasises that there is 'no closed list of features constituting perfectionism' but that it is rather 'an outlook or dimension of thought embodied and developed in a set of texts spanning the range of Western culture.' (I will comment later on the word 'Western' in this statement).[224] He then goes on to mention certain examples of texts that he thinks are perfectionist in their nature, which, to mention a few examples, include: Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Criolanus* and *The Tempest*, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Nietzsche's *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Goethe's *Faust*, Dickens's *Great Expectations* and *Hard Times*, and of course Emerson's 'Self-Reliance', amongst many more. These texts are usually either texts of moral philosophy, literary texts presenting moral issues or texts by moral thinkers. Perfectionist work can also exist in the form of music, art and film, which Cavell discusses examples of in *Cities of Words*. These works represent variations of what moral perfectionism could be interested in despite some of them seeming to be vastly different from or even contending with one another.[225] However, they all share certain features, and perhaps their most important quality is that they talk *to* a specific type of reader. Due to the open-endedness of the perfectionist genre, these texts are a 'growing collection'; they span different historical periods and discuss different topics, which in turn renders them in conversation not only with the reader but also with one another.[226] According to René V. Arcilla, a perfectionist text expresses 'an unmistakable involvement of a first-person account' regardless of how impersonal its topic might seem.[227] It is a text that readers recognise themselves in. However, what differentiates it from other texts is that it talks

[224] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 4.
[225] Arcilla, 'Perfectionism's Educational Address', 149–151.
[226] Arcilla, 150.
[227] Arcilla, 157.

to the reader, not *about* the reader. Reading a perfectionist text is a practice of self-realisation in its Emersonian sense. The reader here is in search of something; they are on a journey of understanding themselves, where they stand and how to express this desired knowledge. It is a striving for intelligibility. These texts could be different for each of us, and they do not fix us or determine who we are on our behalf. They are simply companions on our journey of self-transcendence.

One of the most important contributions of moral perfectionism is highlighting the importance of *self-intelligibility*: of our ability to express our condition to oneself and to others, as well as to recognise the intelligibility of others. However, this recognition of the other is dependent on the recognition of the self. Cavell argues that the 'threat to one's moral coherence comes from one's sense of obscurity to oneself'.[228] Therefore, our recognition of the other's address is rooted in our own self-knowledge and self-transcendence. A sense of ambiguity about ourselves, our actions, choices, suffering and position in life is a threat to our sense of morality and to the way we understand our duties, responsibilities and identity. Yet, is it not that we are constantly in this state of back and forth moral drifting? Do we not often lose our way and struggle to find our sea legs in life? In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell writes: 'Our way is neither clear nor simple; we are often lost'.[229] In that sense, we can say that losing our way is part of the experience of life itself. Therefore, one of the issues that perfectionist texts are concerned with is encountering this lostness through engaging with the idea of self-intelligibility. Struggling with one's own unintelligibility wreaks havoc on one's moral state, but at the same time, it is exactly what inspires a perfectionist behaviour.[230] Perfectionism is not about aspiring towards a certain moral ideal but about recognising a 'crisis in self-understanding'. When we struggle with our self-intelligibility, we become lost to ourselves and might even suffer from a sense of shame and a feeling that we have fallen. The perfectionist text responds to this 'fallenness', and arguably addresses 'those of us who can become existentially lost'.[231]

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[228] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxxi.
[229] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 324.
[230] Arcilla, 'Perfectionism's Educational Address', 152–153.
[231] Arcilla, 149–154.

Cavell's moral perfectionism dwells in the ordinary. It focuses on the here and now and the where and why instead of taking interest in judgments or imperatives. Therefore, the striving for intelligibility is about attempting to find one's position. This attempt comes about through the continuous effort we make to know ourselves (to figure ourselves out, as we may express it in our everyday language) as well as through our expression of knowledge about ourselves to our own *selves* and others. This process is one of moral *confrontation* as well as a moral *conversation* in our struggle for intelligibility, and it involves not only an encounter with the self but also with the other.[232] The idea of the other takes centre stage in Cavell's Emersonian account of moral perfectionism and the perfectionist text is a representation of 'the other as friend', whom we engage in a conversation with. The text as a friend shakes up our conformity and evokes our thoughts through a perfectionist conversation. Engaging with a text in the perfectionist sense could also be 'a way to articulate my own moral position' and 'orient myself'.[233] This engagement has the potential to provide us with the language we need to express our position; it is like 'our thoughts returning back to us, by way of a guide', as Cavell puts it.[234]

Perhaps no one can portray the perfectionist practice for us quite like Stanley Cavell himself, and he does so through his method of approaching texts . Whether philosophical texts, literature, film or even his own biographical work, he engages in a conversation with texts while also allowing them to have a conversation with each other.[235] Describing Cavell's writing, British educator Colin Davis says:

> 'Cavell is a reader who attempts to remain attentive to the claims made by the work he is reading, and specifically by its claim on him, its pretension to teach him, to know something of importance to him which he did not previously know. The issue for him is not to ask what we might know of a text, but rather

[232] Viktor Johansson, 'Perfectionist Philosophy as a (an Untaken) Way of Life', *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 48, no. 3 (September 2014): 58–72; Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 25.
[233] Johansson, 'Perfectionist Philosophy as a (an Untaken) Way of Life', 61–62.
[234] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxx.
[235] For a more detailed look at some of the main works of philosophy, literature and film that Cavell engaged with, see: Cavell, *Cities of Words*. In this book he dedicates a separate chapter for each work or writer he discusses. He discusses some of these works like *A Doll's House*, *The Marquise of O*, *Adam's Rib*, *The Philadelphia Story* in *CHU* and other books as well. Cavell also engages a lot with Shakespeare in many of his perfectionist conversations, see: Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare*.

to ask what it is that a text we care about might know, and how it might call on us to receive its instruction'.[236]

These readings/conversations are in themselves part of Cavell's own perfectionist journey, and our engagement with his writing could also be part of ours. Harkening back to the idea of education as growth, Naoko Saito—borrowing from Dewey and Cavell—describes the trajectory of such education to be expanding infinitely in all directions, which always leaves space for the 'unknowable and the uncertain'.[237] This perspective also corresponds to the Emersonian idea of the path of perfection that grows in expanding circles towards an unattained horizon which awaits us. Then, right at that edge of the horizon there is the start of a new possibility towards what is unknown (yet to be known) to us. Walking this path of perfection (expanding through these circles) is like embarking on a journey of self-overcoming; one that is fuelled by loss and finding. This idea , in addition to Cavell's amplification of Emersonian perfectionism and what it can offer in terms of responsiveness as conversation—with text or with others—has grand potential for education and the way we think about it. It suggests a possibility of seeing education as a journey, which I suggest in this thesis to be an alternative, non-instrumental consideration of education that we are in need of today.

Before I move on to discussing the idea of education as a journey, there is one more remark that I feel is necessary to make in regards to what I have discussed so far. I mentioned earlier that Cavell describes EMP as 'an outlook or dimension of thought embodied and developed in a set of texts spanning the range of Western culture'.[238] So, it is natural to think that EMP could be limited by the Western philosophical grounding of these Western texts. In chapter 2, I traced some of the problems I see in education today to certain blind-spots in the foundations of Western philosophy. So, how is it that I am still arguing for a potential theoretical path to overcome these problems by turning to yet another Western philosophical practice? Before I answer this question and further argue that EMP allows us to break free of these limitations, I must discuss why this question might arise in the mind of the reader of this text. It is noticeable that when an academic text criticises certain aspects of Western philosophy, there is a tendency, in the way that it is received,

[236] Colin Davis, *Critical Excess : Overreading in Derrida, Deleuze, Levinas, Žižek and Cavell* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), 135.
[237] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 76.
[238] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 4.

to expect a discussion that bets it against a non-Western tradition, and this is definitely one way to put forth such criticism. However, there is also the possibility to criticise Western philosophy from within. Philosophers like Nietzsche, Levinas, Heidegger, Derrida, Arendt, Deleuze, Wittgenstein and other more contemporary voices like Cavell, Spivak, Braidotti and many others, all criticise fundamental aspects of the Western tradition from within the tradition itself. Since the beginnings of what many label as the postmodern era of philosophy, there have been thinkers who did just that. Feminist, decolonial and posthumanist scholars criticise much of the Western philosophical tradition down to its ontological and metaphysical roots.[239] There is also a third way to go about this, which is to introduce non-Western ideas and arguments into Western philosophical discussions in a way that allows them to naturally exist together in one text without viewing them as conflicting camps. For example, in a chapter in the Cavell ontology: *Stanley Cavell and the Education of Grownups*, Steven Odin discusses the idea of the ordinary as a 'fundamental category' in EMP in relation to Zen/Chan Buddhism and Confucianism.[240] Naoko Saito and other philosophers of education at Kyoto University continue the tradition of the Kyoto School of Philosophy by working with both the East Asian and Western traditions of philosophy,[241] which is another example of how Western and non-Western philosophy can come together to address and perhaps illuminate each other's blindspots. My argument in this thesis might be considered as the type that criticises Western education from within. However, it is crucial to emphasise that my criticism of Western philosophy is not really a main goal of this thesis as much as it is something that happens 'by default' as a result of criticising education. As I mentioned earlier, my thesis is concerned with how education is viewed and considered today and how the work of Stanley Cavell and, more precisely, EMP carry apt theoretical potential to think differently about education—that is its main focus.

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[239] It is important to point out that this is not a discussion based on geography. What is meant by Western philosophy here is the philosophical tradition that traces its roots back to Ancient Greece. So, the world 'west' here does not merely refer to places on a map. It is true that Western philosophy is naturally dominant in Western culture and the west as a geographical region. However, this is not merely a matter of how the geographical or regional western part of the world thinks. The Western tradition engulfs the whole world today. It has a hegemonic influence on education and how it is viewed and planned everywhere in the world. Even the educational and pedagogical theories that are taught to teachers all over the world are heavily reliant on theories that are philosophically rooted in the Western tradition of thought.

[240] Steven Odin, 'The Ordinary as Sublime in Cavell, Zen, and Nishida: Cavell's Philosophy of Education in East-West Perspective', in *Stanley Cavell and the Education of Grownups*, ed. Naoko Saito and Paul Standish (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

[241] Paul Standish and Naoko Saito, eds., *Education and the Kyoto School of Philosophy: Pedagogy for Human Transformation* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2012).

Then, the issue that remains is that of Cavell declaring his own list of perfectionist texts, plays and movies as limited to some that span the range of Western culture. So, another argument that comes to mind here is that even though Cavell's philosophy rebels against certain blind-spots of Western philosophy, it is still limited to Western concerns and cultural understandings. That might be true; yet, Cavell left that list open along with EMP's other features. This leaves the door open for those who come after Cavell and discuss his ideas to expand that list beyond Western culture. EMP's open-endedness and lack of fixed definition allow it to perpetually grow and change, which makes space for texts that expand with EMP to new possibilities. When I think about EMP, I can see the potential of many variations of perfectionist texts that Cavell did not touch upon in his lifetime, including those that could carry a non-Western or decolonial tone, for example—especially works of fiction. I think such texts could potentially be a good addition to the open-ended list of perfectionist texts. This is definitely a tempting academic project to pursue.

Education as a Journey

In *The Gleam of Light*, Naoko Saito refers to a passage from *CHU* where Cavell states: 'Perfectionism is the dimension of moral thought directed less to restraining the bad than to releasing the good'.[242] She links that to the metaphor of 'the soul's journey' that Cavell uses a few pages later when he draws a comparison between Emerson and Plato pertaining to the relationship of philosophical writing and the reader.[243] Saito argues that this metaphor is meant to showcase that perfectionism does not treat the self as 'the object of knowledge in an epistemology or the subject of moral judgement in ethical theories'.[244] Instead, it pays attention to the question of how I (the self) live my life. This perspective entails an understanding of the self as on a journey of discovering what it values in life, how and why. It is a journey of self-

[242] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 18; Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 52.
[243] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 52; Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 32.
[244] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 52.

realisation but also self-overcoming and self-reliance; it is growth in expanding circles in a perpetual movement from an attained state of the self towards the unattained. This is where the educational potential of the idea of education as a perfectionist journey manifests itself. Cavell describes what he calls the 'idea of life's journey' as 'the quest to take one's life upon oneself, to become the one you are'.[245]

In his discussion of Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*, Cavell construes how the main character Nora feels the urge to leave her home and husband when she realises that she has lived a life of 'violation'. Her life has been decided for her by others, and she has accepted to deny her own existence as a human. Nora realises that she needs education, and she is awakened to its potential to help her in reclaiming the humanity that she felt ever so deprived of. She is inclined by 'the force of an unattained but attainable self' to reclaim her *humanness* (in the Emersonian term).[246] What Nora mostly feels—after her marriage begins to crumble—is injustice. She understands her situation to be unbearable and her life to be not worth living as long as it stays the way it is. In the end, Nora indeed leaves, regardless of being accused by her husband of being a bad wife and a bad mother for seeking her own freedom from a life that she perceives to be shackling. Yet, that moment of breaking out of her cage is not one of pure ecstatic victory, not a real happy ending—it is not an ending at all. It is a step into another realm of difficulties for a woman in 19th-century Norway. Moreover, Nora is also experiencing turmoil of her own: she no longer knows who she is or why she exists. She is *lost*, unsure of her moral sense, her faith or ability of judgement. However, in her leaving, there is courage, and it is as Saito describes it: 'The courage to detach oneself from one's previous state and existing framework of thinking', which often emerges from a 'sorrowful state'.[247] Through this act of 'leaving' and 'abandonment', the self converts loss and lostness into 'onward thinking' through perfectionist growth in expanding circles.[248] It is a process of 'leaping' that is not only courageous but also hopeful.[249] Not only is a perfectionist way of thinking a response to lostness but the state—and feeling—of being lost is also essential

[245] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 329.
[246] Cavell, 255; Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 115.
[247] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 148.
[248] Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden: An Expanded Edition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 136–137.
[249] Cavell, 136–137.

to the perfectionist journey. Therefore, when we lose our way, when we question our existence and our moral judgement, EMP renders thinking as a way *back* from or *out* of our state of lostness, 'as if thinking is remembering something'.[250] In *Cities of Words*, Cavell discusses how deontological notions of morality can be applied to Nora's case. He details what an application of Kant's categorical imperative could look like. However, he concludes that: 'Nora's perplexity demands not the application of a law but the offer of conversation'.[251] Therefore, even his relationship to her and her story as a reader comes about as a form of conversation. Adrian Skilbeck argues that Cavell's offering of a conversation, 'as opposed to the constructing of a law', is born out of a serious consideration for Nora's thoughts. By having a conversation with her, one 'takes seriously the deepest expression of Nora's sense of dishonour'.[252] Skilbeck elaborates further on this by stating that the reason why Cavell seeks a conversation with Nora is that he 'cannot rely on the impersonal character of a universalising maxim in order to understand how something matters to her or to assess the validity of what she is thinking therefore he needs access to her thoughts in the way she is present to him in conversation'.[253] Thus, the perfectionist journey is also about finding the expressions: the language that we need in order to have this conversation. It is about finding our voice but also giving voice to our condition.[254] All in all, EMP's notion of Education implies the idea of embarking on a journey, and in this journey, the focus is on 'finding one's way rather than on getting oneself or another to take the way'.[255] This is why Cavell describes perfectionism as having an 'obsession with education'.[256]

Education as a journey is perhaps an ancient idea that seems to come naturally to the human mind. We are often familiar with it through storytelling, mythology and folklore. From the myth of the Sumarian goddess Inanna's descent into the underworld, Plato's allegory of the journey out of the cave in *The Republic*, Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, all the way to contemporary writings like Helen Keller's autobiography *The Story of My Life*, and an entire

[250] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 55.
[251] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 257.
[252] Adrian Skilbeck, 'Serious Words for Serious Subjects', *Ethics and Education* 9, no. 3 (September 2014): 309.
[253] Skilbeck, 309.
[254] Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 240.
[255] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxxii.
[256] Cavell, xxxii.

genre of women embarking on journeys of self-discovery in contemporary Japanese literature, the theme of education and growth as a journey seems to be present throughout the history of humanity all over the world. This theme is also undeniably present in our modern popular culture, especially via what we call 'informal' types of education, which have gained wide popularity today thanks to technological advancement. After all, knowledge is a part of our daily existence. Yet, how can we harness this idea in a way that is intellectually and academically concrete? When I first started working with the idea of education as a journey, one of my concerns was the possibility that it may be taken to be too soft and romantic to hold any true academic seriousness. However, I think that all of the concepts that I discussed earlier, from Deweyan and Emersonian growth to Levinasian and Cavellian notions of the other to EMP's take on justice and nonconformity, hold enough philosophical weight for a serious academic endeavour. The concept of a 'journey' sits very comfortably and organically at the heart of these philosophical arguments. Stemming from its embrace of and rootedness in what is ordinary, the perfectionist journey is one that takes place in everyday life. It happens today; as Cavell states in *CHU*: 'It is today that you are to take the self on; today that you are to awaken and to consecrate yourself to culture...to bring it home, as part, now, of your everyday life'.[257] The conclusions of EMP's moral thinking—thus, those of the perfectionist journey—are not the results of *reason* or the calculation of consequences (as in utilitarianism) or the testing against a universal law (as in Kant), their relevance and urgency are rather in their immediacy: in the here and now, challenging conformity and responding to lostness on a daily basis. Cavell's work and his idea of EMP not only have the potential to academically elevate the idea of education as a journey but they also hold a sense of moral urgency that we need today in the way we think about education.

Education as a journey is an idea that has a certain romantic quality about it, which is another factor that paves a comfortable position for it in Stanley Cavell's body of work, as he holds romanticism in high regard as a legitimate philosophical practice. If concepts like nonconformity, aversion to injustice, intelligibility of self and other, and the ordinary are to be considered as features of EMP, then romanticism is another one. Following the conclusion of his book *The Claim of Reason*, in which he engages in depth with the problem

[257] Cavell, 55.

of scepticism, Cavell is left puzzled by what he calls 'the outcropping of moments and lines of romanticism' in the fourth and last chapter of the book.[258] In a concluding chapter of a body of work in which he discusses an issue that he considers to be an inescapable condition of human life, his argument kept being pulled towards 'outbreaks' of romantic texts. At first, this realisation unsettles him as he initially perceives these outbursts of romanticism as a threat to the conclusion of his book.[259] I suppose this is how most of us are made to think about romanticism in association with knowledge and philosophy. However, thankfully, Cavell feels that 'uncovering the connection to romanticism' in his book is not only unavoidable but also 'irresistible'.[260] Russel Goodman argues that the 'turn toward romanticism in Cavell's work occurs most dramatically at the moment he begins to scrutinise—from the viewpoint of his earlier philosophy—our relations primarily not with people but with the world'.[261] There is something that Cavell is able to touch upon through romanticism that is not reachable or achievable through modernism. Yet, despite writing plenty on the subject, what that 'something' was remains an open question that Cavell never provides an answer to.[262] However, through the many literary texts that he examines in many of his writings and lectures after *The Claim of Reason*, he makes a strong argument for romanticism as a serious philosophical practice that exists in the everyday—in the ordinary. In it, he sees redemption from both the problems of scepticism and the attempts to provide an answer to it in modern philosophy—referring here to the Cartesian and Humean forms of scepticism and Kant's efforts to solve them in *The Critique of Pure Reason*.[263] Perhaps one of the most relevant aspects of Cavell's romanticism, which is linked to his perfectionism, is its 'contestation' and rejection of the idea of common sense.[264] The discovery and rediscovery of what makes the everyday exceptional or what is termed as 'the uncanniness of the ordinary' does not allow a commitment to fixed ideas of postulates, like the notion of common sense. In reference to my discussion of this concept in chapter two, this is another reason that makes Cavell's work a good example

[258] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 6.
[259] Cavell, 6.
[260] Cavell, 6.
[261] Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*, 10.
[262] Nikolas Kompridis, 'From Scepticism to Romanticism: Cavell's Accommodation of the "Other"', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28, no. 6 (November 2020): 1151–1171.
[263] Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*, 11.
[264] Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism', 37.

to discuss in terms of finding a new and different way to think about and consider education. In its refusal to commit to postulates and its groundedness in the ordinary, the perfectionist journey is our own in the here and now. It resides not only in the realm of myth and storytelling but also in our daily lives at schools, other educational institutions, work and dwelling places. The journey through education is one of self-reliance—of making ourselves intelligible to the self and to the other. Pointing out rationality's romantic aspect is not an attempt to reduce it to something soft, but it is an effort to find hardness in the soft or 'see the hardness of the soft', as Wittgenstein once said.[265] In the upcoming chapters, I will go into further detail about what the perfectionist journey entails through engaging with the experience of the self first. Then I will elaborate on the idea of the other, its relation to the self and its centrality to education and our journey.

Summary

In this chapter I laid out an account of Cavell's idea of perfectionism, which he calls Emersonian moral perfectionism (EMP). I clarified that it does not seek a final state of perfection but that it is rather a continuous process of transformation and self-overcoming. It sees perfection as perfecting without fixed ends. It is not a theory but a dimension, outlook or tradition of the moral life. It is also an open-ended theme that is neither teleological nor deontological but focuses on highlighting the question of 'how do we live our life?'. EMP is the process of perfecting the self through a continuous and unending growth in expanding circles from one state of the self to the next; thus, it is a process of *nextness* and *goallessness*. Cavell asserts that EMP is an aversion to society's demand for conformity, which Emerson considers as a failure to be self-reliant and intelligible to oneself and other. EMP also entails a commitment to moral necessities reflective judgement—which makes the concept of justice central to it. It is also rooted in ordinary language philosophy; so, it takes place in the here and now of our everyday life, and this is what gives it a sense of moral urgency. I also discussed how Cavell established EMP through philosophical engagement with a set of texts that he considered to be

[265] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks, 1914-1916*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (New York: HARPER & BROTHERS, 1961), 44.

‘perfectionist texts’ for sharing certain features. These texts are ones that we engage with and relate to philosophically; they speak to us rather than speaking about us, and our engagement with them is a practice of self-realisation. They help us to encounter our lostness in the world, aid us towards self-intelligibility, address those of us who are existentially lost, and support us in finding the language to express our condition. I pointed out how Cavell left both EMP’s features and his list of perfectionist texts as open-ended, which allows them to perpetually grow and change to make space for texts and expand EMP to encompass new possibilities. In the last subchapter, I discussed the idea of education as a journey. I argued that in paying attention to the question ‘How do I live my life?’, EMP does not treat the self as an object of knowledge in an epistemology or the subject of moral judgement in ethical theories, it rather understands it as on a journey of self-realisation, self-overcoming and self-reliance. This journey is one of growth, of dealing with our lostness and moving from our attained to the next unattained self, of finding one’s way—a journey of education. I also stated that the idea of education as a (perfectionist) journey is rooted in the ordinary and has a certain romantic quality. Cavell defends romanticism as a philosophically serious endeavour and considers it to be unavoidable, irresistible and a redemption from scepticism. Romanticism rejects the idea of common sense, making our educational journey uniquely our own in the here and now of the ordinary everyday. However, I pointed out that this perspective does not mean reducing the hardness of rationality to something soft, but it instead involves finding hardness in the soft.

Chapter (4): A Journey of the Self

‘And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about’.

(Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*)

‘Success is somebody else’s failure...No, I do not wish you success. I don’t even want to talk about it. I want to talk about failure...What I hope for you, for all my sisters and daughters, brothers and sons, is that you will be able to live there, in the dark place. To live in the place that our rationalising culture of success denies, calling it a place of exile, uninhabitable, foreign’.

(Ursula K. Le Guin, commencement address at Mills College, California, 1983)

Self and World

Through the journey of writing this thesis, I pondered a lot on beginnings. Where to start? And how to start? are questions that might be some of the hardest to answer for the writer of any text. When I think about the self’s journey, I am almost always compelled to start from where the self is; from its position in the present, where it contemplates the world and understands its place in it. Therefore, I think that there is no better start to this chapter than discussing the self-world relationship. Earlier, I argued that EMP is a dimension of the moral life that features the question: How do we live our life? It sheds light not only on what we value in life but also on how we come to value

what we value. Therefore, part of embarking on a perfectionist journey of education is to think about our place in the world. Cavell suggests an intimate connection between the self and the world. He suggests that the self does not exist in isolation from the surrounding world, it rather coalesces with it in a reciprocal relationship. In *The Senses of Walden*, Cavell argues that Emerson is 'out to destroy the ground' of a popular 'metaphysical fixture' in philosophy, which separates the inner subjective experience of the self and the external objective reality.[266] He imagines a conversation between Kant and Emerson in which Kant applies his question 'Is metaphysics possible?' to Emerson's essay *Experience*. Kant would suggest, according to Cavell, that genuine knowledge of the world cannot extend experience. Then, Emerson's answer would be a caution to what one would understand experience to be, as it could be 'limited in advance by the conceptual limitations you impose upon it'.[267] This idea extends to our limited knowledge of the human experience and our own limited experience with it. This takes me back to my discussion in chapter 2 about our tendency towards postulates in the way we think about knowledge today. A reliance on postulates and assumptions is a fundamental problem in today's education, which is still underlain by a humanist modernist philosophical foundation. A unified notion of subjectivity that overlooks the infinite possibilities of subjective meaning is a huge limitation in education. Through engaging Kant and Emerson in this conversation, Cavell shows us that this fixation of subjectivity is no more than an illusion—an assumption at best. We of course could think of a way to anchor the concept of the self in an assumed fixed meaning but that 'anchorage is quicksand'.[268] It is merely something mutable that is disguised as a fixed idea. This emphasis on the plurality of subjectivity goes hand in hand with how the self exists in the world. Naoko Saito links Cavell's notion of self and world with Dewey's transactional holism, which is 'the idea that neither the self nor world is something to be known as a fixed entity'.[269] Instead, their meanings are understood through a process of transaction, or as Cavell and Emerson argue, in a 'succession of moods and objects', which leads to an onward movement in expanding circles.[270] Our moods—or feelings, as I understand Cavell to mean

[266] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 127–128.
[267] Cavell, 126.
[268] Cavell, 126.
[269] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 77.
[270] Saito, 77; Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 126; Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Experience', in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Major Prose*, ed. Ronald A Bosco and Joel Myerson (Harvard University Press, 2015), 231.

by moods—are as important to our perception of the world as our sensory experience of it. This 'epistemology of moods' is an idea that Cavell relates to Emerson, and it is a notion that does not draw a hardline distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. Yet, it is neither a form of solipsism nor idealism; it is an experience of succession and onwardness, as if the world is proving its existence to us by its very 'evanescence' from us.[271] In other words, the way we subjectively feel about the world in our process of existence and growth in expanding circles is as vital to our experience as what objectively exists outside of ourselves. In educational institutions today, we are often asked to value our cognitive perception of the world higher than the way we feel about it. While a scientific and factual approach to our existence is important, the reality is that humans cannot help but relate to the world subjectively. By ignoring our intimate, emotional connection with the world, we are acknowledging only half of our story. This does not mean that we should fully surrender to the whims of our emotional impulses. However, education should not ignore this subjective intimacy with the world and how it shapes our experiences, simply because we currently confer more seriousness to cognitive logic. In *Experience*, Emerson writes: 'Thus inevitably does the universe wear our color.'[272] Cavell further elaborates on that by saying:

> 'The universe is as separate from me, but as intimately part of me, as one on whose behalf I contest, and who therefore wears my colour. We are in a state of "romance" with the universe...we do not possess it, but our life is to return to it, in ever-widening circles.'[273]

Here, Cavell argues that even when we draw clear distinction between the entity of the self and that of the world, the relationship between them is still close and intimate, like a romance. Both Cavell and Emerson bring forth this idea from their reading of William Wordsworth, who depicts the mind-world relationship as 'the marriage of self and world'.[274] And just as mutual understanding is needed in a marriage—or similar partnerships—this relationship requires it too. Yet, at times, this connection involves the occasional obstacle where confusion and discontent ensues, and this applies to our relationship with the other. Wordsworth declares feeling 'lost' when he realises how mind

[271] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 127.
[272] Emerson, 'Experience', 242.
[273] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 128.
[274] Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*, 15.

and world can at times appear 'quite frighteningly...distinct'.[275] This experience occurs when the world and those in it feel very alienating and disorienting; yet, I believe that this is very important to our journey, as it allows us space to think about our place in the world, which is essential to a perfectionist journey. Goodman argues that the romantic concept of marriage of self and world also has a clear 'element of willed action'.[276] After all, marriage is a commitment that requires choice, one that comes with a joyful embrace of one's partnership. Yet, I interject here to ask, does that really apply to those who are truly brutalised and alienated in our world? What about those who are the most vulnerable and feel that they have no control, agency or free will over their own lives? Perhaps this is where we again stand to question the philosophy that we are operating from within and evoke the metaphysical and ontological questions that need to be addressed in order to continue on a well lit path. What Cavell does, in a way that adjusts the concept of *will*, which 18th century romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge describe as an act of 'love' and 'joy', is to describe it as 'accepting' and 'acknowledging'.[277] It is first and foremost an acknowledgement of our existence and of our humanity, and also, the willingness to take the other's existence and position into account and bear the consequences.[278] Perhaps those who feel voiceless and unseen at least have a shimmer of light inside them knowing that their mind is their own and that they have at least the freedom and will to understand themselves and attempt to acknowledge the other in an oppressive and unjust world. They at least have the freedom to brave the seas of the journey of self-transcendence. As I will discuss later, a loss of this knowledge of self is something that is a true threat to us, but there is always hope that there might be a way to break free of our shackles, at least in our own minds. This hope can be a lifebuoy in our education journey when we feel lost or neglected. Cavell also uses the metaphor of marriage to create a genre in his commentary on film, which he calls 'remarriage comedies'. This genre includes a group of Hollywood films—released between 1934 and 1949—that tell the stories of (heterosexual) couples who are 'already together' and go through differences and obstacles and are willing to reunite in the end by participating in a conversation

[275] Goodman, 16.
[276] Goodman, 23.
[277] Goodman, 24.
[278] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 326.

with one another.[279] The stories of these films are a 'struggle for acknowledgement', where the woman desires knowledge and at the same time wants to be known by the man, who seems to be ambivalent about his willingness to know the woman (the other).[280] These heroines understand the need for the acquisition of self-knowledge and throughout the story, they come to realise that it is 'a matter of learning who you are', which is achieved through the acknowledgement of their desire.[281] Cavell also describes the comedy of remarriage, as 'an inheritor of the preoccupations and discoveries of Shakespearean romantic comedy'.[282] Indeed, the accounts that he provides of these films, which he calls 'readings', carry somewhat similar themes to his readings of Shakespeare and other works of fiction (like the example of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* that I referred to earlier). These readings further illuminate an understanding of acknowledgement qua an act of will as a substitute to 19th-century romanticism's naive sense of joyful will.

If we are to view our relationship with the world as one that resembles a marriage, then a fair amount of confrontation with the pain and sorrow that it could bring us is pivotal. We engage with that which makes us sad, afraid and lost in this world through a confrontation that can be a conversation that leads to accepting and acknowledging the world and what dwells within it—what is outside of the self, i.e., the other. Marriage after all, Cavell declares, is 'an allegory' of what many philosophers call 'friendship', which is, as I discussed earlier, one way to describe our relationship with the other. Therefore, for those who find the metaphor of marriage to be unappealing and wish not to use it to describe their relationship with the world, then one is free to replace it with the allegory of a partnership, friendship, relationship or even kinship.[283]

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[279] In *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*, a book dedicated to this genre, Cavell characterises it as resembling what he described as 'Old Comedy', which highlights the heroine as a holder of the key to 'the successful conclusion of the plot', unlike 'New Comedy', which highlights the man's strive to overcome obstacles that lie between him and his beloved. However, he also clarifies how the comedy of remarriage is very different from both of these in its casting of a married woman as the heroine, as well as the nature of its plot, which does not move towards getting the couple together, but rather to getting them *back* together again. See: Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 1.

[280] Davis, *Critical Excess*, 147.

[281] Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 56.

[282] Cavell, 1.

[283] For a consideration of how queer relationships could play a role in this discussion and how they may complement but also potentially problematise the idea of remarriage, see: Lee Wallace, *Reattachment Theory: Queer Cinema of Remarriage*, A Camera Obscura Book (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020). Also, for comments on aspects of sexuality (or lack of it) in Cavell's discussion of marriage, see: Rex Butler and Catherine Wheatley, 'Friends and

The educational value of this idea is in its connection to the concept of understanding the world through conversation with the other, which is in itself an educational practice. What one might find appealing about Cavell's discussions of his genre of film and his allegory of marriage and remarriage is how it grounds philosophical questions in ordinary stories from the everyday lives of couples. This parallels what he declares to be the claim of the art of film in the sense that it 'shows philosophy to be the often invisible accompaniment of the ordinary lives that film is so apt to capture'.[284] Bringing philosophy into our daily life—or in better terms, acknowledging that philosophical questions are already there—is like rediscovering the same world we dwell within again and again. This is essentially what philosophy is: perpetually thinking about the same ideas in ways that allow us to continuously rediscover them. It is what Cavell describes as 'going back over something'.[285] However, to think philosophically of the world means that one's thoughts could potentially become rife with perplexity, fear and lostness—basically what Cavell dubs as scepticism. We may feel that we once *knew* the world, but we no longer do so, as if we became 'unfamiliar' with it. Wittgenstein argues that this happens especially when we think of 'metaphysical' questions, and a 'return' to what is familiar and ordinary could calm this sense of philosophical anxiety. [286] However, we never truly return to the world as we knew it before, because 'what returns after skepticism is never (just) the same', Cavell tells us.[287] Here lies the uncanniness of the ordinary: when the boundaries between the ordinary and the extraordinary are blurred. When we think philosophically about the world and our place in it, we return to an ordinary that is extraordinary. We rediscover the world every day. The journey of the self is a journey of discovering the extraordinariness of the ordinary; it is a journey through the uncanny. It is a journey of waking up everyday to a sense of oddness about the world (its nextness), as if we are perpetually discovering it.[288] Thus, our self's journey in education may be a continuous recovery of and from the world we live in and our knowledge of it. As we grow, we may cease to coexist with our own perspectives and values, we may overgrow the concepts

Strangers: A Conversation', *Conversations: The Journal of Cavellian Studies* 8, no. 6 (2020): 126–141.

[284] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 6.

[285] Cavell, 15.

[286] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 165–166; Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*.

[287] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 166.

[288] This is how Cavell referred to Thoreau's *Walden*. See: Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 168; Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden: 150th Anniversary Edition* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

we formally adopted. Being contained in standardised education systems that quell creativity for many of us as students, researchers and teachers may lead to despair and anxiety because we no longer know where we stand. We no longer know our place in the world. Seeing that world anew everyday and continuously questioning and rethinking our relationship with the other (world, people, nature, systems, etc.) allows us to find ourselves by rediscovering ourselves everyday. The self and world relationship is something that I find to be at the heart of the perfectionist journey because of this profound connection to the everyday. I mentioned earlier that Cavell described the everyday as something that we cannot help but aspire to take interest in, especially if we are to engage with philosophy. He connects this idea to the human need to respond to scepticism, which awakens us to the conclusion that the world and others in it are not to be 'figured out' or 'known', but rather to be 'acknowledged'.[289] From then on, there is no escaping the oddness of the uncanny: that sense of unease with the familiar that is rendered unfamiliar and the blurred lines between the ordinary and the extraordinary. Thus, we perceive the everyday as 'lost to us'.[290] So, it seems only adequate that the most important book in Cavell's philosophical journey other than Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is Thoreau's *Walden*, which Cavell describes as having a focus that 'proposes human existence as the founding of ecstasy in the knowledge of loss'.[291] This journey of rediscovering the lost everyday is the journey of knowledge itself, which is why moral perfectionism has an 'obsession with education'. The perfectionist journey is a journey of education.

[289] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*.
[290] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 171.
[291] Cavell, 171.

Lost and Found

The words *success* and *failure* are amongst some of the utterances often associated with education. Today, in particular, it would be challenging to deny the pressure that is placed on us to achieve success and avoid failure, at school, university or our workplaces. We are asked to operate in a certain manner within systems that seem to frown upon those who do not find what is deemed to be 'success' easily achievable. These systems do not favour the idea of losing one's way. Nevertheless, despite their denial of lostness, it is there in every individual's human experience. Loss, lostness and what we may label as 'failure' are concepts that are woven into the journey of the self—the journey of attained and unattained perfection. Cavell argues that '[i]f calculation and judgement are to answer the question Which way?, perfectionist thinking is a response to the way's being lost'.[292] The tragedy of loss and lostness is simply an inevitable part of human existence. I could say with confidence that, at least, most people agree on this. The instability of the human condition is perhaps what our species fears the most. This is why human history up to the present is simply a relatively long story of us trying to make sense of the world. Therefore, when we think philosophically about the world and struggle to understand our own finitude, we become intellectually tragic;[293] this is especially true when we are unable to 'acknowledge' or 'accept' our 'human condition of knowing', which is that we cannot know things for certain outside of the self.[294] Perhaps we struggle to even know what lies within us as well. There is a lot of vulnerability in lamenting over the ambivalence of our condition, and it is a vulnerability that could ironically become

[292] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 55.

[293] Of course here, I am discussing a sense of tragedy that comes with knowledge and thinking about the world and our place in it. It is a type of tragedy that comes with engaging with the world philosophically. This is not to dismiss circumstantial tragedy that is imposed on humans like poverty, physical and mental violence, oppression, war, disaster, etc. Of course these conditions evoke a sense of philosophical contemplation in themselves but require specialised discussion that goes beyond the scope of this chapter. Therefore, I am keeping my discussion within the scope of intellectual tragedy. This includes the tragedy of dealing with the misfortune and disappointment that we often encounter on our educational journey. Cavell, of course, relates the idea of tragedy to scepticism, specifically to the scepticism of other minds, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

[294] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 454.

more intense the further we engage with knowledge. Therefore, it is a cliché to hear someone say that the more you learn about the world, the more miserable you become. As if the more we engage with knowledge, especially when we think philosophically, the more unanswered questions we have and the more complicated and conflicting our understanding of our condition becomes. This feeling involves a sense of 'groundlessness', as if we are standing without a ground under our feet, which could lead us to fruitless pessimism and manifests itself as cynicism or nihilism.[295] Yet, EMP offers a way to see through such groundlessness, at least through our educational journey. The tragedy of becoming lost in the perfectionist journey is met with a sober dose of hope. In *The Gleam of Light*, Naoko Saito warns against an inflammatory sense of fixation on the absolutism of tragedy that leaves no space for hope.[296] She emphasises that hope is specially needed in education and reminds us how EMP offers the notion of 'finding' as a response to lostness. Therefore, hope is essential to the process of education. Emerson opens his essay *Experience* with the question: 'Where do we find ourselves?', and EMP takes this query further by guiding us through 'how' we find ourselves.[297] After asking his initial question, Emerson continues to say:

> 'We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight. But the Genius which, according to the old belief, stands at the door by which we enter, and gives us the lethe to drink, that we may tell no tales, mixed the cup too strongly, and we cannot shake off the lethargy now at noonday'.[298]

These lines from Emerson's text are a tragically beautiful illustration of a state of loss and lostness. After the death of his son Waldo, Emerson was left lost and devastated. Yet, he continued to try to find his way. Cavell

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[295] Saito associates nihilism with a lack of a will to seek the unattainable due to our ignorance of it. It is a state of obliviousness of the true tragedy of the human condition. For further discussion on nihilism see chapter 8 of *The Gleam of Light*. In this chapter, Saito comments on an article by René V. Arcilla that discusses the absolutism of tragedy in which he addresses cynicism as a way to evade tragedy in education. However, Arcilla also warns of a naive sense of hope that could be weaponised to evade tragedy as well through a sense of utopianism, see: René Vincente Arcilla, 'Tragic Absolutism in Education', *Educational Theory* 42, no. 4 (December 1992): 473–481. Arcilla's article in itself is a commentary on the idea of tragedy in education from the perspective of the educator, see: Nicholas C. Burbules, 'The Tragic Sense of Education', *Teachers College Record* 91, no. 4 (February 1990): 469–479.

[296] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 124–125.

[297] Emerson, 'Experience'.

[298] Emerson, 226.

argues that Emerson's opening question is 'of one lost, or at a loss, and asked while perplexed, as between states, or levels, yet collected enough to pose a question or perplexity'.[299] Cavell continues to argue that the way Emerson finds himself again is by 'founding' himself as a philosopher. He argues that there is always a sense of longing for philosophy in Emerson's writing; his prose possesses 'despair of and hope for philosophy'.[300] This 'finding as founding' is a response to tragedy and groundlessness. Saito puts it perfectly when she says that 'Emerson's response to the tragic sense of groundlessness when we lose our way is not grief, but the awareness of the futility of grieving'.[301] To me, this understanding does not necessarily mean an invitation to a stoic approach of rejecting grief. We can still grieve, but we ought to know that grieving is simply a symptom along the way of bringing ourselves back from lostness, although it does not bring back what is lost.

Those who feel neglected and disregarded in education systems, may feel completely lost and unaware of their purpose amidst this complex human existence. As a result, they may become apathetic and grow to live in the bliss of their conformity and moral failings within and beyond their experience in these systems. So how do we then find ourselves when we are lost in the darkness? The answer to that would be through the process of growth as perfection in itself. Getting lost is part of the journey of the attained and unattained perfection, and in the imagery of expanding circles, lostness could mean a sense of stillness in our growth—as if we are stuck in a loop. I imagine the inability to leap to the next circle to become our next self to be like dwelling in our own personal labyrinth in which we hide from both the monsters of our minds and the possibility of an exit. We are either blissfully unaware of who we are and our place in the world, or we feel uncomfortable with our conformity and are unable to expand to take the leap. How do we then manage to eventually escape? How do we see a way out? And what evokes us to stop hiding? In *Circles*, Emerson says:

> 'The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire, is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory, and to do

[299] Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America*, 90.
[300] Cavell, 78.
[301] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 134.

> something without knowing how or why; in short, to draw a new circle...The way of life is wonderful. It is by abandonment'.[302]

Abandonment is an act that delivers us to 'onward thinking' or getting ourselves 'on the way'.[303] In *The Senses of Walden*, referring to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, Cavell mirrors onward thinking with knowing how to go on and knowing when to stop. He argues that it is a state of thinking that is in motion and it is, in a way, related to power; however, that is in terms of power being 'the result of rising, not the cause'.[304] We become lost when we struggle with our self-intelligibility. It is a state of inevitable existential 'fallenness' that, regardless of how tragic, is necessary to a perfectionist journey. At times, we do not recognise that we are lost, but when we do, we might become aware that we lost our sense of place in the world and our sense of self-understanding. The further we drift from any familiarity of the self, the longer it may take us to find our way back. Therefore, there is a sense of will, power, freedom and hope in our attempt to find our way again through the act of abandonment. Cavell refers to abandonment as 'leaving or relief or quitting or release or shunning or allowing or deliverance', which he then equates to freedom.[305] Elsewhere in the same chapter of the book, Cavell also refers to thinking as 'a mode of the self's relation to itself', which he calls: self-reliance.[306] So, if abandonment and onward thinking are intertwined or, in a way, two acts that mirror each other, then onward thinking is also an act of freedom in the self's relation to itself. Abandonment, as the motion of leaving or leaping from a circle's horizon to another, is the self's way of emerging and moving from lostness to onward thinking. It is a motion of a perpetual taking of the next step to the 'unattained but attainable self', which Cavell describes as 'a self that is always and never ours'. This step 'turns us not from bad to good, or wrong to right, but from confusion and constriction toward self-knowledge and sociability'.[307] This motion of stepping or leaving or abandoning is what comes instantly after or perhaps simultaneously with the moment of perfecting. Saito describes it as the moment when 'the self has attained itself and, therefore, starts to unfound and unravel itself to the next stage of unattainable

[302] Emerson, 'Circles', 162.
[303] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 135–136.
[304] Cavell, 136.
[305] Cavell, 136.
[306] Cavell, 134.
[307] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 13.

self'.[308] This moment of perfecting, when the self is perfect and attained is a 'radical moment of transcendence' that we take on a whim, which is a 'manifestation of a *hope* that is born out of *despair*';[309] and yet, it does not promise a glorious destination. Whim merely marks the leap, the moment of abandonment, but it promises neither good nor bad. It is a moment that is 'taken in hope' as Cavell describes it, and the potential good it may lead to is 'something to be proven only on the way, by the way'.[310] Hope is what is behind Emerson's wish of something that is 'somewhat better than whim at last'.[311] What it promises is the inevitable and crucial continuation of the journey of self-realisation and self-overcoming to attain an unattained next self.

The moment of perfection and abandonment as progress is foreshadowed by what Emerson describes as a gleam of light that shines from within our minds. Cavell construes our life's journey as a progression that is 'not assured by a beacon from afar' but is rather 'pointed to' by 'a gleam of light over an inner landscape'.[312] This journey is something that is deeply personal and 'takes its cue' from our own conditions to awaken our judgement of where they place us in the world. In other words, the gleam of light is our own 'intuition'—our sense of who we are. It is something that uncovers our own tendencies towards conformity and evokes our judgement of the world.[313] The gleam of light calls on our genius, our 'voice of mind', which Cavell harkens back to Socrates's idea of genius as something 'like our receptiveness' rather than our 'virtuosity'.[314] Genius is our capacity for self-reliance, distributed universally as the capacity for thinking.[315] In the opening of 'Self-Reliance', Emerson says: 'To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart, is true for all men,—that is genius'.[316] This is not a reference to universalism; what he rather means by this is that genius is not an elitist talent, it is distributed equally amongst all humans. In other words, it is something that we all possess the capacity to cultivate.[317] Genius is about

[308] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 112.
[309] Saito, 112–113.
[310] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 137.
[311] Emerson, 'Self-Reliance', 130.
[312] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 329.
[313] Cavell, 389.
[314] Cavell, 18.
[315] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 26.
[316] Emerson, 'Self-Reliance', 127.
[317] The following is the sentence in 'Self-Reliance' that comes after that referenced in the previous footnote: 'Speak your latent conviction and it shall be the universal sense; for always the

evoking our judgement from within in a way that challenges our blind conformity to society, (I will later elaborate on how an aversion to conformity in this case does not mean a rejection of communality). It is an idea that eventually harkens back to the self finding its place and its own mind in the world. Finding our genius in that moment of the gleam of light's flickering is us stepping into the journey of self-reliance. Yet, that step is still only the beginning, that is why whim is merely whim! It is only the beginning; much work remains to be done after the recognition of our genius. In 'Self-Reliance', Emerson states that 'in every work of genius we recognise our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty'.[318] In that, there is a sense of surprise, perhaps like a eureka moment, but it also comes with a certain familiarity with our own rejected thoughts. I think Emerson here describes the feeling that we get when we reach an idea but we feel as if we pondered over it many times without actually realising that we did. This is when we recognise that we are getting back the thoughts we suppressed and we feel content to receive them back.[319] This takes me back to Cavell's words on thinking as a way to find our way back from lostness, 'as if thinking is remembering something'.[320] This individual uniqueness that our genius embodies cannot be modelled and standardised and, thus, cannot be harnessed and celebrated in a purely instrumentalised education, which is why the best such education can do to come close to it is to rely on assumptions. This of course leads to the dimming of our light or perhaps leads to its loss completely as Saito argues. Our genius also tests our tendency to conformity and puts pressure on our judgement. Its main virtue is self-trust, which is of course not to be understood as a trait of conceit and boorishness but rather 'excellence born of firsthand observation and experience'.[321] Again, in an education system where our gleam of light is dimmed or lost, we have no way to find our

inmost becomes the outmost'. Again, this statement does not contradict Emersonian perfectionism's rejection of universalism. Emerson's words here do not mean what our contemporary minds might read into them. What Emerson potentially means by believing what is true is 'true for all men' and speaking our convictions 'shall be the universal sense' is 'a matter of finding one's words among everyone's'. It is about finding our own ideas and sense of the world instead of blindly adopting what we are shown and told by others. See: Niklas Forsberg, 'From Self-Reliance to That Which Relies: Emerson and Critique as Self-Criticism', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 51, no. 5 (April 2019): 498–507.

[318] Emerson, 'Self-Reliance', 127.

[319] Emily Dumler-Winckler, 'Can Genius Be Taught? Emerson's Genius and the Virtues of Modern Science', *Journal of Moral Education* 47, no. 3 (July 2018): 272–288.

[320] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 55.

[321] Dumler-Winckler, 'Can Genius Be Taught?', 275.

genius, which makes us easily susceptible to conformity. I will later discuss how EMP can give us the hope we need to reignite our light.

The gleam of light is an idea of Emersonian perfectionism and transcendentalism 'as a hybrid of the spiritual and natural'.[322] It is 'the aesthetic and spiritual dimension of EMP' but at the same time, it is secular and grounded in the common, the ordinary, the everyday of human life.[323] That is why the gleam of light is not something miraculous or magical that comes from a higher power from above; it is rather part of a personal and practical process of transformation, self-realisation and self-overcoming. In education as a perfectionist journey, whim is only the beginning, and our genius that is illuminated by the gleam of light needs to be more profound than the impulsivity of whim. Thus, our gleam of light and intuition about our next self are not only to be 'arrived at in person' but also discovered and rediscovered over and over throughout our journey.[324]

We are meant to lose our gleam of light and rediscover it again because that is an essential part of the perfectionist journey. This process is why I would like to accentuate the idea of darkness, which perhaps is the generic aesthetic embodiment of the concept of lostness. In many human cultures, a lot of emphasis is put on the concepts of light and darkness. We are often attracted to the light because darkness frightens us. We compare darkness to menace, horror and ignorance, while the light is usually seen as the force of good, warmth, enlightenment and divinity. Perhaps this preference comes from our tendency to focus on salvation rather than suffering, on arriving rather than leaving, on ends rather than the path to them. However, there is no light without darkness, no salvation without suffering, no growth without (re)birth. We are accustomed to loving the light because it is what nourishes life, but it is in the darkness of the soil that a seed opens up before it sprouts out into the light. In *Cities of Words*, Cavell mentions that he is not only attentive to 'the way in which the initiating impulse to the further self may present itself in different temperaments of thought' but also to 'the beginnings of philosophical stirring which no perfectionist can ignore'.[325] I argue that this stirring begins while we are still lost in the darkness. Whim might seem to flash suddenly in our minds, but

[322] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 101.
[323] Saito, 100–101; Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*; Emerson, 'Circles'.
[324] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 54; Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 102; Emerson, 'Self-Reliance'.
[325] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 315.

it does not come from nothing. Many elements of our condition gradually stir and encourage us to think even before we've developed our sense of intuition and self-reflection. The gleam of light is 'guided' and 'tested', as Cavell puts it, by whether our move to our next self is suggested by the terms of our condition.[326] Thus, the seeds of perfection are sown while we are lost—our gleam of light is born from our darkness. In an essay called *Humanity of Science*, Emerson alludes to this idea when he beautifully paints a picture of the darkness:

> '[A]s the ivy creeps over the ruined tower, and grass over the new-made grave, so, over the spoils of a mountain chain, shivered, abraded, and pulverised by frost, rain, and gravity, and brought down in ruins into the sea, a new architecture is commenced and perfected in darkness.[327]

As far as my reading of Emerson and Cavell goes, I find that the idea of darkness is well recognised and appreciated in their work when it is represented as lostness. Yet, I find that a romantic and aesthetic appreciation of darkness like this example from Emerson's *Humanity of Science* is not emphasised enough in their writing. The tone in which they address darkness can often seem to portray it as something that is there only to be overcome and emerged from; as if it is only acknowledged and appreciated because it is overcomable. As if the night is something that is there only for us to appreciate the daylight. This is something that is very prevalent in Western philosophy and Western culture, arguably due to the mark that Christianity has left on both of them.

If the darkness of lostness, tragedy and confusion is an essential part of the perfectionist journey, then it is something to be taken further than being an obstacle to overcome, no matter how formidable or dreadful that might be. It is important here to point out that I am not objecting to what darkness represents in EMP. I am merely problematising the notion of placing that representation within a light-equals-good and darkness-equals-evil binary. What I am attempting to illustrate is that being lost and confused can be seen as 'good' too, at least in our striving to attain the unattained but attainable self. I highlight this idea because of its implication for education in regards to the concepts of success and failure that I started this subchapter with. In education systems, a

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[326] Cavell, 329.

[327] Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Humanity of Science', in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Major Prose*, ed. Ronald A Bosco and Joel Myerson (Harvard University Press, 2015), 81.

central demand is for us to succeed. Success alone seems to be rewarded at schools and universities—at least most of them from middle school onwards. In higher levels of education, like doctoral studies, little interest is given to documenting how doctoral research evolves, even though in many cases, the failures are what eventually lead to a successful thesis. Failure is not only important in the journey of education, it is also pivotal to it.

When Cavell discusses the terms from which the gleam of light takes its cue, he mentions conditions like boredom, restlessness, disappointment, strangeness, exile, sickness and torment. These are what he claims to be 'the terms in which Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* portrays the modern subject'.[328] Part of the perfectionist journey is realising that we experience the 'knowledge of loss', from the aforementioned tragedies to the tragedy of scepticism. It is after tragedy that 'the world must be regained every day, in repetition, regained as gone' through a cycle of losing and finding, and moving to and from, nexts.[329] This is the main recipe of the perfectionist journey.

Voicing Our Condition

So, what are we to do as we rise from the ashes of our lostness in education? How do we continue the journey after that gleam of light shimmers and we discover our genius? This is when recovery from loss and lostness begins: a recovery that is found in 'a finding of the world, a returning of it, to it'.[330] This finding of our way out of our cold, dark labyrinth bears the price of giving something up, letting go, abandoning, leaving, moving on, leaping. We do this by seeking—'finding in every step'—by thinking onwards to the most nearby temporary end of the small journeys that constitute the self's grand encompassing journey. This is the journey of knowledge, of philosophy itself; it 'starts in loss', in the finding of the self at a loss and ends in the recovery from

[328] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 329.
[329] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 171–172.
[330] Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America*, 114.

it.[331] It is of course only the recovery of that single issue of finding, as the journey continues on towards no fixed ends, no ultimate final finding and no 'unified foundation of philosophy'.[332] We are meant to depart again. Every shore we reach eventually becomes a *port of call* rather than a true final destination.[333] The flying perfect always invites us to set sail again, to abandon the self for the next self. This 'endless journey of self-overcoming and self-realisation' is the 'essence' of Cavell's EMP.[334] Yet, most importantly, and what distinguishes EMP from other perfectionisms is the element of *shame*. It requires us to become ashamed of our current condition—in a way, ashamed of ourselves—as we endeavour for our next self.[335] Shame is a state of self-dissatisfaction in that unsettling moment when we realise our failing to aspire to a further unattained self. Cavell calls Emerson's 'Self-Reliance', 'a study of shame'.[336] Shame is also a concept that is related to our navigation of our place in the society that we recognise as ours. It is an expression of self-consciousness, of our realisation of our own conformity. Shame is what arises when we can no longer justify complacency and injustice, whether it is practised on us or others. Therefore, the significance of shame is its potential to prompt something in us, to make us realise that change is needed. When asked in an interview at Harvard University, 'What does it take to be a philosopher?', Cavell begins his answer by saying that a 'taste' or a 'mood' for philosophy is required. Then, he continues: 'You get to a mood where you can only be found by making assertions and finding yourself dissatisfied with everything you've said. If you like that state of being dissatisfied with everything you've said or that's said to you, you are probably hooked already, and so philosophy has chosen you'.[337] If anything, Cavell's words here confirm how pivotal this feeling of dissatisfaction is to our journey. I imagine it as something that accumulates inside of us throughout our experience in the world and evokes that forward thinking that allows us to leap to our next self in a process of self-overcoming as well as self-transcendence. Dissatisfaction is a provocation to-

[331] Cavell, 114.

[332] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 134.

[333] A 'port of call' is a maritime term. It refers to a specific place where a ship stops during its voyage (for maintenance, supplies, to load or unload cargo or other needs). It can mean any temporary stop during a journey.

[334] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 53.

[335] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 16.

[336] Cavell, 47.

[337] Stanley Cavell, Interview with Stanley Cavell - Conversations with History, interview by Harvard University, 2002, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIIKqEl8xEw.

wards finding our place as well as our voice in the world. After all, perfectionism sees both individual and social misery 'less in terms of poverty than in terms of imprisonment, or voicelessness'.[338] When we get lost, we lose our voice, and the journey of finding our genius again, of recognising our own rejected thoughts, is also the journey of rediscovering our voice, of becoming intelligible. This situation, as I will argue later, has many implications for education as a journey, as it is a journey of finding our voice and the words to have conversations and voice our condition. Education systems are not always happy and fulfilling places for many of us, especially for those deemed as the other, those who fail to meet the standards of these systems. Saito echoes this concept in one of her journal articles when she declares, based on her interactions with students, that many of them 'had lost something precious in the course of their school experience' as education that is too concerned with ultimate goals and developed standards fails to respond to their loss of voice.[339] Cavell's idea of the voice is of course rooted in ordinary language philosophy and in the everyday. It starts from the idea of home, from the place that should feel the most familiar to us in this world. The feeling of discomfort or dissatisfaction in one's home, of not feeling 'at home' is arguably a multi-dimensional idea. It is a feeling of discomfort with our own state of mind, our place in society as well as the place we think that we belong to. The everyday dwelling of our physical home is where we start our interactions with the material world around us as well as where we begin practising language. It is where we begin to partake in conversations with others. This domesticity of the everyday is probably why Cavell was interested in the films that he engaged with philosophically, as they all share elements of this as a theme. Looking at some examples of these films could very well aid us in understanding the Cavellian idea of the voice.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned Cavell's commentary on film and his philosophical reading of a genre of Hollywood films released between 1934 and 1949, which he calls 'the comedy of remarriage'. Yet, this is not the only genre that he discussed. In his 1996 book *Contesting Tears*, he introduced the genre of 'the melodrama of the unknown woman'.[340] Getting its name from the film *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, Cavell describes this genre as one

[338] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxxi.
[339] Naoko Saito, 'Awakening My Voice: Learning from Cavell's Perfectionist Education', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 36, no. 1 (January 2004): 79.
[340] Stanley Cavell, *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

that is 'derived' from the comedy of remarriage but that negates the element of comedy through melodrama. He also occasionally refers to it as 'the melodrama of unknownness'. The women of both genres can be understood through moral perfectionism, but the difference is that the women of the melodrama seek knowledge and their unattained but attainable self outside of marriage—outside of a 'mode of conversation with a man'.[341] Marriage in these films is not something to be regained or 'reconceived' but is rather a 'route' to transformation and change of the woman's identity.[342] In *Contesting Tears*, Cavell even imagines what the women of the melodrama would say to the women of the remarriage comedies, and in that speech, they declare why they seek knowledge outside of what they describe as 'the humiliation of marriage'. They declare: 'there is no happy education to be found there; our integrity and metamorphosis happens elsewhere'.[343] The women of this genre walk away from friendships with men who do not hear their voice. They choose the solitude of unknownness over marriages where their intelligibility is not welcomed by the men in these relationships. Unlike the men of the comedies who, despite their 'brutishness', crave knowledge of the woman, which allows a conversation and friendship, the men of the melodrama do not. They rather avoid it, escape it, exploit it or even seek to destroy it.[344] That is because the woman's otherness provokes and even peeves them. In the end, what the women of both of these genres want is the recognition and the knowledge of their separate existence from the man's image of marriage. In other words, they seek the acknowledgement of their separateness.[345] So, again, this is an issue of the other's subjectivity.

In his discussion of *Stella Dallas*, Cavell points out how in the beginning, Stella walks into her marriage with eagerness for education, but she quickly realises that her aspirations cannot be found in it.[346] In the early scenes of the

[341] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 108; Cavell, *Contesting Tears*, 6.
[342] Cavell, *Contesting Tears*, 6.
[343] Cavell, 6.
[344] Cavell, 13–14.
[345] Cavell, 22–23.
[346] Stella Dallas is a film by director King Vidor, released in 1937. It is about a working-class woman who marries into high society but later separates from her husband. She dedicates her life to raising her daughter Laurel and eventually separates herself from her as well to allow Laurel to be fully embraced by high society and live a better life. This action is typically viewed by the film's audience as the ultimate sacrifice of a mother, but Cavell argues that there is more to Stella than a mere self-sacrificing mother. Cavell provides a summary of the plot with a focus on some of the film's aspects that he pays close attention to in: Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 265–270

film, we see Stella as a young woman full of ambition and eagerness to expand her horizons and learn about the world. She describes herself as 'crazy to learn everything' and 'become someone'. I found that her marriage to Stephen does not come across, at least to me, as a form of greediness to enter high society but as a route to more freedom and liberation from her strict parents and the limitations of her class. She is eager to meet more people and establish a place of her own in the world to the point of insisting on going to a party and socialising only days after giving birth. She refuses to receive 'education' from her husband, who—on more than one occasion—shows himself to be unapproving of Stella's unfiltered personality and general taste for life. Indeed, this disposition seems to be Stella's defining feature throughout the film. Cavell calls the chapter in which he discusses *Stella Dallas,* 'Stella's Taste'.[347] Her taste is shown in Cavell's work not only as a mere defining trait but also as a weapon that she wields to fight her battles and eventually reclaim her voice. Stella learns that she does not belong to the world of her husband and daughter. She realises that by leaving, her daughter Laurel would finally be able to fully embrace that world and get a chance at a better life; she uses her taste to push Laurel away. This outcome is embodied in a famous scene from the film when Stella shows up to a fancy resort hotel, where her daughter is socialising with her friends, dressed up in what is described as 'Christmas tree' attire. On her body, Stella has piled accessories, furs and perfumes in a display of vulgar taste that becomes the mockery of the young people at the resort. Her plan to make a spectacle of herself is successful, as it drives her daughter to run away from the resort in embarrassment.[348] The women of the melodrama choose to negate conversation and recognise their isolation in an act of claiming their freedom. They find their self-intelligibility through finding their voice. Stella, as Cavell puts it, 'learns the futility of appealing to the taste of those who have no taste for here'.[349] So, she acknowledges 'the individuation of her daughter'

[347] Cavell, *Contesting Tears*.

[348] Cavell contests the popular idea that Stella is unaware of the effect of her 'Christmas tree' display on other people and insists that it is done intentionally as Stella is fully literate in the concept of style and its impact on society. This literacy is evident on more than one occasion in the film, for example, through Stella knowing exactly what kind of clothing she should wear to impress the world of Stephen and through the clothing that she designs and tailors herself for their daughter Laurel. Stella understands that the concept of taste is what others her in her daughter's world. She wields that knowledge again when her first attempt to send her daughter away fails. When Laurel runs back to her, Stella puts on a display of an alleged 'new Stella': a Stella who is newly married to a vulgar man and who smokes as she listens to jazz and reads cheap women's magazines. This trick works, and Laurel leaves her mother's side forever. See: Cavell, *Contesting Tears*, 201.

[349] Cavell, *Contesting Tears*, 202.

and lives through the pain of this knowledge by allowing Laurel to move on from her. As a result, at the end of the film, Stella walks away with pride in an act of reclaiming her voice.[350]

I see a parallel between the ending of *Stella Dallas* and that of Sayaka Murata's novel *Convenience Store Woman*.[351] The novel's heroine Keiko Furukura knows that she has always been different from others. The way she perceives and understands the world is different from how others in society seem to navigate it. She is fully comfortable in her identity as a convenience store worker and more than happy to understand the world through the lens of the store. For her, the store is a little world on its own, where she understands herself, thus, understands others. At one point, she even refers to herself as being 'reborn' as a convenience store worker. However, she is also well aware that in society, she is an oddity—the other: a 36-year-old woman who is aromantic, unmarried and barely able to understand other people's emotions and motives. On top of that, she has only held one job in her life as a part-time convenience store worker. Throughout the story, Keiko lays out the different ways in which she pretends to *conform* to the image that society demands of her, to be 'a normal cog in society'.[352] She absorbs her surroundings and 'mimics' other people's emotional reactions and sense of style to seem as 'normal' as she can and comes up with excuses as to why she is still unmarried and working part-time at her age. However, when she realises that her excuses are becoming less believable to others, she strikes a deal with a cynical, idle man (Shiraha), who pretends to be her partner in return for being dependent on her for food and shelter. In the end, when her endeavour to please society steals her away from her personal world of the convenience store, the place that enables her to know herself and others, she realises on a whim—as if in a moment of flickering of her gleam of light—that she cannot compromise her existence as a convenience store worker for the sake of being 'normal'. 'It is not a matter of whether they permit it or not. It's what I am,' she tells Shiraha in the end.[353] In the last scene of *Stella Dallas*, Stella observes her daughter getting married through a window and dons a smile of pride and accomplishment

[350] Saito, 'Awakening My Voice', 81.

[351] *Convenience Store Woman* is a novel by Japanese author Sayaka Murata. It was first published in Japan in 2016 by Bungeishunjū Ltd. In this text, I reference the 2019 English translation edition. See: Sayaka Murata, *Convenience Store Woman*, trans. Ginny Tapley Takemuri (London: Granta Publications, 2019).

[352] Murata, 20.

[353] Murata, 162.

before walking away towards the camera. Cavell invites us to imagine Stella's walk as the embodiment of the Thoreauvian image of 'the transfiguration of mourning as grief into morning as dawning and ecstasy'.[354] This is the Emersonian perfectionist idea of overcoming pain and voicelessness by abandonment—the 'detachment of self, by the act of leaving'.[355] Like Stella, Keiko, at the end of *Convenience Store Woman*, catches her reflection in the window of the store and is able to think of herself, for the first time in her life, as a 'being with meaning'.[356]

In another film of the melodrama of the unknown woman, *Gaslight*, Cavell describes Paula's finding and reclaiming of her voice as her *cogito ergo sum*, 'her proof of her existence'.[357] It is a *cogito* that is displayed in the form of irony and madness. After she finally realises the truth about the way her husband Gregory manipulated her into thinking that she was imagining things, forgetting things, engaging in kleptomania and all together losing her mind, she says near the end of the film as she is holding a knife: 'Are you suggesting that this is a knife? I don't see any knife. You must have dreamed you put it there...Are you mad, my husband? Or is it I who am mad? Yes. I am mad'. In that, she is mockingly turning the same accusations of imagining things back at Gregory as well as embracing the status of 'mad' in an act of defiance and re-creation of herself. Cavell also uses the allegory of singing to describe Paula's reclaiming of her voice (she is a singer like her aunt): 'her *cogito* thus comes to the singing of her existence, and she chants this existence, accepts herself as mad'.[358] Her new found existence, her freedom, is voiced by the reclamation of her madness. In *Convenience Store Woman*, Keiko embraces her existence through rejecting her humanity and reclaiming herself as a convenience store *animal*. 'For the human me, it probably is convenient to have you around, Shiraha, to keep my family and friends off my back,' she tells

[354] Cavell, *Contesting Tears*, 212.

[355] Saito, 'Awakening My Voice', 86.

[356] Murata, *Convenience Store Woman*, 163.

[357] *Gaslight* is a film by director George Cukor, released in 1944. It is about a woman who is psychologically manipulated by her husband to the point of questioning her perception of reality. It is where the colloquialism 'gaslighting' originates from. Cavell provides a summary of the plot with focus on some of the film's aspects that he pays close attention to in: Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 102– 108.

[358] *Contesting Tears, Cavell, 60.*

Shiraha at the end. 'But the animal me, the convenience store worker, has absolutely no use for you whatsoever'. Shiraha later protests: 'You are not human!'; Keiko thinks to herself: 'That's what I've been trying to tell you!'[359]

Before a final conclusion to these stories, where the woman reclaims her voice, her isolation allows her to observe the world around her in silence. Thus, she gains a powerful ability to judge the world and reach the conclusion of declaring her freedom from it—her transcendence.[360] This outcome is more evident in the cases of Stella and Keiko, who seem to not only be aware of their otherness but also manage to instrumentalise it to achieve their goals. With Paula, this realisation comes much later. Paula's loss of voice seems to occur as she becomes 'decreated' by means of being psychologically tormented out of her wits. Cavell refers to how 'a dog' could associate the flickering of the gas light and the noises coming from the attic with the time that Gregory leaves her home every evening. She realises this correlation only when the detective points it out to her, indicating that Gregory made the noises and caused the light flickering when he sneaked into the attic to look for her aunt's jewellery. Before she is 'instructed' by the detective to reach that conclusion, she goes through a 'process of controlled amnesia' that renders her stupid, or rather 'self-stupefying'.[361] She allows her oppression to take hold of her and completely conforms to the loss of her voice, which is a loss of her reason. In *Cities of Words*, Cavell elaborates further on Paula's non-existence, her unknownness, by noting its manifestation in the Emersonian idea of 'mankind as ashamed'. She is too ashamed and timid to 'declare' her existence 'as revealed in its power of thinking'; thus, her dereliction of thinking prevents her power of judgement.[362] Therefore, she exists as if she 'haunts the world'; she becomes a ghost in her own house. In education, this act of self-stupefaction and turning away from our sense of judgement is something that continues beyond the walls of educational institutions. Education systems that fail to address the loss of our voice but also have the power to induce this loss, leaves a lasting effects on us: we become morally apathetic members of society that are devoured by their own conformity, especially in regards to issues that do not directly impact us. An education that leads to the loss of our voice

[359] Murata, *Convenience Store Woman*, 162.
[360] Cavell, *Contesting Tears*, 16–17.
[361] Cavell, 51.
[362] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 110–111.

and renders us unintelligible also veils us from the voices of others, which facilitates avoidance of our moral responsibilities towards them.

The idea of voice in the Cavellian perspective (based on Wittgenstein) transcends the notion of the voice as a vehicle of human language. This conceptualisation is very evident in his book *The Claim of Reason*, in which he, as Sandra Laugier puts it, aims to 'shift the question of the common/shared use of language, which is central to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, toward the less-explored question of the definition of the subject as voice, and the reintroduction of the voice into philosophy as a redefinition of subjectivity in language'.[363] This redefinition of subjectivity as voice stems from the idea that the ability for expression and meaning is realised not only through the external (outer) mode but through the interior (inner) process that accompanies speaking. Cavell emphasises that these two modes cannot be understood separately. A subject is not something between the inner and outer but rather both of them together, and the inner in itself refers to both 'the private and the manifest'. The inner thoughts—what takes place in the mind—are accessed through means of the outer (words, expressions, the criteria of things).[364] The inner mode of our human voice is what Cavell calls 'the unknown', and it cannot be denied but, at the same time, cannot be understood as something completely hidden and private. Laugier argues that Wittgenstein, especially after Cavell's reading of film, changed the discussion on privacy. What is private to me (the self) is accessible to the other if I want them to have access to it via my expression. So the problem is not whether I am able to express this privacy or not but it is actually in my ability to *mean* what I am expressing, which means my willingness to express and expose myself.[365] This understanding is why Cavell describes inexpressiveness, which is an anxiety of expression, as a 'fantasy' that gives the illusion that expressing myself (voicing my condition through language) is unnecessary. The fantasy of a private language, Cavell adds, is 'an attempt to account for, and protect, our separateness, our unknowingness, our unwillingness or incapacity either to know or to be known'.[366] It is an easy way to avoid self-knowledge as well as knowing the other. I think Cavell puts it perfectly in *The Claim of Reason* when he says:

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[363] Sandra Laugier, 'The Claim of Reason as a Study of the Human Voice', *Conversations: The Journal of Cavellian Studies*, no. 9 (May 2022): 38–71.
[364] Laugier, 46–47.
[365] Laugier, 50–51.
[366] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 369.

> 'A fantasy of necessary inexpressiveness would solve a simultaneous set of metaphysical problems: it would relieve me of the responsibility for making myself known to others—as though if I were expressive that would mean continuously betraying my experiences, incessantly giving myself away; it would suggest that my responsibility for self-knowledge takes care of itself—as though the fact that others cannot know my (inner) life means that I cannot fail to. It would reassure my fears of being known'.[367]

This fear of being known, this 'wish' for the fantasy of the privacy of self underlies scepticism. It suggests that voicing our condition does not require our own intervention or the necessity of the uncomfort of change. Yet, there is no change without discomfort and no voice without loss. Therefore, voicing our unknownness is an 'upheaval' of our inexpressiveness (being powerless to make ourselves known) as well as our over-expressiveness (expressing ourselves beyond our means or control).[368] This is where the educational value of the idea of the voice comes forth. Knowing ourselves, becoming intelligible and self-intelligible requires 'self-defeat'. In education as a perfectionist journey: 'I must disappear in order that the search for myself be successful'.[369] The notion of self-knowledge in this journey is inseparable from the discovery and making of our self-intelligibility, which means that it is, in itself, a journey of acquiring the language to voice our condition. Martin Gustafsson argues that unintelligibility is 'a necessary condition for Cavellian invention and transformation'.[370] This unintelligibility, this loss of the self only to be rediscovered and reinvented through education's perfectionist journey is a matter of 'resisting conformity', and it embodies a sense of freedom in allowing ourselves to commence a venture without fixed ends.[371] This reinvention of a self that is capable of voicing the human condition is also a matter of self-transcendence. Intelligibility in the perfectionist journey of education always involves making ourselves intelligible to others, which allows us to have a conversation with them; it allows us to go beyond ourselves and become detached from an egotistical narrow view of the world.[372] To be aversive to conformity does not only mean doing so for the sake of the self or for one's individual

[367] Cavell, 351.
[368] Cavell, 351; Laugier, 'The Claim of Reason as a Study of the Human Voice', 41.
[369] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 352.
[370] Martin Gustafsson, 'What Is Cavellian Perfectionism?', *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 48, no. 3 (September 2014): 99–110.
[371] Gustafsson.
[372] Saito, 'Awakening My Voice', 87.

benefit with a disregard to other people. Even though EMP focuses a lot on the idea of the self and encourages nonconformity in regards to society's enforced rules and norms, it does not equate conformity with communality. Therefore, it does not encourage us to be aversive to communality. Through the tight connection between the intelligibility of the self and that of others in EMP, the voice of the 'I' in it can be the voice of the 'we' and remains subjective. Thus, voicing my condition is also a matter of voicing the condition of the other. This relationship is why subjectivity is 'a political question' of representation and voice, whether it is the 'subject's expression by her community' or 'the community's expression by the subject'.[373] Thus, I do think that the Cavellian ideas that I am discussing in this text can very much be a conduit to finding a way to join our voices with others in the face of injustice; it is what I think should be one of education's main traits— the ability to encourage us to realise the importance of recognising the place and value of that which is other and assert our moral obligation towards it. In the next chapter, I will go into these concepts in more depth as I reflect further on the idea of the other in the perfectionist journey and touch on the notion of knowledge, acknowledgement and friendship in more detail.

Summary

In this chapter I discussed the perfectionist journey of the self in education. I began by reflecting on the self-world relationship. I described how Cavell, through Emerson, challenges the separation of the inner subjective experience of the self from the external objective reality. Neither of them exist in a fixture, and our experience with our world is a state of succession of moods, which means that it is embodied in the way we experience it. This fluidity challenges the notion of fixture and assumptions about the subjectivity of other selves. The intimate, emotional connection we have with the world shapes our experience, and this is something that needs to be acknowledged in education. I then discussed the concept of 'marriage of self and world', which romantics of the 18th century, like Wordsworth, described as a joyful commitment that requires choice and embrace of partnership. I questioned this view and argued

[373] Laugier, 'The Claim of Reason as a Study of the Human Voice', 38.

that Cavell's notion of this relationship as acceptance and acknowledgement is more relevant. Cavell discusses acknowledgement in his reading of film and his genre of the comedies of remarriage in which he elaborates further on his allegory of marriage and describes it as friendship. Acknowledgement is reached through having a conversation with the other, and it is an educational process in itself. I also discussed the idea of lostness. Being lost is a tragedy that is an inevitable part of human existence and, thus, of education itself; this condition is an integral part of our journey of attained and unattained perfection. EMP offers the notion of 'finding' as a response to lostness. Therefore, it establishes the idea of hope as an intrinsic part of education and offers a way to navigate and overcome lostness. To do so, the concept of abandonment is suggested, which is the self's way of emerging from lostness to onward thinking. It is the motion of leaving or leaping from a circle's horizon to another: a moment of transcendence to the next unattained self. This moment of leaping is a moment of perfecting that we take on a whim as hope born out of despair. It is foreshadowed by the flickering of our inner gleam of light, our intuition and sense of who we are. This moment calls on our genius, our capacity for self-reliance and awakens our reflective judgement. The gleam of light is an aesthetic and spiritual dimension of our educational journey that cannot be modelled or measured. It is also secular and grounded in the ordinary of the everyday. Finally, in the last subchapter, I discussed the idea of voice in EMP. I brought two examples from Cavell's philosophical reading of film and his genre of the melodrama of the unknown woman, particularly *Gaslight* and *Stella Dallas,* and added an example from the Japanese novel *Convenience Store Woman* to lay out how reclaiming our voice could be the way to recover from lostness. I discussed the concept of shame as an expression of self-consciousness and a realisation of our own conformity and unintelligibility, and how it is the driving force for us to seek the recovery of our voice and words. The women in the examples struggle through silence; their otherness is not acknowledged and their intimate relationships with the world lack friendship. They eventually negate conversation and recognise their isolation, then walk away from their relationships in an act of claiming their freedom and self-intelligibility through finding their voice. The Cavellian idea of voice explores the subject as voice, which emphasises the inner process along our outer expression of language (speaking). In that, the inner voice of the subject cannot be shrugged off as 'unknown'. Cavell warns against falling for the fantasy of subjective privacy; this is the belief that our inner voice is separate and unknown, which can result in the unwillingness or inability to express this voice as a means to relieve ourselves from the responsibility of making ourselves

known to others (making ourselves intelligible). This responsibility is an educational one, it is an upheaval and a difficult process of recognising our unknownness; yet, it is one that we must go through to find our intelligibility and the language to express our condition. Finding our voice also means taking on the responsibility of making ourselves intelligible to others, having a conversation with them, and voicing our condition and theirs.

Chapter (5): A Journey with the Other

'What is the problem of the other if it is not a problem of certainty?'

(Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*)

'I have heard of a man whose friend had been imprisoned and who slept on the floor of his room every night in order not to enjoy a comfort of which his friend had been deprived. Who, cher monsieur, will sleep on the floor for us?'

(Albert Camus, *The Fall*)

When I began my discussion of the idea of the other in this thesis, I mentioned it as a 'challenge' to the universalised notion of subjectivity and Western philosophy's tendency to make assumptions. I also mentioned how many philosophers, like Levinas, criticised this tendency by arguing that a large portion of philosophy's ontological efforts are achieved based on an assumed reality that underestimates the endless possibilities of subjective meaning. Therefore, we can never have a fair and sound discussion of the perfectionist journey of the self without understating how the idea of the other fits into it. Earlier, in chapter 2, I discussed what the idea of the other is. I explained the ontological differences between how Cavell and Levinas consider the other: how they disagree about the infinity and transcendence of the other but agree on the responsibility towards and the necessity of conversation with the other. In this chapter, I would like to delve deeper into the Cavellian understanding of this concept and how it fits in the perfectionist journey in light of EMP. I consider the concepts discussed in this chapter to be pivotal to understanding 1) the Cavellian concept of the other, and 2) the place the other occupies in the idea of education as a journey, which is one that cannot be explored without others and an understanding of the role of what is other. Our perfectionist journey of education might be a journey of self-reliance but it is always taken along with the other.

Knowing the Other

In the fourth and last part of *The Claim of Reason*, which Cavell titles 'Skepticism and the Problem of Others', he lays out a discussion of Wittgenstein's parable of the boiling pot:

> 'Of course, if water boils in a pot, steam comes out of the pot and also pictured steam comes out of the pictured pot. But what if one insisted on saying that there must also be something boiling in the pictured pot?'[374]

Cavell then imagines different ways of how the question might be answered. He lays out potential answers as the following:

> 'One response might be: "Of course there is something boiling in the pictured pot! Otherwise there wouldn't be steam coming out! That there is something boiling inside is what the steam means! You seem not to understand what a picture is!" But sometimes one's response will be: "Nonsense! How could something be boiling in a picture? You seem to have forgotten what a picture is!'[375]

Cavell clarifies that Wittgenstein applies this parable to the idea of 'the picturing of pain'.[376] Thus, if we imagine the potential content (let's say liquid) inside the pot to represent pain and the pictured pot to be the other, then how do we know that pain actually exists in the other? The brilliance of this imagery is the way that it deals with thinking about something which we do not fully comprehend. In this case, that thing is the other and more precisely, the other's feelings. Dealing with a boiling pot on a stove nearby that I can see,

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[374] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §297, as quoted in Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 332.

[375] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 334.

[376] The idea of pain is used a lot by Wittgenstein and Cavell, perhaps because it is a strong human emotion that facilitates sympathy and is also often viewed as private. Even in our everyday language, we often hear someone saying how they cannot relate to someone's pain because it is one of those feelings that are hard to imagine or relate to without a personal experience with it. It is something that can be a potent example of the human experience.

hear, feel and perhaps smell is one thing but attempting to understand the content of a pot in a picture is a completely different experience. Pain, thus, is an example of the 'private sensations' of the other that we cannot truly grasp. Wittgenstein of course mainly discusses these sensations in regards to their position in the language-games.[377] Yet, within this discussion of language there is also an interesting observation to be made about our existential understanding of the other in relation to the self. Cavell argues that perhaps any argument about the existence of liquid (pain) in the pictured pot (the other) can be settled by portraying the pot in the picture in a way that gives us a peak at its content, either by showing us the content through a certain view over the rim or by making the pot made of clear glass, for example. Yet, if this image were to be so, it would not be relevant or suitable for 'the question of knowing the pain of others';[378] this is because, Cavell clarifies, 'we would not know what the analogy is to looking "over the rim of its top"; we have no perspective of this kind, or ought not to claim one, on our fellow creatures'.[379] We may feel that there is a sense of inescapable opacity to the other. Yet, Cavell challenges this idea by arguing that the problem of our relating to the other is not because they are veiled from us but because we fail to acknowledge them—the veil is in our own minds. In that, he challenges the notion of viewing the external world and other-minds as one and the same problem. '[W]hat is inside the other is not transparent to me'; thus, 'the problem of the other is not discovered the way the problem of the knowledge of objects is discovered', he clarifies again in *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*.[380] This idea relates back to my previous discussion of the assumptions we make in education about the subjectivity of the other. Assumptions, postulates and presuppositions are all easy means of escape from the discomfort that the opacity of the other makes us feel. Cavell's concept of the other is a warning against assuming our knowledge of the other or attempting to force such knowledge to disclose their otherness. This idea also mirrors the Levinasian distaste for philosophy's attempt to defuse the other instead of accepting its otherness. What inspired this connection for me is also what Cavell says about the possibility of an observer's (an interlocutor in the language-games) *insistence* on the existence of either 'something' or 'nothing' in the pictured pot. Let us go back to the potential answers to the parable: 'Of course there is something boiling

[377] See: Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*.
[378] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 333.
[379] Cavell, 333.
[380] Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 150.

in the pictured pot! Otherwise there wouldn't be steam coming out!' and 'Nonsense! How could something be boiling in a picture?' In the latter answer, by assuming that nothing is inside the pot and, thus, that no pain exists in the other, we engage in an act of *denying*. Cavell says: 'The fire in a picture will not burn you (unless you're in the picture); the steam from this pictured pot will not open this morning's letter. What it *is* is a picture'.[381] I find these lines to be an instant reminder of the many ways we are capable of denying the subjectivity of the other. The words 'of course!' and 'nonsense' are both grammatically significant to this insistence, and they shed light on how we speak about the other in a way that assumes that we know what we are talking about. However, why would someone insist? Why would the interlocutor declare emptiness? Why do we assume that we know the other's pain or that it does not exist in the first place? What the parable conveys to us, Cavell argues, is to ask ourselves these questions, reconsider the utterance of words and be 'suspicious' of insistence.[382] Assertions about the other can be argued as an automatic denial of its existence. If I assume that what is in the pot is water while in fact it is another liquid or not even liquid at all, then I am denying the whole existence of that something; I am denying the other by overlooking who or what the other is. In other words, when we make assumptions in education about the subjective identity of the other, we are—dare I say—erasing that other by attempting to erase their otherness. Cavell argues that our scepticism of other minds is a 'stance' that we take 'in the face of the other's opacity and the demand the other's expression places upon [us]'; and that stance is a 'denial or annihilation of the other'.[383] This denial of the other (scepticism of other minds) is something that Cavell saw as a 'fundamental process of scandalous scepticism'.[384] So, how does all of this fit into the perfectionist journey in education? In my venture through the journey of the self, I emphasised the importance of meditating on the idea of the self's relationship with the world, which is a relationship with the other. However, we also know that the perfectionist journey is one of self-knowledge and self-intelligibility, which includes the intelligibility of others. Then, how do we regard this intelligibility? How do we navigate a relationship with the world and others in it when it is a relation that Cavell describes to be 'not one of knowing, where knowing construes

[381] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 335.
[382] Cavell, 336.
[383] Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 150.
[384] Standish, 'Education for Grown-Ups, a Religion for Adults', 79; Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 150.

itself as being certain'.[385] How do we know the other without assumptions or assertions? I mentioned earlier that Cavell asserts that our intention towards the other should not be that of knowledge with certainty but of acknowledgement.

The case for acknowledgement can be further elaborated on by referring back to the idea of intimacy as an allegory for our relationship with the world and others in it. In many examples of intimacy including those from Cavell's reading of film, literature and theatre, especially Shakespearean tragedies, he invites us to see romantic relationships as a representation of the self's relation with the other. In these romances, we see that the proof of the other's existence is not a problem of 'establishing connection' but one of 'suffering' the 'separation from the other'.[386] I understand this to mean that the challenge we face in our journey is the realisation of the individuality of the other and its separation from our own nature; the understanding that the other is separate from us and we ought not to attempt to defuse it in a way that matches our self. Yet, this realisation in itself is the moment we truly 'know' the other. In a way, we know the other by not knowing the other. So, it is not knowledge but acknowledgement. Through a philosophical reading of these relationships, Cavell also draws an image of what our resistance to acknowledgement looks like. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, for example, Othello's failure to acknowledge the otherness of Desdemona—his inability to leave himself open to otherness—brings about the collapse of his confidence in his knowledge. He chooses the inconceivable path of believing Iago instead of his wife and drowns in the torment of his jealousy. He is completely lost, almost in a feverish dream of self-torture enacted by his sceptical doubt. His state is not out of his belief in a piece of knowledge (the alleged unfaithfulness of his wife Desdemona) but in an effort to avert knowledge all together.[387] In his commentary on Cavell's exploration of *Othello*, Paul Standish describes the tragic hero's torment as 'an emblem of his inability to live with the imperfection of the human condition'.[388] Othello seeks an image of perfection as completeness; 'a purity, of a perfect soul' and sees Desdemona as a companion that fuses into his image, into his sameness, and confirms it.[389] He sets out a criterion that is based on

[385] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 45.
[386] Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 146.
[387] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 484.
[388] Standish, 'Postmodernism and the Education of the Whole Person', 130.
[389] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 485.

himself of how this other (his wife) ought to be, but when her otherness shatters that confirmation of his image of himself, he 'loses his grasp of his own nature'.[390] This is a loss that is caused by Desdemona's own openness to his otherness. Unlike him, she leaves herself open to the other, and is willing to change through their union, and in that she evokes in him 'the possibility of his own 'imperfection' and 'incompleteness'.[391] Therefore, Othello's 'avoidance' of the acknowledgement of the other is a form of sceptical narcissism, which is shattered the moment it is 'exposed' thus 'known'.[392] Cavell also discusses this avoidance in other Shakespearean examples. In his essay called 'The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*', which is published in his book *Must We Mean What We Say?*, he elucidates that similar to Othello, Lear, who is eager to receive confirmation of Cordelia's love and outraged by her moderate expression of it, must 'first recognize himself, and allow himself to be recognized'.[393] Lear knows that Cordelia truly loves him. Yet, he refuses to recognise that love because it demands a recognition of his *self*, which is something that he avoids in the opening scenes and only attains in the end of Act 4 when the two are reunited. The avoidance of love (qua the avoidance of acknowledgement) is a common theme in the stories of Shakespeare's tragic heroes. Their struggle is their inability to forgo knowledge. Thus, 'overcoming knowing' becomes a task that they all share: 'one crazed by knowledge he can neither test nor reject' (Othello), 'one haunted by knowledge whose authority he cannot impeach' (Macbeth), 'one cursed by knowledge he cannot share' (Hamlet), and one who 'abdicates sanity for the usual reason: it is his way not to know what he knows, or to know only what he knows' (King Lear).[394] These characters are avoiding the acknowledgement of the other by avoiding the acknowledgement of the self, first by themselves through their resistance to the reality of their imperfection and then by others through not allowing themselves to be left open to the other. Therefore, the 'barrier to knowledge of the other', as Russell Goodman puts it, 'lies in the knower'.[395] What our perfectionist journey in education can bestow upon us is a realisation that the acknowledgement of the other is the self's responsibility. It is up to my 'attitude and sensibility'; thus, a failure to acknowledge other minds is my (the

[390] Cavell, 486; Standish, 'Postmodernism and the Education of the Whole Person', 132.
[391] Standish, 'Postmodernism and the Education of the Whole Person', 130.
[392] Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 146–147.
[393] Stanley Cavell, 'The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*', in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1958), 274.
[394] Cavell, 325.
[395] Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*, 6.

self's) problem.[396] Cavell affirms this by saying: 'In knowing others, I am exposed on two fronts: to the other; and to my concept of the other'.[397] Here lies another distinction between the Cartesian idea of the external world, which is something that exists in a completely objective manner outside of our own control and 'other minds scepticism', in which the self plays a role.[398] Therefore, Cavell highlights:

> '[A]cknowledgment "goes beyond" knowledge, not in the order, or as a feat, of cognition, but in the call upon me to express the knowledge at its core, to recognize what I know, to do something in the light of it, apart from which this knowledge remains without expression, hence perhaps without possession'.[399]

In this, Cavell lays out the seeds of a notion of an ethical commitment towards the other. It starts with a recognition of the other's relationship to the self and how a commitment towards acknowledging the other is a commitment to acknowledging oneself. Then, it continues by construing that the best way to know the other is by not knowing the other. In that I mean overcoming the idea of knowledge and replacing it with acknowledgement; overcoming avoidance by acceptance. Yet, this ethical responsibility is something that we are able to deny. We see examples of this avoidance on a daily basis in our lives, especially when we look at how we relate to each other in our human societies. We are chronically suspicious of each other, specifically of those we deem very different from us—based on their nature, culture, lifestyle or even skin colour. We are suspicious of them because we cannot see sameness in them. We may think that we are unable to know them and recognise that sameness in them, and we stop there without attempting to acknowledge their difference or otherness. We live in a world where we are told that some victims of injustice and violence are more worthy of our sympathy than others because they are 'like us'.[400] The education we have today is one that does not aid us

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[396] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 424; Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*, 6.

[397] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 432.

[398] Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*, 6.

[399] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 428.

[400] I am referring here to statements that were made by some political commentators and journalists at the time of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022. We watched in horror as Ukrainian victims of war were deemed by these statements (as well as many examples of attitudes towards them) to be more worthy of the West's sympathy than people from countries like Iraq and Afghanistan because they were more 'like us', 'civilised', 'European', 'christian', 'have blue eyes and blonde hair' and their country 'isn't a place.. that has seen conflict raging

in avoiding such moral failure. Perhaps we are all taught the value of being benevolent towards the other in school as children. We read stories about good and evil throughout our childhood and we are always encouraged to do good deeds towards others. Yet, as we grow older, education systems fail to take interest in considering the other on a more complex level. Instead, the topic of the other is addressed by a few specialised subjects that are allocated to certain fields of study within the humanities and social sciences. A lot of these subjects seem to function under a convincing epistemology, but they still harbour the same fundamental philosophical problems of assumptions. Thus, an interest in fixed ends that can only be based on assumptions about the other does not foster acknowledgement but instead encourages the tendency to dampen and muffle the otherness of the other out of a rejection of dealing with its unknowability. Such rejection lays out an educational epistemology that manifests avoidance of the other's existence all together, which can lead us to falling into a trap of moral apathy— this is how we end up with a selective sense of justice and morality. In placing the responsibility of acknowledging other minds on the self, the Cavellian concept of the other harbours an educational dimension. Thus, a discussion of this concept is, in itself, a discussion about education: it is inseparable from any consideration of education as a personal perfectionist journey.

for decades', see: Moustafa Bayoumi, 'They Are "Civilised" and "Look like Us": The Racist Coverage of Ukraine', *The Guardian*, March 2022, sec. Opinion, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/02/civilised-european-look-like-us-racist-coverage-ukraine. Of course, this initial reaction to the sameness of Ukrainian victims continued through how they were treated as refugees in comparison to those from other places who were deemed not 'like us', see: Deanna Alsbeti, 'A Double Standard in Refugee Response: Contrasting the Treatment of Syrian Refugees with Ukrainian Refugees Student Column', *Human Rights Brief* 26, no. 2 (2023 2022): 72–76.

The Craftsman's Friend

The human capacity to treat the other in certain ways evokes many questions. An example of such is in the context of humans' treatment of other humans. If I know that I am human and that I am capable of experiencing pain as well as other feelings like fear, sadness, love and joy, then recognising the other as human just like myself should tell me that they feel that too. Wanting to be treated in a certain way by others and wanting to be acknowledged, should inform the way I treat them. Thus, for many humans, it is important to be able to recognise the other as human too. It is clear that a lot of emphasis is put on them being 'like us', but what does that entail? In this context, a familiar question is often heard: Aren't they human too? It is a question that could arise in the face of witnessing humans brutalising other humans. Just as some of us are capable of sympathising with certain others because of the claim of 'they are like us', others seem to have the capacity for the opposite by declaring that certain humans are 'not like us'. Did slave owners *see* their slaves as human? Cavell wonders about this as well in *The Claim of Reason*. Of course, I have to mention here that other sentient beings feel pain too, but it seems to me that a good number of people need that human sameness to feel a certain level of sympathy with the other.[401] Yet, is this human sameness enough? Did the Nazis see Jews, Romanis, homosexuals and other holocaust victims as humans? Do we, those of us who see victims of genocide on our screens today and look away with disregard, see those victims as human? Cavell contemplates the question of seeing humans as humans—based on the Wittgensteinian idea of seeing something as something—and reminds us that things like slavery and Nazism are 'a human possibility'. We can call acts of slavery or genocide 'monstrous', but we need to keep in mind that it is not

[401] This discussion of seeing the human as human seems to be made from a very human-centric perspective. With it comes the potential for the underlying assumption that only humans possess a true capacity for complex emotions, like pain, suffering, fear, comfort, joy and love. If not that, then at least it may seem to assume the human as superior to the non-human. This is a notion (an assumption) that unfortunately a lot of humans tend to harbour. However, I do not limit seeing the human as human to a human-centric notion that is devoid of a consideration of non-human animals, and neither does Cavell. He, in fact, takes special interest in the sentience of animals, especially those that we farm as food in his reflection on Cora Diamond's discussion of J.M. Coetzee's novel *Elizabeth Costello*. See: Stanley Cavell et al., *Philosophy and Animal Life* (Columbia University Press, 2008).

monsters that committed them, humans did.[402] We humans are very much capable of understanding that the others we brutalise are of the human species, at least 'some kind of human', and yet, we are still capable of excluding them from the 'realm of justice'.[403] Herein lies a paradoxical human capacity of knowing that someone is human but considering and treating them otherwise (not *seeing* them as human). Indeed, *dehumanisation* is one stage of perhaps the most vicious and atrocious act humans can commit: the act of genocide. Inflicting such large-scale and horrific brutality on another group of people might not be possible without the perpetrator declaring the victim to be non-human or sub-human. In fact, some studies suggest that the closer the 'social proximity' is between the two groups (victim and perpetrator), the more severe the level of dehumanisation becomes during a genocide.[404] I suppose this severity is necessary in order for such an unforgivable act to take place. The act of genocide stands as an extreme and potent case of the human capacity for 'monstrous' immoral acts towards the other. I find this phenomenon academically interesting in relation to Cavell's discussion of seeing humans as humans, not only because Cavell mentioned the examples of slavery and Nazism but because of this element of dehumanisation. What does it take for something that seems human to be *seen* as human by us? In an attempt to navigate this question, Cavell lays out the story of the craftsman and his friend. He weaves a fascinating tale that leads to many meditations across the span of over 20 pages, but I will illustrate here only one or two of its features.[405] The story starts with Cavell imagining himself strolling in a garden with a craftsman and his friend who is wearing gloves and concealing his face with the brim of his hat. The craftsman suddenly starts revealing certain parts of his friend's body to Cavell to showcase that the friend is in fact an automaton. At first, Cavell cringes at the invasion of the friend's body by the craftsman as he starts to lift up the friend's trousers, take off his gloves, unbutton his shirt and knock off his hat. However, his discomfort dies down when he realises that the friend is not human. Time passes by and Cavell visits the craftsman again.

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[402] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 377–378.

[403] That is why I personally approach words like 'humane' and 'humanitarian' with a sober dose of hesitation and suspicion because they seem to be used in a way that assumes or implies that humans are mainly good and benevolent, which omits the opposite side of human nature.

[404] Lisa Haagensen and Marnix Croes, 'Thy Brother's Keeper? The Relationship between Social Distance and Intensity of Dehumanization during Genocide', *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 7, no. 2/3 (August 2012): 223–250.

[405] Cavell start telling the story at the end of page 403 of *The Claim of Reason* and reveals its last plot twist on page 408. However, it is tricky to pinpoint when he actually finishes with it or finishes discussing it. At some point, he even admits that it is unfinished. It is a puzzling and dense philosophical tale that could easily take an entire book to analyse and discuss.

The latter proudly showcases his handiwork by demonstrating how he is able to make the friend's body parts look human. Cavell is shocked to see what seem to be very realistic looking body parts under the friend's shirt, but the craftsman assures him that they are synthetic. The craftsman assaults the automaton friend with a knife to showcase that his pain response is still very machine-like and not quite perfected yet. Cavell seems uncomfortable and starts to look for ways to remind himself that if he looks inside the head of the friend, he will probably find cogs and screws. More time passes by, and the next time Cavell comes to the garden, he finds the craftsman marvelling at the greatness of his latest edition. The friend now looks indistinguishable from a real human, even in the way he moves, sits on a bench, lights a cigarette and seems to 'enjoy' it. His voice is human-like, and even his head is now a human head! Then, the craftsman produces the knife as usual and starts approaching the friend, who leaps away and resists the craftsman's assault. He begs the craftsman not to stab him by screaming: 'No more. It hurts. It hurts too much'. Cavell is horrified and starts to ask himself: 'Do I intervene?' Cavell here lays out many ways in which this scenario could be understood. He discusses how he (the one who exists in the story) could start wondering if this friend who is pleading for mercy in front of him is not an automaton but a human double, a 'ringer'. There is also the scenario of the craftsman assuring him that the friend is indeed an automaton but is intentionally designed to react the way it is reacting. The struggling, the movement, the words, are all 'built in', and he raises his knife towards the friend again. And yet again, Cavell asks himself: 'Do I intervene?', he then turns his attention to the craftsman and yells at him for building the friend too well, for giving him 'an artificial body and a real soul'.[406] At this point, the Cavell of the story is ready to demand an x-ray of the friend's body to make sure that he is truly a machine. He asks himself how long he is willing to believe the craftsman when he tells him that the friend is just an automaton? And how does he know whether the friend is truly experiencing pain? How do any of us know if someone is in pain by looking at them? Generally, there are specific criteria to recognise the body language of someone in pain (contortion of the body, facial expression, a certain way of screaming, moaning, etc.). If the friend fulfils these criteria then it is settled; we know he is in pain. Yet, what if he does not fulfil these? Also, even if he contorts his body and screams in agony, how do we know that it is the same pain that we (or the Cavell of the story) know to be pain. In 'Knowing and Acknowledging', Cavell lists some of the criteria for identifying pain: 'throbbing, dull,

[406] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 406.

sharp, searing, flashing…'. He adds: 'you can say, if you like, that if one pain gets identified by these criteria with the same results as another does (same place, same degree, same kind) then it is the same pain. But it also seems to me not *quite* right, or these criteria of identity are not quite enough, to make fully intelligible saying "the same"'.[407] So, criteria seem to help us identify something but do not necessarily help us know its exact nature. Criteria may indicate that the friend and Cavell have the same indication of a physical pain but this is 'not enough' to establish a proof of sameness. Let us say that I know that I am a human who feels *pain* (in italics), and the friend is an automaton who feels 'pain' (between apostrophes). In this case, 'pain' does exist but does not fulfil my criteria of *pain*. Thus, there is no way for me to know if *pain* is the same as 'pain'. The criteria here do not provide me with the certainty of the sameness of pain in the other, which means that my scepticism of its existence remains intact. But does that matter? Cavell argues that the craftsman, who wants to convince him that the friend is just a brilliantly built machine yet still a machine, loses his power over him (Cavell) at some point. Any non-human flaw in the automaton can be corrected and perfected with time by a 'super-craftsman'. There is also the possibility of the friend being a human ringer. Thus, 'criteria comes to an end'.[408] So, Cavell's relationship with the automaton friend as a representation of our relationship with the other is established on a lack of knowledge of the privacy of that other. In that, there is the temptation of the sceptical wish to excavate that knowledge and defuse the otherness of the other through packaged criteria; yet, this is just a mere epistemological wish. We have no way of knowing how the other truly feels. What are we to do about it then?

In a final possible scenario, Cavell develops feelings of sympathy for the friend and finds a way to treat him. Then, one day, in what seems to be an act of subservience to the craftsman, the friend suddenly snatches Cavell and delivers him to the craftsman. The latter points out that Cavell's attitude towards the friend is his attitude towards a 'soul', then he rips open Cavell's shirt to reveal a chest full of clockwork (machinery). Now, our philosopher is faced with the possibility that he and the friend are not as different as he thought, not in body and perhaps not in soul. All he knows is that he himself feels pain, but does that mean that the friend necessarily has pain as well? The craftsman

[407] Stanley Cavell, 'Knowing and Acknowledging', in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1958), 245.
[408] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 412.

points the knife at him and urges him to 'decide' whether the friend feels pain, but Cavell cannot decide:

> 'Before, when the craftsman asked for my agreement, I was in a position to decide something, there was room for me to have a say, and there was the same room for the craftsman. But now I am being asked whether I do or do not share the life of suffering with this other, and at the same time I am shown that I do not know whether I am observing or leading that life'.[409]

So, is it that the Cavell of the story is a machine after all and his pain is that of a machine? Was it 'pain' after all? Or is it that the automaton friend has true pain regardless of what that pain is? After all, even if that pain is not the same as Cavell's, it is still pain for the automaton—his version of it at least. In conveying the need (precisely the sceptic's need) to know the nature of the other's pain, Cavell conveys that the 'fundamental importance of someone's having pain is that he has it; and the nature of that importance—namely, that he is suffering, that he requires *attention*—is what makes it important to know where the pain is, and how severe and what kind it is'.[410] Perhaps that is important to know for a medical professional who is trying to scientifically identify the pain in order to help with relieving and treating it but is this knowledge essential for sympathy for the other who is in pain or any ethical obligation towards them? What I—and Cavell—would say is: No! This is where the educational value of seeing something as human lies. It is not the need to know the pain of the other in order to pay attention to it but the acknowledgement of the existence of pain in the other regardless of how well we understand it. I would say that it is something that extends to non-human others that we share ecosystems with. One of the most pains we ought to emphasise in education is the pain that our exploitation of the environment causes other human and non-human beings.[411]

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[409] Cavell, 408.

[410] Cavell, 'Knowing and Acknowledging', 245.

[411] As humanity, along with all Earth's inhabitants, face an escalating environmental crisis that threatens our existence, the philosophical idea of the other can provide profound value to educational and ethical discussions about this crisis. Environmental education is another educational area that is highly instrumentalised in the sense that it is continuously being adapted to become 'education for sustainability'. This adaptation seems to slowly eclipse fundamental questions of philosophy, ethics, and justice in environmental education, in favour of a more goal-oriented but reductive pursuit, see: Bob Jickling and Arjen E. J. Wals, 'Globalization and Environmental Education: Looking beyond Sustainable Development', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 40, no. 1 (2008): 1–21. Cavell's concept of the acknowledgement of the other's pain and our answerability to it could aid us in discussing and understanding the importance of an ethical and moral discussion of the concept of the other that includes nature, future generations,

In ‘Knowing and Acknowledging’, Cavell states that what he takes to be ‘the philosophical problem of privacy’ is not one of finding or denying sameness but one of ‘learning why it is that something which from one point of view looks like a common occurrence’ (like having the same experience of looking at a mountain view or diving into a cold lake), while from another looks ‘impossible, almost inexpressible (that I have your experiences, that I *be* you)’.[412] This question admittedly has no answer. We do not have the capacity to *be* the other. Yet, Cavell suggests, we seem to insist on putting this ‘incapacity’ into words. Perhaps it is human nature, our discomfort with that which we do not know or understand. Thus, even the anti-sceptics, including Cavell, would accept the problems that sceptics call attention to in regards to knowing others (yet, Cavell still ‘rejects the intellectualization’ of them ‘as problems of certainty’).[413] This acceptance comes out of a feeling of powerlessness stemming from our own human limits, our own ‘finitude’. This occurs when, as Cavell describes it, the ‘metaphysical finitude’ turns to an ‘intellectual lack’.[414] So, what do we mean when we say to another: ‘I know you are in pain’? This utterance does not mean that I truly *know*, it is not an ‘expression of certainty’ but one of sympathy, which ‘admits the claim made on me by another’s pain’, and this claim is what ‘demands to be acknowledged’.[415] Understanding the other’s pain comes through acknowledgement rather than certain knowledge. I find the revelation of the clockwork of Cavell’s chest to be somewhat of a poetic representation of this acknowledgement as well as sympathy (I will argue later how acknowledgement does not always lead to sympathy). It makes me wonder: Did Cavell’s sympathy turn him into an automaton (or whatever the friend was)? Is it strange to think that sympathy transforms you into a different person? These questions are also directly linked to the educational address of the perfectionist journey. Our encounters with the other allow us to learn of our own limitations but also show us how

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marginalised communities, and non-human fellow creatures. I do not consider arguments about the environment further in this thesis, but the topic could definitely be an interesting research project for the future. Bringing the Cavellian perspective into the discussion of environmental issues and education has been done before. For example, Adrian Skilbeck connects the Cavellian idea of ‘wording the world’ to how young people can find their voices pertaining to environmental activism. See: Adrian Skilbeck, ‘“A Thin Net over an Abyss”: Greta Thunberg and the Importance of Words in Addressing the Climate Crisis’, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 54, no. 4 (August 2020): 960–974.

412 Cavell, ‘Knowing and Acknowledging’, 262.

413 Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 24.

414 Cavell, ‘Knowing and Acknowledging’, 263; Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 23.

415 Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 24.

we can break those boundaries. This interaction is a recipe for growth in expanding circles. In that, the transcendence of the self in education as a journey is rooted in overcoming the contradictions of the human nature of 'self-centeredness' and 'aspiring towards the whole'.[416]

I also see the shocking discovery of the clockwork chest to be the recognition of humanity in the other—because humanity is what I am, it is the lens in which I understand the world; it is the language that I speak. So to me, when we say that we recognise something that is 'human' in the other, we mean that we recognise a sameness that we can relate to. This is why we can also recognise humanity in the non-human. When we say that a cat or a cow feels compassion and joy 'just like us', we do so to try to recognise them as 'besouled'. When we *see* something as human, we 'acknowledge' humanity in the other. This also applies to those humans whom we perceive as very different from us. Even when the other is private to me, I still recognise them as a human with a 'soul'.[417] Therefore, Cavell refers to human being's lack of capacity for seeing others as human beings, i.e., excluding the other from the realm of justice, as 'soul-blindness'.[418] He does not elaborate on this concept much, but I understand it as representing the most extreme form of avoidance. Another meaning that I confer to the revelation of the mechanical chest of the Cavell of the story is a revelation of acknowledgement of the other as an ethical response that precedes epistemological knowledge. This placing of ethics before certainty, acknowledgement before knowledge, is something that Cavell has in common with one of—if not *the*—philosopher(s) of otherness: Emmanuel Levinas.

[416] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 147.
[417] 'Soul' here does not hold a religious meaning. Cavell makes that clear more than once in his text. I understand it as another analogy for recognising the human in the other.
[418] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 378.

Ethics and the Finitude of the Other

The shift from knowledge to acknowledgement in regards to the other puts forth the idea of ethics above epistemology. The notion of 'ethics first' can be found in Levinas, who places ethics also above ontology.[419] I have mentioned briefly, in chapter 2, some of the similarities between Cavell and Levinas, and perhaps the best way to start expanding on this concept is by highlighting how both philosophers are particularly critical of the treatment of the other in the philosophical traditions they come from. Just as Cavell criticises the philosophy of language for relying on criteria to understand the other, Levinas criticises phenomenology for reducing the other to a phenomenon. There is a propensity in the phenomenological traditions to 'understand things in terms of how they come to appear', which establishes a disposition to place ontology above ethics.[420] This is something Levinas staunchly opposes. Paul Standish eloquently defends the idea of 'obligation [as] prior to being' when he writes: '"To be or not to be" is not the question: this can only be a distraction from the ghost that rumbles under the stage, the ghost to whom we are inevitably, inescapably, always obligated'.[421] In the Levinasian sense, coming into a face-to-face encounter with the other demands absolute responsibility, which establishes an asymmetry of the self's relation to the other. The face of the other is an alterity that I have no way of truly knowing; its bareness is an exposure of vulnerability, and coming into proximity with it calls the self into question. It is an 'address' of ethical obligation 'from which the self cannot flee'.[422] For

[419] When it comes to ontology, Paul Standish argues that Cavell seems 'reluctant to fully accept Levinas's emphasis on ethics before Ontology', and that Cavell's attention to the existence of the other comes belated if it is to be viewed from a Levinasian perspective. See: Standish, 'Education for Grown-Ups, a Religion for Adults', 83.

[420] Paul Standish, 'Ethics before Equality: Moral Education after Levinas', *Journal of Moral Education* 30, no. 4 (December 2001): 341.

[421] Standish here is referring to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He notes that the ghost is that of Hamlet's father, 'whose murder he is obligated to avenge'. Hamlet hears a sound from underneath the stage, which represents (in his imagination) 'the ground of his being'. The sound of the ghost urges Hamlet to place obligation above being. As if it is asking him to snatch it from underneath his being and raise it above his ontological distractions. See: Standish, 'Ethics before Equality', 341.

[422] Sharon Todd, *Toward an Imperfect Education: Facing Humanity, Rethinking Cosmopolitanism*, Interventions (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 17–18.

Levinas, the Other is an infinite entity beyond the self's finite knowledge; it transcends human finitude and demands infinite obligation.[423] The self here is in a passive position, it has no choice but to respond to the moral obligation that the proximity to the other demands. Its responsiveness to and responsibility towards the other are endless;[424] this is where the disagreement between Cavell and Levinas starts. They are in agreement about the ethical responsibility to the other. However, the friction between them appears in this concept of the (in)finite. Cavell sees the other to be as finite as the self is, and the distance between them is closer to the lateral sense than it is to the ascendent; it is of the notion of what is *next*. Building on Thoreau, Cavell acknowledges the other through *nextness* and *neighbouring*.[425] In that, the self here is not passive, it is capable of rejecting its responsibility towards the other. This conceptualisation could be argued to be closer to the reality of the self's relationship with the other. Humans are very much capable of denying their moral obligation towards the other; that is something we continuously witness in our lives. Therefore, Cavell presents a more balanced approach to the relationship between self and other, which makes it more suitable and applicable in education.

Cavell believes that the condition of human existence is one of finitude. Thus, as he argues in the examples of *Othello* and *King Lear* (amongst others), the recognition of the finitude of the other is the recognition of the finitude of oneself and the entire human condition. It is *Human, All Too Human,* as the Nietzschean title goes. So, to reject this finitude, to retreat from acknowledgement back to seeking the certainty of knowledge is to turn our backs on the claim that the other makes onto us. The uncertainty of our finitude is troubling for the sceptical mind, which is why we are always tempted to aim for fixation in our approach to knowledge. In education, this anxiety manifests in an 'all-or-nothing of knowledge', which leads to a general 'cultural scientism' in which human finitude is intellectualised (in an attempt to overcome it).[426] Retreating back to the certainty of knowledge can be a way to evade our ethical responsibility towards the other. In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell lays out the idea of the 'discovery of the other', which underlies the realisation that the

[423] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*.

[424] Ian McPherson, 'Other than the Other: Levinas and the Educational Questioning of Infinity', in *Levinas and Education: At the Intersection of Faith and Reason*, ed. Denise Egea-Kuehne (Oxford, UNITED KINGDOM: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 87.

[425] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*.

[426] Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 21.

self is the 'other's addressee'; in that, the self has the power to either acknowledge the other's existence or not.[427] In this power lies the potential to deny the other's address (existence), and that is what Cavell labels as 'tragic'. He argues that the problem of the self is not the fact that we do not have access to the other's internal mental state but rather that we have the ability to deny their address.[428] In comparison to Levinas, Cavell's reflections on the other seem to carry further involvement of the self and its own moral turmoil evoked by the other's existence. He goes beyond the idea of recognising the other and the responsibility that it imposes on us towards our *answerability* to the other and our reluctance to heed its call.[429] This dynamic is true even when I adhere to approaching the other with acknowledgement; my answerability can still be limited. For example, my acknowledgement of the other's condition (like pain or suffering) could be drawn from my sympathy towards that condition. However, I could also acknowledge the other's suffering but 'sympathy may not be forthcoming'. Thus, the 'claim of suffering may go unanswered'.[430] This is a major idea to be addressed in education.

If we return to the parable of the boiling pot and the story of the automaton friend, we yet again find the idea of the opacity of the body of the other, which veils us from *knowing* what the other is truly feeling or experiencing. Yes, this concept of the body as a veil that obstructs our attempts to look inside someone is to be acknowledged. Yet, we must tread lightly here since acknowledging the unknowability of the other can be used as an excuse to repudiate a responsibility for the other.[431] Such dismissal means that we deny our intelligibility and withhold it from the other. Perhaps the most glaring example of using the idea of 'body as veil' to evade responsibility towards the other is the way humans historically treated the concept of race (again, the 'they are not like us' argument). This evasion (or avoidance) evidently bears—and bares—violence. There are times when the evasion of our responsibility becomes a form of violence in itself, whether it is an active form of violence or a passive one, like the violence we practise when we refuse to think about how a piece of mass produced meat reaches our plate or how the politicians we elect are participating in funding wars in faraway nations. It is easy to avoid what is behind a veil. Addressing this veil *must* be a priority in any educational endeavour.

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[427] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*; Kompridis, 'From Scepticism to Romanticism', 1158.
[428] Kompridis, 'From Scepticism to Romanticism', 1158.
[429] Kompridis, 1159.
[430] Cavell, 'Knowing and Acknowledging', 263.
[431] Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 25.

Violence is another theme that Cavell has in common with Levinas. A commonality that Cavell himself notices. In an essay he titled 'What is the Scandal of Skepticism?', published in *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*, Cavell expresses his surprise of how he and Levinas have reached a similar conclusion about other-mind scepticism despite working from two very different philosophical traditions.[432] However, despite this discovery, Cavell in general does not seem to dedicate a lot of time or effort to studying Levinas further, or at least he does not write much about him. Yet, in 'What is the Scandal of Skepticism?', he takes interest in Levinas's idea of violence and draws a comparison between Levinas and psychoanalysis (specifically Melanie Klein here) in regards to this concept.[433] He discusses how our initial inability to know the other is represented by scepticism as narcissism, which links to or even evokes a sense of violence in the self towards the other, which both Levinas and Klein seem to agree on. Klein approaches this idea of violence from a revised notion of Freud's Oedipal relation—dubbed pre-Oedipal—and uses the example of the mother as other. In Klein's argument, the self's initial experience with this violence towards the other is represented in the child's aggressiveness when the mother, as the one who sustains life and provides nourishment, withdraws in an act of separateness (a reference to weaning from breastfeeding).[434] So the violence here is caused by the other's separateness.[435] On the other hand, in Levinas, this violence is evoked by the mere presentation of the face of the other. In fact, he argues that the realisation of the self's mere existence, being (*ětre*), can be understood as a form of violence towards the other by means of taking, occupying, 'usurping' someone else's place in the world. This thought is especially valid when my being in the world, my condition as it is, is built on top of the other's suffering. In *Entre nous*, Levinas construes:

> 'HAVING to answer for one's right to be, not by appealing to the abstraction of some anonymous law, some juridical entity, but in the fear for the other person. My "being in the world" or my "place in the sun," my home—are they

[432] Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*.
[433] Cavell, 148.
[434] For more on Melanie Klein's work see: Melanie Klein, *The Writings of Melanie Klein Vol. 1-4* (London: Hogarth press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1975). Also, for another example of a comparison between Klein and Levinas and how it could apply in philosophy of education see Sharon Todd, 'Guilt, Suffering and Responsibility', *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 35, no. 4 (November 2001): 597–614.
[435] Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 148.

> not a usurpation of places that belong to the other man who has already been oppressed or starved by me?'[436]

This relationship between self and other that Levinas highlights here is indeed something that we ought to think about today, as our comfort in this world grows more and more dependent on the labour, suffering and exploitation of others. Thus, today's education ought to lead us to recognise this reality, but it unfortunately fails to. Both Levinas and Klein's perspectives on violence portray a sense of loss of relation or loss of knowledge—a shattering of ego—in our encounter with otherness. This loss is somewhat of a tragedy, but Cavell thinks that it is one that we can deal with by replacing our desire for knowledge with acknowledgement.[437] The theme of violence is also clearly present in the examples of the Shakespearean tragic heroes. Othello's avoidance is enacted in a violent confrontation with the unknowable other and leads to tragedy, in this case, the strangling of his wife by his own hands. He omits her otherness by violently silencing her voice forever. In a way, even acknowledging that change is needed carries violence; it can be seen as a violence towards the self as one tears apart oneself in an undertaking of moving towards the next self, the next circle. This image is one of 'disfragmentings' and 'reconstructions' of one's state.[438] How do we then deal with this condition? When we set sail on a journey of the self in education, we do not embark on it alone—we are always in the company of the other. How do we solve the tension between our wants and needs and the existence of the other in our educational journey? For Cavell (as well as Levinas), initiating a dialogue is key. Using our voice and making ourselves intelligible in a conversation with the other is the educational practice that allows us to navigate this tension.

[436] Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1998), 130.
[437] Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 150.
[438] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxx.

Friends and Conversations

The Emersonian idea of journeying might seem paradoxical to some, especially those who are acquainted with Emerson and Thoreau as the 'classic representatives of American individualism'.[439] As I've discussed, the perfectionist journey is one of self-cultivation and self-overcoming; it is an endeavour to laterally transcend the self to the next self, to achieve a 'further state of humanity'. Yet, Cavell points out that we should not take Emerson to mean that this further state of humanity is to be achieved in oneself alone.[440] As George Kateb puts it: 'Emersonian self-reliance is not perpetual solitariness. When we ask whether the self-reliant individuals need others, we mean to see what human relationships Emerson posits as ideally suited to self-reliant individuals'.[441] Naoko Saito reminds us that for Emerson, 'moral constraint is not given by the universal moral law of an "ought" [referring to Kant] but by the other as a friend'.[442] I like the way René V. Arcilla puts it in the anthology *Stanley Cavell and the Education of Grownups* when he says, 'The drama of perfectionism, it turns out, involves at least two actors: one who is lost and the other, the friend, whose support enables the former to start to find his or her way'.[443] The figure of the *friend* in EMP is a depiction of the other who challenges, aids and perhaps illuminates a path of new possibilities for the self. The friend is an antidote to our conformity; they evoke a sense of shame over our complacency and have the potential to draw us 'beyond ourselves'.[444] Cavell argues that the encounter with the friend 'discovered or constructed' is a representation of 'the standpoint of perfection', when our aversion to conformities and heteronomies is intrigued enough to pull us towards a new circle of the self.[445] Therefore, the role that is 'assigned' to friendship in EMP—and

[439] Saito, 'The Gleam of Light: Initiation, Prophecy, and Emersonian Moral Perfectionism', 172.
[440] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 11; Saito, 'The Gleam of Light: Initiation, Prophecy, and Emersonian Moral Perfectionism', 173.
[441] Kateb, *Emerson and Self-Reliance*, 96.
[442] Saito, 'The Gleam of Light: Initiation, Prophecy, and Emersonian Moral Perfectionism', 173–174.
[443] Arcilla, 'Perfectionism's Educational Address', 155.
[444] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 57.
[445] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 59.

thus, in education as a journey—is that of 'recognition and negation'; it reminds us of our current still state and foreshadows for us what needs to be moved from and towards. The friend is the writer of the perfectionist text who never imposes their influence on us or lectures us from a superior position. Instead, they engage in a conversation with us; a friendly confrontation, if I may call it. The friend is also the perfectionist text itself, aiding us through our journey of self-intelligibility.[446] In the perfectionist endeavour, the reader and the friend share the experience of lostness. The friend perhaps is someone who is conveying how they became adrift and how they overcame that, or how us humans can become lost or struggle to find our position.[447] The perfectionist friend in education as a journey is someone who can also be a provocateur who snaps us out of our conformity and evokes us to partake in further moral investigations. Cavell also points out the importance of acknowledging Emerson's consideration of the 'friend as enemy', who also contests our current knowledge. I understand this as paying attention to the significance of learning from our encounter with the other even when that other is not a friend in the conventional sense. A friend is an other whose encounter teaches us even if their presence is of a malefic nature.[448] So, even a foe can be a perfectionist friend. In the end, whether their existence on our path of perfection is of an amiable, hostile, aggravating, comforting or even neutral nature, the other is there to turn our heads. Whether a bump in the road or an illuminating candle on a dark path, the other is there to draw our attention to something beyond ourselves. It is there to make us think further and challenge our conformity. However, the friend (the other) does not provide a prepackaged solution to our calamities, and our conversation with her/them/it does not necessarily reach an agreement. Rather, the perfectionist aspect of our conversation/confrontation is our willingness to take the other's position into account and 'bear the consequences'.[449]

I discussed earlier the closeness between Cavell and Levinas in regards to the importance of dialogue between the self and the other. While Levinas considers the other to be infinitely transcendent, Cavell sees the relationship between the self and the other to be of a lateral nature. In other words, the other

[446] Arcilla, 'Perfectionism's Educational Address', 156.
[447] These are to be understood as examples and not as part of a closed criteria of topics that the perfectionist text explores.
[448] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 59.
[449] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 326; Johansson, 'Perfectionist Philosophy as a (an Untaken) Way of Life'.

in EMP is a neighbour of the self that takes a position of nextness to it. Therefore, the perfectionist friend is someone who is in conversation with us in the here and now. In education systems, the perfectionist friend can be a teacher, a fellow student, a text or another specific figure. On the other hand, it could also be our own *self*. As the concept of education as a journey is centred around the idea of self-reliance, it is not far-fetched to suggest that we may aim to befriend ourselves on our journey, more precisely, our next self. I mentioned earlier that the concepts of nextness and neighbouring do not only apply to an exterior other but also to our encounter with the otherness that we have within ourselves as well; this is what Thoreau calls *doubleness*. Cavell construes that we are to understand doubleness as 'a relation between ourselves in the aspect of indweller, unconsciously building, and in the aspect of spectator, impartially observing'.[450] We may see the unity of these two aspects as a 'perpetual nextness'; through it, we become companion and neighbour to our own self in education. We engage in an act of 'befriending' our next self. If conversation with the other is a form of befriending, then in order to maintain our doubleness and growth in expanding circles, we are to befriend our next self. We need to be the spectators of our own otherness in our educational journey as well as the unconscious dwellers within the process of growth and self-overcoming.

Many philosophers have paid close attention to the concept of friendship.[451] Emerson and Thoreau both view having a friend in our lives to be important for our growth and self-transcendence. They view the friend as someone who challenges us and eventually aids us in reaching our future self.[452] Notably, these ideas inspired the Cavellian take on the figure of the friend, who appears in his discussion of marriage, especially in his genres of film (remarriage comedies and the melodrama of the unknown woman). I have mentioned before that he considers marriage an allegory of friendship, in

[450] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 108.

[451] For Aristotle, friendship is a virtue (or involves virtue) that is 'most necessary for our life', and he considers a true friend to be 'another self'. Jacques Derrida presents a deconstruction of the idea of friendship which he finds difficult to define. In *The Politics of Friendship*, he elaborates on the topic in relation to its political implications and notions of justice and democracy. He navigates his ideas through the work of Aristotle, Nietzsche and Levinas, amongst others. See: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed (Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Pub. Co, 1999); Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, Radical Thinkers (London ; New York: Verso, 2020). Also see: Heather Devere, 'The Fraternization of Friendship and Politics: Derrida, Montaigne and Aristotle' 24, no. 1 (2005): 70–77.

[452] For further discussion of the Emersonian and Thoreauvian concepts of friendship see: John T. Lysaker and William Rossi, eds., *Emerson and Thoreau: Figures of Friendship* (Indiana University Press, 2010).

which dialogue or confrontation through conversation is key to the story of the couple. In *Cities of Words*, Cavell construes that friendship as a philosophical idea is what 'gives value to personal relations' and provides us with the words of the other that inspire the ever-difficult labour of change.

> '[T]he moral life is not constituted solely by consideration of isolated judgments of striking moral and political problems but is a life whose texture is a weave of cares and commitments in which one is bound to become lost and to need the friendly and credible words of others in order to find one's way, in which at any time a choice may present itself...in pondering which you will have to decide whose view of you is most valuable to you'.[453]

The friend is not merely the other that I have a conversation with throughout my journey in education but also the one who I direct the words that I acquire to express myself towards. The friend is a companion on my journey and at times, the journey's (temporary) goal.[454] Conversations with the friend do not have to lead to a satisfactory result or an agreement. There are instances when a dialogue with the other completely fails and times when it only 'seems' to wrap up successfully because of conformity. This is clear in the example of Stella Dallas, who seems to engage in conversations with others for years before realising that sometimes she needs to listen then continue her path in her own way and through that, she finds her own voice. The educational value of dialogue is in the conversation itself and my 'willingness' to take the other's position into account, which is a practice of moral seriousness. Skilbeck argues that the 'invocation of conversation' in Cavell's moral perfectionism is an invitation to take one another seriously. Yet, with that seriousness comes the possibility of 'discomfort, disagreement and failure to find common ground'.[455] However, this is a normal element of having a dialogue. Conversations on our educational journey are what nurture a process of perfectionist rebirth. In the words of Cavell: 'Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions; so it is symbolized as rebirth'.[456] As I mentioned earlier, even a foe can be a figure of friendship on a perfectionist journey. Cavell argues that the figure which Aristotle calls a friend, who is 'opposed to my present, unnecessary stance' on my behalf, Nietzsche calls an 'enemy'. In *Convenience Store Woman,* Shiraha is definitely not a friend to Keiko. He is in fact closer to an

[453] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 16.
[454] Cavell, 27.
[455] Skilbeck, 'Serious Words for Serious Subjects', 310.
[456] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 125.

enemy as he continuously undermines her and reminds her of why society will never accept her otherness. However, through the intensity of his aggressive words and manipulative requests, she finally reaches the point of facing her true desire. The presence of friendship in these stories comes with the concept of creation of the human by the human through conversation, which implies 'mutual education'.[457] This exchange is necessary for establishing 'perfectionist narratives'. The conversations in the remarriage comedies shape the validity of the relationship.[458] What seem to be ordinary everyday conversations are an affirmation of intimacy and mutual education in a 'life well-lived together'. While on the other hand, the conversations in the melodramas (with a drastic lack of friendship) are 'constitutive of marriage's negation'.[459] The 'everydayness' of these conversations is yet another reminder that education happens in the here and now in a confrontation/conversation with the other and our next self as our potential future self. A perfectionist education 'depends' on this encounter. It must be an endeavour of going beyond the self.

Summary

In this chapter I delved deeper into the Cavellian idea of the other. I started with an account of Cavell's discussion of Wittgenstein's parable of the boiling pot, which Cavell uses to investigate how we deal with the unknowability of the other (through the example of the other's pain). Cavell argues that our failure to relate to the other happens not because we do not 'know' them but because we do not 'acknowledge' them. Other minds are not to be disclosed as things in our external world; they are not to be diffused and dissected but

[457] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 277.

[458] The notion of a conversation is very essential in the films that Cavell pays attention to, they are even called *Hollywood Talkies* of the 1930s and 1940s. Cavell emphasises this in *Pursuits of Happiness* when he says: 'I do not know any words on film that seem to satisfy better the thirst for conversation than those exhibited by these Hollywood talkies of the thirties and forties. Talking together is for us the pair's essential way of being together', see: Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness, 146.

[459] Áine Mahon, 'Marriage and Moral Perfectionism in Siri Hustvedt and Stanley Cavell', *Textual Practice* 29, no. 4 (June 2015): 631–651; Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 27.

to be acknowledged as separate from us. The sceptic's fear of the unknowability of the other often leads to reliance on assumptions or denial of the other's pain altogether. Assumptions in themselves can be a form of denial of the other as well because they attempt to erase their otherness. To elaborate on the concept of acknowledgement further, I turned to Cavell's discussion of Shakespearean tragedy. I laid out the way Cavell shows us how we refuse to acknowledge the other due to our inability to live with the imperfection of the human condition and our own finitude. What education as a journey can give us is the realisation that the acknowledgement of the other is the self's responsibility and that a commitment towards acknowledging the other is a commitment to acknowledging oneself. However, this responsibility is one that humans are capable of denying and today's formal education does not help us avoid such a moral failure. This is where I turned to the story of the craftsman and his friend, which Cavell discusses in *The Claim of Reason*. I focused on my account of his discussion on the concept of seeing the human as human. I elaborated on many entwined examples of humans being capable of denying their responsibility towards the other by questioning their 'humanity', which is the label of sameness that we look for in others. Using again the example of the sensation of pain, the story of a craftsman who creates an automaton that develops an expression of what seems to be human pain, challenges our perception of the other on metaphysical and ontological levels. This complex and multifaceted discussion confronts our 'criteria' for what counts as human or not and thus tests our self-consciousness of our avoidance and assumptions. The transcendence of the self in education as a journey is rooted in overcoming the contradictions of the 'self-centeredness' of human nature and aspiring towards seeing the other to be as human as us, as 'besouled'. After that, I moved to elaborating on the concept of human finitude through a comparison with Levinas. Levinas sees the other as an infinite entity beyond the self's finite knowledge, and the self has no choice but to be morally obligated to it. On the other hand, Cavell sees the other to be as finite as the self is; it is not transcendent above the self but next to it in a position of neighbouring. Therefore, the self has the power to either acknowledge the other's existence or not, and in that lies the potential to deny the other's address. The tragedy of our relationship with the other results from this deniability. Therefore, the Cavellian idea of the other goes beyond responsibility into our *answerability* to the other's address; this means that an acknowledgement of the other does not automatically translate to duty and sympathy. Consequently, our avoidance of acknowledgement bears a sense of violence driven by what Cavell calls scep-

ticism as narcissism; however, this can be remedied through acknowledgement and the educational act of conversation. When we encounter the other in a confrontation in education we encounter new possibilities for the self to grow beyond its conformity, especially if we turn that confrontation into a conversation. The other in that context is the Cavellian figure of the 'friend', who evokes a sense of shame in us over our complacency and has the potential to draw us beyond ourselves and partake in further moral investigations with us. Cavell considered friendship as a philosophical idea to be what gives value to personal relations and helps us to find inspiration for the difficult process of change. The friend is a companion on our perfectionist journey of education—they are who we have perfectionist conversations with. However, these conversations do not need to reach a satisfactory result all the time; their educational value is rather in the dialogue itself and our 'willingness' to take the other's position into account.

Chapter (6): Braving the Seas: Education in Light of Emersonian Moral Perfectionism

‘Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire’.

(W. B. Yeats [allegedly])

‘So romantics dream revolution, and break their hearts’.

(Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*)

In the earlier stages of this thesis, I focused on what I perceive to be two fundamental and intertwined philosophical problems with education: its occupation with final ends and its faulty relationship with the notion of the other. I then clarified how the two problems are connected. I proposed Cavell’s EMP as a philosophical point of view that could potentially free us from these problems and allow space for a non-instrumental way of thinking about and reconsidering education. To pursue this endeavour, I laid out the idea of education as a perfectionist journey stemming from Cavell’s work in general and his EMP in particular. Throughout three different chapters, I presented EMP as a naturally open-ended philosophical outlook that harbours a focus not only on the individual as an abstract idea but also on their empirical experience with the other. In that, education as a journey, in its Cavellian perfectionist foundation, stands as a natural alternative dimension to the idea of today’s heavily instrumentalised, policy-bound and standards-obsessed education. Yet, is it really that easy? Can I simply claim that I have created a ‘solution’ to what I dubbed as a ‘problem’? Can we simply switch gears towards an EMP-based education and call it a day? It is fair to say that if the answer to education’s problems were that easy, then there is no need to fret beyond the creation of a magical button that could solve all of our troubles with a single reality-altering click. How do we then go about this? What can the Cavellian moral perfectionist notion of education as a journey truly offer us? Before attempting to answer these questions, we must first remind ourselves of where we stand and what we are dealing with. In chapter 2, I argued that education is a particular

phenomenon that is historically and politically constructed. I went on to discuss certain theoretical aspects of the philosophical grounding and applications of education in terms of instrumentalisation and the principle of rational planning. However, another look at the actual state or reality of that construct we call education as it exists in our experience within its institutions is needed before I attempt to elaborate further on how to consider it from a Cavellian lens. So, in the next few subchapters, I first begin with revisiting an overview of the condition of education the way it looks today in light of the Cavellian concepts that I have discussed so far. Then I shall put forth how the consideration of education as a journey—in light of EMP—could illuminate the way for those of us who yearn to not only survive our experience of education's condition but also push for change.

The Condition of Education

Near the beginning of my discussion of education and its problems, I elaborated on some of its historical roots that I consider to be pivotal to understanding its condition. I mentioned that education—and especially its systems of schooling—harbours a colonial legacy that needs to be acknowledged. The traces of this legacy are present today in educational institutions: in the way it implicitly pushes for Western intellectual supremacy and in its use of a certain liberal rhetoric of equality while at the same time working with a neoliberal engine that muffles and quells sociopolitical concerns. What this rhetoric also masks is that the demand for conformity to a certain dominant political rationale remains very strong in educational spaces today. The neoliberal model that seems to gain more and more influence as we go through the 21st century reinforces and encourages this sense of conformity. This model uses the seemingly 'benevolent' language of freedom and dialogue while relying on generalised and assumptive notions of democracy that disregard the other. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey says:

> 'It has been part of the genius of neoliberal theory to provide a benevolent mask full of wonderful-sounding words like freedom, liberty, choice, and

> rights, to hide the grim realities of the restoration or reconstitution of naked class power'.[460]

An example of this could be one that we have encountered this year (2024 at the time of writing this text) world-wide with the pro-Palestine student protests on university campuses, which were generally met with disregard and even violence because their demands did not match the prevailing political rationale that universities wanted students to conform to. Many of these universities speak a vague neoliberal rhetoric of academic freedom, open dialogue and work-environment safety but evade true action in terms of taking moral responsibility for these students and their demands. From a Cavellian perspective, these are the types of educational institutions that demand conformity, and their response to the student protests is a symptom of the facade of charitability that educational institutions work behind. It is as if those of us in these systems are being asked 'politely' to maintain a position of being 'the slaves of our slavishness', as the Cavellian saying goes. The facade of morality and academic freedom in education systems also permeates what we call 'moral education' as ethics and morality in education have become a standardised, subject-limited domain with 'facile' methods of teaching and learning.[461] Therefore, issues of justice, morality and freedom seem to be only favoured when they remain in the pages of textbooks within the walls of the classroom. The brunt of the current condition of education leaves further wounds and scars through our experiences with its systems. Moreover, by reducing education to the logic of market and global competitiveness, neoliberalism makes our experience with education closer to a factory of 'employable' individuals rather than a perfectionist journey of self-overcoming. Plus, it sees students as consumers and in that, it promises individual liberty via freedom of choice when it comes to educational institutions and products. The 'ideology of choice' that neoliberalism promotes as one of its core values, which comes with promises of freedom and access to a better education, frequently produces the reverse outcome and undermines equity and social justice.[462] Therefore, what the commodification of education offers is merely an illusion of freedom for most people, and what it mostly does is create inequalities through its reduction of everything to 'an implicit contract between buyer and

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[460] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 119.

[461] For a discussion on how this point is related to notions of subjectivity and objectivity, see: Standish, 'Ethics before Equality'.

[462] Codd, 'The Construction and Deconstruction of Educational Policy Documents'.

seller'.[463] The impact of this reality is even harsher on certain groups of people and in certain places in the world. In the Global South, the implementation of neoliberal policies, which are mostly based on Western-oriented criteria of market 'prestige' has a direct negative impact on Indigenous knowledge and local languages.[464] This is because these policies function based on pushing universalised fixed ends to their utmost capacity, which in this case comes with neocolonial connotations.

Another aspect that the facade of equality creates is an illusion that students have equal opportunities for standards of success, so that in the case of failure, these students have only themselves to blame. The instrumental neoliberal model of education we have today neglects anyone who does not live up to the presupposed standards that are required of them. With that comes a sense of shame and guilt that many students become plagued with. Anyone who is the other, who thrives in a different type of education rather than a system that is heavily occupied with standardised testing and controlled learning environments is bound to struggle. Immigrants, Indigenous, neurodivergent, highly creative or highly sensitive individuals, to mention a few, are all examples of people who often feel that education has failed them (not to mention those whose education systems already label them as 'special needs'). The kind of shame that a failure in meeting educational standards evokes is different from the concept of shame that I discussed earlier. The sense of shame that Cavell discusses is one that comes with a feeling of moral 'fallenness'. We feel ashamed because we become dissatisfied with our conformity and with our current state of self. It is a shame that pushes us to aspire for a further unattained self: one that transcends to a better moral existence pertaining to our self as well as our self's relationship with the other. That shame allows us to become conscious about our place in society and renders us no longer able to justify complacency and injustice. However, the sense of shame that heavily instrumentalised education systems evoke in us is a shame that cannot easily be harnessed to seek self-overcoming. It is one that is rooted in a toxic sense of guilt and self-blame for not conforming enough with standards and not being who we are asked to be. One of the forms of conformity that

[463] Peters and Besley, *Building Knowledge Cultures*, 33.

[464] Gyamera and Burke, 'Neoliberalism and Curriculum in Higher Education'. Also, please see: Mere Skerrett, 'Countering the Dominance of a Global North in Early Childhood Education through an Indigenous Lens in the Global South', *Global Studies of Childhood* 7, no. 2 (June 2017): 84–98, for an example of the imbalance that Western empiricist assumptions creates in education and its effect on Indigenous peoples.

such systems demand of us is a sense of sameness. Being or feeling different, being the other, the one who requires a different approach to education, learning or socialising to thrive, can leave us with a sense of shame towards our otherness. It is a shame that could lead us to double down on our conformity and seek to achieve the sameness that is required of us. Thus, we become tragically lost and unhappy. This shame and guilt may also lead us to apathy, which according to Saito, 'displaces the inclination to learn and grow'.[465] Students and even teachers become just a cog in the machine, moving silently through semester after semester with a sense of neglect and irrelevance. This state is what John Dewey describes when he writes: 'We do not know what we really want and we make no great effort to find out. We, too, allow our purposes and desires to be foisted upon us from without. We, too, are bored by doing what we want to do, because the want has no deep roots in our own judgement of values'.[466] This sense of numbness in education leads many scholars to declare education to be in a state of crisis. An education that induces our loss and silence is one that dispels our gleam of light. What we instead need is an education that reignites the flames of our genius, one that gives us a voice and allows our otherness to be seen. We need an education that encourages us to seek nonconformity with what stifles our moral judgement and blinds us from seeing humanity in others.

Before I attempt to discuss the potentiality of that, there is one more issue that I would like to address in regards to the condition of education today. It is well known that, particularly in the last couple of decades, education has become heavily influenced by an emphasis on positivism and experimental design; this is very true in the case of academic research. I mentioned earlier the impact of the positivist assumptions of a purely evidence-based approach to education on the experience of those who do not 'fit the mould' as the saying goes. However, what I want to add here is how positivism side-lines a core aspect of our individual and collective human experience in education, which is the element of emotions. The reality of education today is that in its most popular methods, systems and strategies, it overlooks the importance of emotions in regards to the way humans know and acknowledge the world. Yet, even when emotions are paid attention to, they are made to be a subject of science (perhaps within psychological or psychiatric studies of education), but they are not acknowledged as a core element of the true human approach to

[465] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 2.

[466] John Dewey, *Construction and Criticism*, The First Davies Memorial Lecture (Columbia University Press, 2019), 12.

knowledge. Conventional positivism, the way we use it today, places the cognitive aspect of the human experience above emotional experiences. This predilection is mostly prevalent in the way we conduct research in the social sciences (education being one of them), where we create a facade of caring about the true human experience of individuals through implementing interpretivist qualitative methods. Yet, the way they are applied in research suggests a degree of dependency on presupposed assumptions about reality and an idealisation of the cognitive aspect of the human experience. In fact, there is a clear prevailing hierarchy of cognition, representation, and rationality over other aspects of the human experience in the social sciences today.[467] And while cognition and rationality are extremely important, an unbalanced consideration of them can leave us with a view that falls short in understanding other deeply important aspects of human subjective engagement with the world.[468] A pure scientific approach is pivotal when studying cells under a microscope or when calculating the speed at which a wave travels in the ocean, but we still need something more than that when we are exploring the human experience in education. We may go ahead and calculate it; neuroscience can definitely tell us a lot about how we make sense of the world and others around us, but there is still an aesthetically emotional sense to that experience that conventional scientific methods in education and educational research tend to ignore. This brings to mind the Norwegian film *Kitchen Stories* (*Salmer fra kjøkkenet*).[469] The film is set in the 1950s, where a Swedish research team aims to revolutionise the home kitchen through observing housewives and bachelor men in their own kitchens. So, the team sends a scientist called Folke Nilsson to the home of Isak, a rural Norwegian bachelor. Folke is supposed to sit on a ridiculously high chair and observe Isak in his kitchen while refraining from speaking or interacting with him in any way. The goal of the research is to meticulously map how bachelors use their kitchen in order to rationalise

[467] Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, 'Methods in Motion: Affecting Heritage Research', in *Affective Methodologies*, ed. Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2007), 101.

[468] Waterton and Watson, 'Methods in Motion'.

[469] *Salmer fra Kjøkkenet* is a 2003 Norwegian film by director Bent Hamer, who co-wrote it and was inspired by reading post World War II research books on the efficiency of the Swedish housewife. Amongst other things the film was a commentary on the blindspots of positivist research, which is something that not many films have commented on. One comical event in the film is when Isak thinks that he is getting a horse for his participation but receives a wooden Dala horse (Dalahäst) instead. This might be in the film simply for the comedic value, but I think it could be understood as symbolising the relationship between research and the public. What is the value that research participants and broader society are truly receiving from flawed empirical methods that lead to flawed research?

household work and design a more efficient kitchen model. However, while conducting the research, there are many things that Folke fails to understand because he is not allowed to speak to or interact with Isak. Outside of working hours, Folke lives in a little caravan outside of Isak's house so they would absolutely avoid interacting. The situation becomes tricky when Isak (who consented to being a subject of the study) begins to feel the need to prepare his food in a different room because he becomes uncomfortable with the idea of being observed, which perplexes the scientist who does not understand the reason behind Isak's behaviour. The absurdity of the situation peaks when Isak stops using his kitchen all together and begins to observe Folke through a hole in the ceiling instead. The two lonely men end up breaking the strict rules of the study and becoming friends; they both abandon their involvement in the research project for the sake of human interaction. Most academics would say: this is exactly what you must avoid when conducting research, or: this is exactly what we have an ethical considerations chapter in our studies for. That is true! However, what the film shows, especially in the symbolism of the researcher's absurdly high chair, is that the reality of the human experience looks different from that which we eventually convey on paper as social 'scientists'. There is a considerable part of the picture that is being omitted on paper. We simply cannot deny the emotional aspect of our place in the world. Thus, research methods need to accommodate this aspect instead of ignoring it. Beyond systematic learning and rationally planned ends and means, on an individual level, education is a very personal and subjective experience. Humans are arguably unable to stop grasping knowledge because it is part of our journey through life and the way we exist as beings. Therefore, a qualitative approach that is policed by reductive approaches to subjectivity is bound to fall short. This superiority of cognition and logic over emotions and perceptions is not disconnected from the aforementioned reality of education's imperial and colonial legacy, which is also the legacy of many of the Western philosophical underpinnings of education as well. The *hardiness* of science and logic has historically been used as a symbol of a superior advanced culture/civilisation versus the *softness* of chaos, spirituality and emotionality of what have been viewed as inferior cultures. Marginalised individuals and oppressed groups like women, immigrants, refugees, Indigenous peoples, neurodivergent individuals, those with different learning needs or mental health issues, colonised populations, the working class, and even children in some cases are all examples of those who 'have typically been associated with a

sensuous worldly realm and hence have been implicitly or explicitly denigrated along with it'.[470] This is yet another aspect of the reality of education that made me simply unable to go on with my argument without showcasing.

To sum up the aforementioned from a moral perfectionist perspective, the reality of education today is that it is a domain that is marked by exclusion. It is built on historical and theoretical legacies and with political and economic structures that render it a construct that exists for the benefit of certain humans rather than others. That condition along with its constant interest in standards, creates a strong demand for conformity and leads to lostness and apathy. Education today lacks what Saito calls the 'imaginative sensitivity to the invisible and silent' in the human condition.[471] It is fixated on notions of 'gaining' through standardisation and mathematically measured concepts of performativity and efficiency but what this gaining endeavour leaves many students with is a sense of 'losing'[472]— a loss that goes unnoticed by what we call educational reform policies. Saito describes this state as tragic, but I also think about it as *violent*. There is a certain violent aspect to education that flows subtly in our lives not merely because it overlooks the other and corners students into despondency but also because of what it breeds into the world. The apathy that education creates is not merely towards the education process itself, which could be embodied in the story of a brilliant student who was failed by the system and thus stopped caring about their education and did homework and tests with indifference only as means to graduate. The apathy that is more dangerous than this example is one which begets morally loose individuals who build their lives around self-involved principles that easily shun moral responsibility towards what is deemed other. This moral apathy allows systems of oppression to continue their exploitation of the disadvantaged. It is a parallel to the Levinasian idea of being (*ětre*) as a form of violence towards the other by means of taking, occupying, 'usurping' someone else's place in the world. When citizens of powerful democratic countries who have the power to rally against war and violence to invoke political change are instead unbothered and mainly concerned with what feels good and satisfactory, all while benefiting from that exploitation of others, then we know that education has failed us. This evasion of our responsibility is a form of violence in

[470] Allen and Goddard, *Education and Philosophy*, 160.
[471] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 128.
[472] Naoko Saito, 'Education's Hope: Transcending the Tragic with Emerson, Dewey, and Cavell', *Philosophy of Education* 59 (2003): 182–190.

itself and a matter that we always need to be mindful of when discussing education.

What is left to consider then is how to deal with this condition. This is the moment when the reader of this text would expect the word 'solution' to be mentioned. There is indeed an obsession with 'solutions' in education as a field of study, just as much as there is a demand for 'applications' when it comes to theory. There is a constant demand that is placed on those who work with philosophy of education to present theories that can be comfortably 'applied'. This pressure results in work that can seem forced, 'contrived' and eventually 'unconvincing'.[473] This is yet another example of a practice in education that embodies the systems we have built, which value results, fixed ends, quick solutions and the short-sighted 'what works' perspective over dealing with the true complexity of the human experience in education. It is a system that underestimates the true kinship of education and philosophy. Therefore, I will be daring and say that there is no magical button that can solve the problems of education; there are no quick and immediately applicable solutions to them. Reform policies cannot change what is fundamentally problematic in our systems. The type of change we truly need would be grand, destabilising and revolutionary on a global scale. I mentioned earlier that EMP is not satisfied with reform; it demands transfiguration and a full transformation. Therefore, what we really need in education is a revolution. However, this is not something that can be achieved independently without fundamental changes in the entire political and economic global structure. Where does this leave us then? Well, there might be something short of that which the idea of education as a journey in the light of EMP can offer. It might not provide us with clear-cut solutions but what it does is point out the way to how we can deal with the condition of education, and how this may slowly lead to a possible future change. It can be a lighthouse that illuminates the way in our dark and stormy condition.

[473] Saito, 'The Gleam of Light: Initiation, Prophecy, and Emersonian Moral Perfectionism', 170–171.

Perfectionist Endeavours: Education for a Lost Humanity

When it comes to finding a lighthouse signal in a storm, there is but one thing we must commence with: hope. It is our salvation as we navigate a world which seems to fling us to the brink of despair, finite as we are, whenever we ponder upon it. We are to establish hope in finding a way within an education system in which we are lost and have no power: a system that is politically anchored and bound by the will of managers and policymakers. In adopting the perspective of education as a journey, we can brave the seas of our educational experience within and without formal systems. But how and when do we begin the journey? In a way, our journey with education starts the moment we are born. Yet, along the way we may lose our gleam of light, we may forget it is there or live our lives unaware of its existence, especially when no one tells us it exists or instructs us on how to recognise it. Therefore, in order to find it again, we must make our journey a perfectionist one, and the way to set out on such an endeavour is marked by hope. In the words of Emerson, we 'hope' and '[g]enius creates'.[474] This shift to the perfectionist journey that we embark upon on a vehicle of hope starts with *shame*, with our sense of crisis in our condition. This is not the toxic shame that we are made to feel towards not meeting the standards of education, which weaponises our guilt and fear of failure to cement our conformity. It is rather the Emersonian shame that is the 'natural or inevitable enemy of the attainable self', as Cavell describes it.[475] It is the provocateur of change and growth towards the unattainable self. Shame flashes into existence when we become aware of the degree of conformity that staunchly instrumental education systems demand of us. We may suddenly realise that we are in fact lost and plagued with a sense of apathy and nihilism after years of blissful ignorance of that lostness. We might also see that we are oblivious to our participation in a violent wheel of power that dismisses the other. Something accumulates in us, we cease to be blinded by our conformity, and we become ashamed of our condition. The moral urgency of perfectionism awakens in us. This is where hope comes in. Instead of letting

[474] Emerson, 'The American Scholar', 96.
[475] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 30.

our mourning of loss and lostness take over us, we use our grief to 'go through the tragedy' and search for hope.[476] To make sense of our condition in education through EMP is to come to a point of understanding that our perception of education, what it is, what its function in our lives is, and what it means is influenced by the way that it is discussed around us from childhood. We often grow up being told why we need to go to school and why a formal education is good for us. The way we approach and understand education is also influenced by what policy dictates the aim of education to be. The way education is understood by those who plan and manage it seeps into our perspective of it and becomes one of society's norms. Therefore, I believe that shedding these imported perspectives of education and truly thinking about what it means to us is the first stride in stepping into the perfectionist journey. From that point of recognising the nature of our education, we are to ponder upon our personal experience within it. Recognising our conformity conjures the Emersonian question: 'Where do we find ourselves?'[477] Sometimes, we stumble upon a journey by coincidence; we read a book or meet a teacher that awakens our Emersonian shame. So, we might not realise right away that we have embarked on a perfectionist journey, but if we are to trace its beginnings, we would probably trace it back to the time we started asking ourselves the question: How do I live my life? It is a question about our place in the world, about where and how the self perceives and deals with the other. Is this a question that we are encouraged to ponder upon in education today? Were we ever told in a classroom to make this question the beating heart of our education? I would say that such an occurrence is rare, if it exists at all. That is because this question implies 'perfection as perfecting', which is a state of growth in endless expanding circles with no fixed ends, which our instrumentalised neoliberal education systems do not allow. Thus, a way to go around that is to let EMP's notion of education as a journey point the way for us to personally seek our individual self-realisation and self-overcoming, even within a system that dulls our gleam of light. We can gain our own perspectives of how to navigate the system and keep in mind that education happens within and without formal learning. Both Emerson and Cavell describe self-reliance as 'conformity's aversion'.[478] So, through thinking about our education as a perfectionist journey, we are naturally resisting conformity. This is a process that requires courage, which comes in the act of abandonment that converts lostness to onward

[476] Saito, 'Education's Hope', 185.
[477] Emerson, 'Experience'.
[478] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 26.

thinking. In *The Senses of Walden*, Cavell writes: 'The first step in attending to our education is to observe the strangeness of our lives, our estrangement from ourselves, the lack of necessity in what we profess as necessary. The second step is to grasp the true necessity of human strangeness as such, the opportunity of outwardness'.[479] There is tragedy in the fact that as a student, I have little power to change the system I'm in. Yet, it is from this tragedy, in my state of loss, that the 'rekindling' of my gleam of light becomes possible.[480] In changing my perspective of education, in thinking about it as an endeavour that goes beyond fixed ends, in seeing ends as beginnings in themselves, I am making space for the invisible and silent within me to be seen and heard at least by myself. In that, I open myself to that which is 'uncertain' and 'unknowable' and lies 'beyond the reach of [my] existing knowledge'.[481] This approach to education on a personal level is a philosophical one, and it is an emblem of survival in the neoliberal machine. It carries a certain transcendental spiritual element, not in a religious sense but in giving an aesthetic value to our transformational experience in education.[482] This aesthetic aspect is something that Cavell marked as moral perfectionism's contribution to ways of thinking about moral judgement. As most moral theories point out the importance of being intelligible to others and of others being intelligible to the self, EMP also highlights the importance of being intelligible to oneself.[483] However, it is important to always note that this spirituality is secular in nature. It is not mystical or supernatural and does not encourage crude individualism but rather emphasises 'self-reliance as a *social* morality'.[484]

Making ourselves intelligible is one of the main aspects of the perfectionist journey in education. And it is perhaps what has the potential to take us beyond our feeling of helplessness into becoming invokers of change as it is the process of finding our voice. The transformative process of perfectionist growth in its ways of transformative onward thinking is what aids us in our struggle for intelligibility in education. However, we must be careful here not to treat intelligibility as a goal and fall in a trap of treating it as a fixed end (since we seem to be conditioned to gravitate towards that). This caution also

[479] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 55.
[480] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 160.
[481] Saito, 76–77.
[482] Saito, 141.
[483] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxxi.
[484] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 146.

applies to approaching it as an educational aim that once achieved becomes a means to perfectionist transformation. For example, in his reading of Cavell's perfectionism, Paul Guyer argues: 'we need to make ourselves intelligible in order to realize our potential for invention and transformation'.[485] However, it is the process of transformation that actually leads to a gradual gain of intelligibility of the self and other. Martin Gustafsson opposes Guyer's concept of Cavellian intelligibility and argues that it 'presupposes' that intelligibility has 'already been achieved', which renders it as 'a mere prelude or means to substantively moral action' when it is rather a pursuit that has 'moral significance' in itself.[486] I see both perfectionist transformation (you may call it growth) and intelligibility to be intertwined processes; they both happen on the way of our educational journey. This position seems to be in alignment with Gustafsson's perspective that 'invention and transformation involve striving for a better world and a better self without being entirely clear on what such a better world or better self might be'.[487] In other words, transformation and intelligibility are elements within our perfectionist journey, which naturally makes them perpetual and open-ended. We must be careful not to categorise them and pin them down to substantive notions— to do so would simply negate a core characterisation of EMP and its idea of education as a perfectionist journey, which is the fact that our journey is one without fixed ends where we build self-reliance as growth in expanding circles. This open-endedness is where EMP's claim of freedom initiates from, especially in education. Freedom is a concept that is tightly akin to intelligibility. The endeavour of making ourselves intelligible to ourselves and the other is a moral necessity and an act of acknowledgement; thus, it contributes to the conversation of justice, which as I will discuss later, must always be a matter of high importance in education.[488] It is also an endeavour of finding our voice in the world and, of course, within our education systems. Declaring our existence through our intelligible voice affirms our onward thinking and our striving towards finding the way out of lostness. Since the perfectionist journey always starts from a point of lostness, then it also starts from a place of unintelligibility and silence (loss of voice). There has been a growing interest in the past two decades in the idea of the 'student's voice', which promotes the integration of student voices in the ed-

[485] Paul Guyer, 'Examples of Perfectionism', *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 48, no. 3 (September 2014): 5–27.
[486] Gustafsson, 'What Is Cavellian Perfectionism?', 100.
[487] Gustafsson, 101.
[488] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxxi–xxxii.

ucational process 'via pedagogical partnership' to achieve a democratic transformation.[489] However, this approach is arguably still being done from within the notion of instrumentalised performativity, which can reduce the meaning of voice to a 'mere indicator' or a tokenistic standard.[490] Moreover, this approach to the concept of voice is quite depthless in the sense that it focuses on the academic substance in a school or university rather than a profound venture towards justice. Paul Standish argues:

> '[T]he emphasis here is not so much on political representation and social justice but, at the broad level, on something more like the very *possibility* of politics, and, at the more specifically educational level, on the substance of the curriculum, the substance of academic subjects themselves'.[491]

In other words, a school or university's engagement with a highly instrumentalised model of the 'student's voice' can easily slip into a situation where the focus is placed on the educational institution itself, its curriculum, its individual students, what the parents want, etc. The focus becomes an issue of effectiveness, performativity or something similar to customer satisfaction (as students and their parents are treated as consumers) rather than an effort towards fair social justice where voices are truly heard indiscriminately. This outcome harkens back to my earlier example about student demonstrations on university campuses, where academic freedom and free speech are rendered as empty signifiers and commercial veneers at best. So, the efforts that are allocated to address student voicelessness could themselves 'miss the point', as Standish puts it, 'they may be colonised by the performativity they seek to overcome'.[492] In that, the system fails to truly recognise the silence of students (as well as teachers). On the other hand, what the Emersonian and Cavellian concept of reclaiming our voice provides us with is a way to truly sense the silence. This is especially important for teachers. We often find ourselves in a state of confrontation with the conventional culture and criteria of an educational system. By taking on the perspective of the journey, students and teachers become more aware of the impact of these confrontations, especially when

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[489] Shuting (Alice) Sun et al., 'Student Voice in Assessment and Feedback (2011–2022): A Systematic Review', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 48, no. 7 (October 2023): 1009–1024; Michael Fielding, 'Beyond the Rhetoric of Student Voice: New Departures or New Constraints in the Transformation of 21st Century Schooling?', *FORUM* 43, no. 2 (2001): 100.
[490] Paul Standish, 'In Her Own Voice: Convention, Conversion, Criteria', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 36, no. 1 (January 2004): 91.
[491] Standish, 103.
[492] Standish, 104.

we become averse to conformity. A confrontation is a way to engage in a conversation, which is a natural occurrence in the process of growth; it creates the transformation to self-reliance and elevates our voice. Standish argues that within the educational context, attention should be given more to the 'reception' of the voice rather than the 'activation' of the voice, and that is through focusing on what is learned.[493] In other words, things like surveys of students' opinions, course evaluations or bodies like student councils have their limits within a system that anchors itself in notions of performativity—simply because voices can easily be lost or fall on deaf ears. Instead, what could be more beneficial is looking closely into the confrontations and conversations—which hopefully lead to acknowledgement—that occur amongst students, teachers as well as the educational content. Engaging in education as a journey means that these conversations are happening with oneself and also amongst friends; it is an enterprise towards acknowledgement. The element of our voice and intelligibility through our use of language in these conversations is highly important. Cavell also argues that in order to acknowledge others, we need to allow ourselves to be acknowledged by them. This does not merely mean wanting others to care about us but also wanting them to understand (and acknowledge) that our expressions (our use of language) express us. This means, as Cavell puts it, to allow ourselves 'to be comprehended', which is something that we 'can always deny'.[494] Therefore, to not deny this is 'to acknowledge [our] body, and the body of [our] expressions, to be [ours]'.[495] It is to acknowledge our own existence in the world. This acknowledgement is at the core of our continuous journey of becoming intelligible, and the realm of the perfectionist conversation in education is where it is evoked and nurtured.

As I mentioned earlier, these conversations do not necessarily need to reach an agreement. In fact, the confusion and lostness that disagreements with others may cause contribute to our transformation, growth and moral judgement. Moreover, transformation that is meant to be achieved through these conversations is a transformation of society as a whole, not just the individuals within the educational context. It may be confusing to some when Cavell says 'what is best for society is a model for and is modelled on what is best for the individual soul'.[496] Again, this does not mean a promotion of selfish individualism

[493] Standish, 105.
[494] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 383.
[495] Cavell, 383.
[496] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 7.

but rather the 'aspiration towards our own best selves' as a way to build a just society.[497] Making ourselves intelligible is also about finding the language to voice our condition in our ordinary everyday life. However, I think that what we learn in educational institutions does not always cross over to our daily lives. Apathy and disinterest in educational content, the lack of perfectionist encounters in education systems, in addition to the exclusivity of academic language, particularly in higher education, are important players in creating this rift. The perfectionist journey allows us to see our education as an everyday undertaking that is happening in the here and now, in and outside of the system. Finding the language to voice our condition means that we become able to 'elaborate the action', as Cavell argues: 'say why you are doing it, if that is competently asked; or excuse or justify it if that becomes necessary'.[498] Therefore, our struggle for intelligibility is a 'form of navigation', a matter of finding our 'position' to express our knowledge and make it clear to oneself and others.[499] It is important here to note that making our position clear does not mean indicating a specific aim or a fixed goal for our actions, it is rather a matter of articulating oneself and one's position as a whole, not merely one's actions—the intelligibility of our actions is part of our self-intelligibility.[500]

As for those of us who study, work with and research education as a discipline (I will refer to this group here as *educators* as a general term), EMP's concept of education as a journey points out the way for us to reexamine education outside of a teleological, deontological or even a value theory perspective. The question: how do we live our lives? reminds us that education happens in the here and now, in the everyday, and that it functions with ordinary language. To me, I associate this concept with the need for educators to perpetually re-examine and reflect on what we mean when we say that we are engaging with education, learning, teaching, studying and how these words manifest in our everyday lives outside of education systems and our roles in them. I mentioned before the Wittgensteinian idea of the *actual* and *eventual* everyday. I argued that, according to Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein, when we go through our daily lives without intimately thinking about what we consider normal and mundane, we are actually living an illusion. How many daily actions do we go about doing without truly thinking about them? How many unethical choices do we make out of cognitive dissonance or avoidance of

[497] Standish, 'In Her Own Voice', 102.
[498] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 311.
[499] Johansson, 'Perfectionist Philosophy as a (an Untaken) Way of Life', 60.
[500] Johansson, 60–61.

acknowledgement? I would say a great deal. However, only when we think about these ordinary daily details deeply and intimately enough, we would actually be able to reach what Wittgenstein calls the *eventual* everyday.[501] This means that we see our world anew; we find the extraordinary and the uncanny in the ordinary. This process is transcendental in nature but it is descendant rather than ascendant. It is transcendence towards nextness, which is part of the educator's journey of growth and self-reliance. And it is a journey that they take alongside their work, students or research. Another aspect of our role as educators that embarking on the perfectionist journey puts to question is the theoretical background that we place our work upon. Today, as we work with education from within the social sciences, we are primed to rely on a rational sceptic epistemology that treats the self and other as objects of knowledge and demands certainty and fixed ends via its assumptions and approaches to criteria. Even in the way we speak of education, we are focused on a language that conveys the supremacy of fixed notions of truths, solutions, aims, goals, etc., not to mention other terms of the knowledge economy like efficiency, performativity, competency and so on. This focus limits human knowledge to our ability to *apply* these words to 'the things of a world'.[502] Thus, we reduce human knowledge to the borders of these words and the concepts they convey. This is related but not limited to the demand for application that I mentioned earlier in this chapter. An important undertaking in our journey as educators is to understand why things are the way they are; why our systems demand certainty and fixed ends. On our journey, we are to ponder upon the human condition of finitude and understand that our fear of the unknown and dissatisfaction with the fact that we can never truly know the other leads us to an obsession with fixity and certainty. We are to realise that a failure to acknowledge the other is not only an avoidance of acknowledging oneself but also 'a failure to accept the ordinary conditions of learning', which leads to replacing them with 'quality control'.[503] This realisation could make us feel as if we have lost our grasp on the world; it is terrifying because it warns us against trying to escape from uncertainty through scepticism and also denies us the dependency on epistemological assurance.[504] Yet, according to Cavell, this loss is when a philosophical consideration of our condition truly begins.

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[501] Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America*, 46.

[502] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 17.

[503] Paul Standish, 'Skepticism, Acknowledgment, and the Ownership of Learning', in *Stanley Cavell and the Education of Grownups*, ed. Naoko Saito and Paul Standish (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 80.

[504] Critchley, 'Cavell's "Romanticism" and Cavell's Romanticism', 48.

Education as a perfectionist journey is an education for a lost humanity. It is an education that bestows upon the world educators who are committed to, as Standish puts it, 'the recovery of an ordinary understanding of teaching and learning from its denial by the metaphysical voices of performativity and quality control'.[505] Of course, education as a perfectionist journey is an approach that is philosophical in nature. Therefore, the journey begins the moment we realise that we are philosophically lost or at a loss.[506] Cavell considers an education that is stripped away from philosophy to be 'destroyed or missed or frozen'.[507] When we question the criteria of our culture in a confrontation, when we examine our words and what we mean when we say them (making them our own), we are making philosophy our education. This is when, Cavell conveys, 'philosophy becomes the education of grownups'.[508] The fact that we are physically grown does not necessarily mean that we have stopped *growing*. This, of course, is not an indication that EMP is invalid for the education of children. The struggle for intelligibility, working on our words to make them our own, confronting others through conversations (with both people and text), these are all philosophical endeavours that both adults and children are able to partake in.[509] Yet, a child's journey is different from that of an adult. For a child, it is a journey of being born (initiated), while for an adult it is one of being reborn (converted or transformed).[510] The perfectionist journey not only starts from a point of lostness but also bears the burden of continuous limitations, amongst them are, as Saito puts it, 'the impossibility of the full understanding of different values' and 'the imperfectability of democratic ideals'.[511] In education, this is embodied in the difficulty of finding adequate spaces to have the perfectionist conversations that we desperately need due to the rigidity of our systems of knowledge and their subservience to financial politics. What EMP offers is the concept of conjuring hope from

[505] Standish, 'Skepticism, Acknowledgment, and the Ownership of Learning', 85.

[506] I previously pointed at Cavell's comments on the opening lines of Emerson's 'Experience': 'Where do we find ourselves?' as a question that is 'of one lost, or at a loss'. Cavell continues to describe Emerson's lines as perplexed yet collected enough to pose questions. See: Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America*, 90.

[507] Stanley Cavell, 'Philosophy as the Education of Grownups', in *Stanley Cavell and the Education of Grownups*, ed. Naoko Saito and Paul Standish (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 25.

[508] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 125.

[509] Johansson, 'Perfectionist Philosophy as a (an Untaken) Way of Life'.

[510] Johansson, 65.

[511] Saito, 'Education's Hope', 187.

within this condition through integrating an aesthetic, natural and spiritual aspect to our experience, emblematised by the power of the perfectionist impulse (whim) and the reigniting of our gleam of light.[512] Thus, the core value of the concept of education as a journey is the conversion of our state of lostness, emptiness, obliviousness into hopeful perseverance, belief in our genius, onward thinking, the courage to embrace what is other, and finding our way instead of relying on predetermined ends.

Nonconformity for the Sake of the Other

EMP is a philosophical outlook that is marked by its aversion to conformity and injustice, which is the condition for our humanity. When we fail to recognise our conformity, when we avoid the acknowledgement of the other and self, when we refuse to see the other as human, we lose our humanity—we become 'unborn'. Today, in a frantically fast-based 'everyday', it has become easier for us to slip through moral cracks and live a life plagued with conformity and avoidance. We are overworked, sensorly over-stimulated, mentally burdened by a looming environmental disaster, and recently, through social media, we are becoming more exposed to the true disfigurement of our unjust world. Yet, we also have unlimited sources of entertainment, comfort and adventure. Thus, we have an ideal formula to choose a path of apathy, avoidance, conformity and emptiness, or what Klas Roth calls 'deceptive and self-destructive comfort zones' and again what Cavell describes as being 'the slaves of our slavishness', rather than taking the unwieldy burden of moral responsibility.[513] With its nonconforming nature, EMP's concept of education as a journey challenges this apathy in and out of education systems. Self-reliance and the struggle to find our voice are not possible without the confrontations that bring us to a state of acknowledgement and transformation. Thus, a moral responsibility towards the other is something that is naturally woven into a perfectionist educational journey. With that comes an emphasis on justice,

[512] Saito, 187.

[513] Roth, 'Making Ourselves Intelligible—Rendering Ourselves Efficacious and Autonomous, without Fixed Ends', 30; Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 47.

which I believe must be a matter of high importance in education. EMP's non-conformity is not geared towards some pretentious notion of social isolation or selfish individualism, but it is rather a mode of 'social participation' for 'the betterment of self and society'.[514]

EMP demands justice as a moral necessity. Nonconformity in the face of injustice in the here and now of the ordinary means that its response to injustice is immediate and urgent. In a rationally planned, economised, standardised education that feels self-serving and bureaucratic, issues of justice and morality are presently packaged in subject-limited formats; they are a learning 'outcome', something that we teach our students to 'aim' for, and they are often bound by certain criteria. Aiming for justice in education is definitely not a bad enterprise, but it is the way that it is limited within specific moulds that makes it lacking. This limitation can of course be traced to the concept of rational planning and the need for all knowledge in education systems to fit fixed outcomes. However, there are also other theoretical symptoms that can be traced to the tendency, especially in higher education, to view the learning process mainly from the lens of scientific rationality. In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell construes the tendency to draw comparisons between knowledge and morality, in the sense of knowledge being 'scientific', out of the prominent commitment to scientific rationality.[515] In this type of comparison, a moral argument can be painted as insufficient or 'deficient' if it does not exhibit a similar structure to the scientific method.[516] This convention mirrors what we witness today of the need to fortify arguments of morality and justice with numbers, statistics and empirical facts for them to be viable and taken seriously. Cavell argues that this need to rationalise morality is based on two assumptions. The first one is that scientific arguments are all settlable with evidence and agreement, and the second is that moral arguments need to be settled and reach a conclusion.[517] However, when it comes to EMP, Cavell states: 'one's quarrel with the world need not be settled, nor cynically set aside as unsettleable. It is a condition in which you can at once want the world and want it to change—even to change it'.[518] Therefore, Cavell emphasises that a moral argument or conversation does not need to reach an agreement; it rather establishes rationality 'in the absence of agreement' through the 'hope' of

[514] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 55.
[515] See part III: 'Knowledge and the Concept of Morality' in Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*.
[516] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 120.
[517] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 254.
[518] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 18.

agreement—otherwise, the argument itself would be 'pointless'.[519] So, here again, the theme of hope continues. Therefore, in the light of the idea of the perfectionist journey, our conversations with the other in education, especially moral conversations about justice, require hope as their main conduit. But do we really need to have these conversations? And why? The theme of justice is essential to our journey because EMP urges us to find our genius and voice within the circumstances of social order and to participate in the conversation of justice. It is a conversation that occurs in the here and now within, without and beyond our learning process in an educational institution. In *CHU*, Cavell argues that 'the cultivation of (one's) genius requires and demands no unjust share of social goods'.[520] The issue of one's freedom is the issue of one's voice. Even when there is nothing one could do in an encounter with social injustice, one could at least show a 'consent' or 'dissent' through one's voice. This means, Cavell argues, that when I lend my voice to recognise a society as 'mine', 'as speaking for me', I have to make sure that this voice is truly my own. That is because in making my society 'mine', 'my own', it becomes 'one in which I am spoken for', and raising my voice in criticism of its disadvantages means that I am not only criticising it but also 'criticising myself'.[521] What I understand Cavell to present here is an invitation for us to treat the society that we identify as being part of as a mirror of our individual selves coming together to form a collective. The faults of this society is a collective outcome of each of our own individual faults. Thus, dealing with the injustice that society inflicts on others starts with dealing with the injustice we ourselves inflect on them. When I recognise myself as a member of a community where I become intelligible to others and they become intelligible to me, we collectively claim that community as *ours*.[522] Therefore, when I speak of my-

[519] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 254.

[520] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 26.

[521] Cavell, 27–28.

[522] Cavell works out arguments in regards to community through engagements with Wittgenstein and Austin. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that his view of what makes a community is based within a discussion of language and communication. Andrew Norris argues that by pairing the claim of reason with the claim to community, Cavell establishes a concept of community that is reflexive, open-ended and 'addressed to interlocutors who will question, reinterpret, and possibly reject [self-reflexive claims on publicity and community]'. This means that the Cavellian idea of community goes against certain political theories that suggest that the concept of community is defined by a specific prevailing political concept, authority or sovereign. For Cavell, the claim to community needs to be continuously addressed through conversation between its members. If conversations concerning this claim are never raised in a community because it is presupposed to be close-ended common sense that has been 'definitively addressed', then that community is 'no community at all'. Norris also points out that Cavell's

self as a member of that community, I am speaking for others in my community as well. Andrew Norris argues that 'Cavellian claims to community are claims made by citizens facing one another', and there is a certain authority in that claim.[523] Therefore, Norris continues, to 'speak authoritatively for the community…The authority one claims can only be exercised in an act that grants the same authority to those whom one addresses: one asserts oneself to be, with them, a speaker among speakers, a citizen among equals'.[524] However, this dynamic of speaking and being spoken for means that I give my consent for those others to speak for me. With this affiliation comes the risk of disappointment, but it is also how I define, deliberate and redefine myself politically.[525] Aletta J. Norval argues that disappointment is not only important to the conversation of justice but also to the 'outlining' of 'a theoretical account of democracy'. That is why many theorists who write about democracy start their discussion from a state of crisis and dissatisfaction with the status quo.[526] However, these beginnings of disappointment and restiveness are always followed by 'a rejection of defeatism'. Norval argues that Cavellian perfectionism, by nature, 'suggests a closeness' between our disappointment and our 'desire for something better'.[527] Having a voice in a community does not mean absolute consent. Cavell argues that being part of a community where I speak for others and get spoken for by others means that, at times, I have to risk a 'rebuff'. So, rethinking our place in the world and rebuffing our community when we no longer feel that it speaks for us is better than blindly consenting to it. This rethinking and rebuffing does not directly translate to dissent or an evasion of our responsibility in the community, it is rather a disagreement of the 'content' within it.[528] In other words, we do not abandon our community and our duty towards it because we disagree on certain issues. What matters in the end is that we do not end up conforming to whatever we think

take on modern philosophical scepticism—which differs from that of many Wittgensteinians—is essential to his discussion of political concepts. This perspective is very unique considering that epistemology and political theory are usually viewed as 'having very little to do with one another'. A connection between the two is not commonly an interest of political theorists, especially not of eminent theorists like Wolin, Arendt, Taylor, Bernstein and Gadamer. See: Norris, *The Claim to Community*, 2–7.

[523] Norris, *Becoming Who We Are*, 114–115.

[524] Norris, 114–115.

[525] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 130–131.

[526] Aletta J. Norval, *Aversive Democracy: Inheritance and Originality in the Democratic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.

[527] Norval, 5–7.

[528] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 27.

we are supposed to consent to in a community. To have a society of conformists means that agreements end up in service to 'private benefit' rather than general will.[529] We see this outcome around us every day in societies where we have a facade of a functioning democracy, in which many people believe that it functions well enough for them to maintain a social contract and a minimum level of criticism towards it while being either blinded or apathetic to the injustices that are inflicted on the disadvantaged other. In other words, they confuse *communality* with *conformity*.[530] Cavell even suggests that we might be delusional about the reality of our society in thinking that we treat others equally when we are complicit in the injustice that falls upon them by conforming to the social contract.[531] What our education as a journey urges us to do is to rethink the notion of the social contract (which Cavell deems as a myth), to realise that when we are born we enter this contract without knowing. '[W]e are born free and are everywhere in chains', and in that 'we are not exercising our general will' for the good of society as a whole but rather to the 'particular', 'the partial', 'the unequal', 'to private benefit', 'to privacy'.[532] Realising this, being aware of and alarmed by our ability to ignore the other's address, and deciding to be nonconforming when we see injustice being committed in our name is an educational process. If we fail to stand up and speak for justice, we fail to stand up and speak for ourselves, so we halt our own self-transcendence and self-reliance. Therefore, education as a journey is a perfectionist endeavour that carries within it a political aspect through the process of self-examination and speaking politically to oneself and to the other. Therefore, as Norris puts it, 'To speak for oneself politically in this manner is to make a claim to community'.[533] Thus, this political aspect is also one of discovering 'the possibility of democracy', which in order for it to exist needs to (just like the self) be perpetually '(re)discovered'.[534] Norval argues that nonconformity in the here and now allows us to harness a hopeful imagination of a democratic future:

[529] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 132.
[530] Forsberg, 'From Self-Reliance to That Which Relies', 499–500.
[531] Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary*, 60–61; Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 25–26.
[532] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 25–26.
[533] Norris, *Becoming Who We Are*, 113.
[534] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 16–17.

> 'To break out from the common way presupposes not only a sense of dislocation, however small, but also the availability of an alternative imaginary horizon, something transcending the here and now, disclosing at least the possibility of new worlds'.[535]

This imagination of a condition of justice is essential in EMP and to the achievement of democratic communities; therefore, it is essential to the notion of education as a journey, and it carries with it the hope we need when we engage in perfectionist conversations with the other. Cavell argues that imagining a perfect democratic reality, 'does not exempt us from acting in the present scene of imperfection...On the contrary, this imagining is what enables us to act, that is, to exist in freedom from a despair of democracy'.[536]

What I mentioned so far is the basis on which standing my ground for justice and conversations with and for the other emanates from. But how does all of this apply to education? In fact, this is not something that can be implemented in a discussion about education, it is rather, in the light of EMP, must be part of the process of education itself. The struggle to find our voice, to speak for ourselves and for others and acknowledge the other and their speaking for us, to find our place in the world and learn that our nonconformity is not to be taken as a self-serving enterprise but as a way to raise our voice for justice—all of these are educational processes. Moreover, when we engage in a conversation with the other, we are offering ourselves, our words and our position to them and permitting ourselves to be read by them; in that, we offer ourselves as education for the other.[537] Of course the same thing goes when the other offers themself to us in a conversation. In EMP, that other that we engage in conversation with is called the *friend*. In education, a friend can be a teacher, a colleague, a mentor or even a text or a picture; it is that which engages in a conversation with me and evokes my shame. The friend bares their self and words to me in what George Kateb describes as a 'mutual intellectual nakedness'.[538] They can be a representation of a self or a position that I have yet to attain and encourage me to overcome my sceptical narcissism, to look around and search for a gleam of light that I am missing. They can be the other who opens my eyes to the injustice of their condition in society. Just as

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[535] Norval, *Aversive Democracy*, 190.
[536] Stanley Cavell, 'What Is the Emersonian Event? A Comment on Kateb's Emerson', *New Literary History* 25, no. 4 (1994): 951–958.
[537] Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 135–137.
[538] Kateb, *Emerson and Self-Reliance*, 105.

they are in Cavell's remarriage comedies, melodramas of the unknown woman, the Shakespearean plays or as the writer of a perfectionist text, the friend is an educator, even when they are a provocateur or an enemy. Their education is in their openness to me through conversation, and in order for me to have this conversation, I need to be willing to be open to them as well. This is how we become, as Cavell says, 'educations for one another'.[539] Friendship is the perfectionist educational way in which we shake off our conformity. The friend provokes and encourages us to attain our next self. They are the hero of our journey of transfiguration and difficult change as we work to find our gleam of light. The 'conversation of justice' that we have with the friend (the other) does not only mean using words to have a dialogue, but it is a 'way of life together'.[540] It is also about our ability to listen, respond to difference, and change.[541] Educational friendship is not something that can be limited to a learning subject. It needs to be embedded in the educational process, in every class, activity and exchange.

Education as a journey is a way to learn, know, acknowledge, endeavour and become someone who lives in the world responsibly. It is an upheaval, a difficult process of change but also liberating in the sense that it is a venture to find the balance between my position and freedom and that of the other to create a condition of justice. The Cavellian idea of perfectionism is, as he describes it in *Cities of Words*, 'the province not of those who oppose justice and benevolent calculation, but of those who feel left out of their sway, who feel indeed that most people have been left, or leave themselves out, of their sway'.[542] This is why I think that EMP is a moral outlook for those who feel the most unheard and unseen in education systems and, of course, in society as a whole. It is for those who do not fit within a teleological or deontological view, who feel out of place in education systems and are desperately in search of their voice in a world where they feel unheard and misunderstood. It is a journey for individuals but also for communities through the collective experience of that community's members.

[539] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 31.
[540] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 173–177.
[541] Norval, *Aversive Democracy*, 5.
[542] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 25.

The Perfectionist Teacher

In his reading of *Gaslight*, Cavell refers to the young detective, who explains to Paula how her husband is manipulating her, as her 'voice teacher'. Cavell bestows the title of teacher upon the detective because by helping Paula to snap out of her madness and explaining to her that what she is experiencing is not only truly happening but also has a logical explanation, he *instructs* her and 'confirms [her] words' and '[reintroduces] her to language'.[543] In other words, he aids her through her journey of finding her voice. What is interesting is that in the film there is an actual figure of a teacher, that of Paula's singing teacher, Signor Guardi. In the beginning of the film, Paula asks him a foreshadowing question: 'I have no voice, have I?', and he answers: 'The trouble is not with your voice alone. Your heart is not in your singing anymore'. Then he proceeds to advise her to give up on singing and go be in love and happy. It is right after that scene that we see Paula engaging in an act of self-stupefaction by agreeing to marry Gregory, a stranger she has known for a mere two weeks. I mentioned earlier that Cavell links the act of abandoning her pursuit of song to the denial of her voice. However, what interests me as well is how the detective and Signor Guardi, the two characters who embody the figure of the teacher, drastically differ from each other. While the detective represents a companion who gently takes Paula's hand through the darkness and makes her realise that her gleam of light exists somewhere, Signor Guardi contributes to her lostness by giving her the last push to completely and voluntarily let go of her voice. When she asks him if she has a voice, he does not confirm or deny its existence because he does not try to understand the complexity of Paula's question. Instead, he points out that there is a 'problem' with her voice and goes on to project his own voice on her by convincing her that she is too distracted by being in love to be good at singing. Through his *deafness* towards her plea, this teacher not only leaves Paula in the eye of the storm, he perhaps gives her the nudge that is required for her to be caught in the storm's merciless whirlwind. The detective and the singing coach embody two different examples of teachers in our education systems today. One is a perfectionist teacher, who becomes our friend, holds our hand through our

[543] Cavell, *Contesting Tears*, 58; Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 110.

lostness and helps us to find the courage for abandonment, which change and transformation require. The other is—let me call them—a conformist teacher, who contributes to our lostness. We often see teachers as guides or mentors; we place a lot of responsibility on them to show us the way. Yet, just like is the case with our relationship with others in our community, we run the risk of disappointment. We also often see them in the light of their identity as teachers, as representatives of a certain profession. However, a lot of the teaching process depends on the individuals that are engaged in it and have their own way of being in the world. In other words, we fail to acknowledge the subjectivity of the figure of the teacher.

Teachers could 'craft' classrooms that are worlds in themselves, which could be either 'all-absorbing' of the outside world or 'all-enclosing' and isolated from it.[544] Therefore, it is important to remember that teachers are neither the ports of our voyage nor the captains of our ships, they are travellers on their own journeys just like us. Cavell expresses this when he says: 'The anxiety in teaching, in serious communication, is that I myself require education'.[545] Through being on their own journeys, teachers struggle with the condition of education the same way we do but in a different capacity. The rigid systems of performativity and competence have their impact on teachers as well. Teachers today are under pressure to become instruments in the making of an effective, secure, predictable, and risk-free education that produces predefined learning outcomes.[546] Because the neoliberal paradigm has created an economic relationship between teachers and students—along with their parents/ guardians—that resembles a seller–customer dynamic, teachers find themselves under enormous pressure to meet standards. These standards are particularly seen as the standards of the 'profession' of teaching, and they demand a certain 'performance' of 'skills' and 'behaviours' while sidelining the 'ethical disposition' of teaching.[547] Moreover, teachers are often scrutinised by the evidence-based policy discourses concerning whether teachers are meeting or undermining the 'nation's expectations' pertaining to global competitiveness criteria that have been imposed upon them.[548] These discourses

[544] Darryl M. De Marzio and David T. Hansen, 'The Call to Teach in Contemporary Educational Thought and Practice', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 56, no. 1 (January 2024): 86–90.
[545] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 125.
[546] Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 1–2.
[547] Clarke and Phelan, *Teacher Education and the Political*, 60.
[548] Clarke and Phelan, 2.

often find their way to the media and influence the public's opinion of teachers as well, which in return affects their experience with their work. This leads to the development of rhetoric concerned with the need for 'enhancing' and 'improving' teaching practices as a means to more *effective* learning outcomes. This rhetoric by means of consensualism is made to be pivotal and unquestionable, which only induces further anxiety for teachers and demands their conformity.[549] Meeting certain aims becomes the core of a teacher's work. Many hours are spent on administrative and managerial tasks that make it difficult for teachers to work with holistic, transcendent, interdisciplinary or cross-curricular efforts even if they were motivated to do so. Time becomes a teacher's enemy. Yet, this unfortunately has been the reality of teaching for a long time. David Hansen states that as early as the development of national educational systems in the 19th century, the 'values and virtues' of teaching have often been incompatible with 'external forces' that reduce teaching to 'a mere means to economic, social or nationalistic ends'.[550] Many teachers conform to this restrictive reality, but many others continuously harbour wishes for alternative models that could free them from the constraints of 'the test-oriented world of standards'. Yet, these wishes do not find their way into becoming a true voice, they are rather silenced and remain mere 'murmurings'.[551] The pursuit of 'what works' leaves no space for regarding the individuality and subjectivity of teachers. Clarke and Phelan argue that neoliberal policies consider teachers only 'in terms of their object-like qualities—as implementers of state or national curricula or as enactors of professional standards—rather than as agents capable of identifying and articulating their own purposes and speaking with their own voice'.[552] This dynamic also extends to teacher education and the process of preparing teachers for their work, especially when it is done based on a check-list of standards for the profession of teaching. The preparedness of teachers is measured based on mechanistic and

[549] See discussion by Clarke and Phelan, 3.
[550] De Marzio and Hansen, 'The Call to Teach in Contemporary Educational Thought and Practice', 87.
[551] Clarke and Phelan, *Teacher Education and the Political*, 26; Stephen J. Ball, Meg Maguire, and Annette Braun, *How Schools Do Policy: Policy Enactments in Secondary Schools* (London: Routledge, 2011), 68.
[552] Clarke and Phelan, *Teacher Education and the Political*, 29.

hierarchical tests and performance criteria that establish a 'fantasy of accountability'.[553] This fantasy promises relief from the 'uncertainties of complex political, institutional and interpersonal processes'.[554] All of these restrictions lead teachers to paths of conformity, apathy or nihilism, which bubble to the surface in the shape of burnout, negligence or dismissal of teaching as a career option all together. Teachers may become lost alongside their students and struggle to find a transcendent, aesthetic or moral value to their work.

What the approach of education as a journey can do for the teacher's experience is point out ways in which they can think beyond these restrictions and aspire to become perfectionist teachers. Again, this is not to be viewed as a direct, clear-cut solution, or yet another standard that teachers need to aspire to on top of their many burdens. It is rather something that begins with what we may call *a state of mind*. By viewing themselves as being on the journey along with their students, teachers could allow their work to be part of their own personal experience rather than being a mere role that they need to fulfil. They are usually 'compelled' to frequently rethink their work because they deal with subjects that are continuously changing. What their journey may allow them to understand is that this also requires a reimagining and renewing of their 'being' and 'personhood'.[555] Teachers are on a journey with their students. They are travellers with a calling to care and aid other travellers, to help them find a certain sense of *authority*. One of the things that we gain through our journey of education is the ability to trust in our own experiences. Perhaps we start the journey with *whim*, but in order to continue leaping from one circle to another, we need to build trust and gain *authority* in our experiences to do so. Cavell argues that 'the primary good of a teacher is to prompt his or her students to find their way to that authority'.[556] In this authority, there is also a sense of confidence, acceptance and trust that we need to find ourselves again after lostness.[557] The perfectionist teacher guides us through the moment of

[553] Clarke and Phelan, 29.

[554] Claudia Lapping, 'Institutional Accountability and Intellectual Authority: Unconscious Fantasies and Fragile Identifications in Contemporary Academic Practice', in *Privilege, Agency and Affect*, ed. Claire Maxwell and Peter Aggleton (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 95.

[555] De Marzio and Hansen, 'The Call to Teach in Contemporary Educational Thought and Practice', 86.

[556] Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 12.

[557] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 99.

self-perfection when we see our gleam of light and find our genius.[558] They cannot make us see our gleam of light, that is something that we arrive at on our own, but they can encourage our transformation and support us through the difficult upheaval of change and transfiguration. They are a friend that we engage in a conversation with but also one who encourages a conversation between us and others in education. This conversation is hard work, and it can harbour a certain tension that Cavell describes as 'the anxiety over listening to each other'. Therefore, it is the perfectionist teacher who takes on the responsibility of providing a reason for the conversation to restart when it falters and falls silent.[559] They are the facilitator of the transformative conversation with the other. Taking the concept of teaching and the teacher to a perfectionist dimension allows us to overcome the custom of neoliberal totalising practices and criteria that govern education today.[560] A teacher with a perfectionist approach to education is someone who encourages us to think beyond the limits of the self and fixed ends and recognise the invisible and silent in the self as well as the other.

The meaning of the perfectionist teacher goes beyond those who teach as a profession. The other (as other people or things) can be a teacher as well. This is what Cavell means when he states that we are 'education for one another'.[561] Yet, the other as teacher does not directly instruct us, and the goal of our relationship with them is not for them to lead and for us to follow. They rather shed the light of the otherness that lies within us through exposing their otherness to us. This relationship is close to the Levinasian idea of the face-to-face encounter. In that, the perfectionist teacher points to the next yet unattained self (other me) that I am to move towards. Saito argues that they guide us by 'standing on the intersection between the inter- and intradimensions of

[558] Saito, 'The Gleam of Light: Initiation, Prophecy, and Emersonian Moral Perfectionism', 180–181.
[559] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 371.
[560] Paul Standish makes the same argument in a discussion of teaching and learning from a Levinasian perspective, which always considers education in relation to the concept of the other. He argues that a perfectionist approach makes way for teaching to reach beyond what is 'directly planned' and invite 'further thought'. See: Paul Standish, 'Levinas and the Language of the Curriculum', in *Levinas and Education: At the Intersection of Faith and Reason*, ed. Denise Egea-Kuehne (Oxford, UNITED KINGDOM: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 64.
[561] Levinas also considers the Other to be 'the first teaching', see: Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 204.

my self' and '[becoming] the occasion for crucial turning points in my perfection'.[562] She also argues that through the act of teaching, that moment of perfection when the gleam of light is rekindled is shared and mutual with the other. Therefore, teaching also becomes learning, and specifically 'learning to be with others as neighbours'.[563] In the difficult condition of education today, the perfectionist teacher fosters hope in us, in themselves and in the togetherness that the process of the educational journey brings along. It is a challenging task, as this hope is not easy to maintain given the disappointments of education's condition. Therefore, teachers are not magicians that conjure this hope out of thin air, they rather find it through growing beyond themselves and then allow it to illuminate our mutual journey.

Embracing the Beautiful: To Read and Write the World

The vehicle of hope upon which we take our perfectionist journey of education gives a certain romantic, aesthetic value to our experience. The perfectionism of education as a journey is not a competing moral theory but one that highlights the dimensions of the moral life, which is accounted for through an 'aesthetic aspect' of moral judgement.[564] This aspect can be seen in the worth that Cavell confers to romanticism as a serious redemptive philosophy and to forms of human expression that hold great aesthetic value and convey a romantic experience, like works of fiction, film, theatre, opera and art, broadly.[565] Therefore, in order to complete a vision of education as a journey, it is necessary to discuss this romantic, aesthetic aspect and shed light on the

[562] Saito, 'The Gleam of Light: Initiation, Prophecy, and Emersonian Moral Perfectionism', 181.
[563] Saito, 182.
[564] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxxi.
[565] The list of texts, films and plays that Cavell worked with is naturally not accessible to everyone and not everyone would consider it to be of a perfectionist essence. They are definitely very Western and to some would be considered elitist. However, as I mentioned before, Cavell left this list open-ended, which means it is up to us who have come after him to further expand on that list to include other cultures, other types and genres of film, literature, theatre and art, as well as other types of mediums of human expression.

emphasis that Cavell places on reading and writing in particular. As he considers highlighting the importance of self-intelligibility to be one of EMP's main contributions, he demonstrates a special interest in the role text plays in finding our words to express our condition and 'enter the conversation of justice'. It is an element of EMP's occupation (obsession) with education, which places focus on 'finding one's way rather than on getting oneself or another to take the way'.[566] Paul Standish argues that Cavell sees the importance of reading in political terms. He adds that 'the significance of reading lies not in scholarly coverage of vast ranges of literature but rather in giving attention to a text, in being ready to be challenged by it, and in taking on the responsibilities of interpretation'.[567] Cavell engages with literature deeply as a means of philosophical inquiry and reflection. He treats literature (I mean here works of fiction) as a rich repository of human experience that can expand our understanding of fundamental philosophical questions. Texts with romantic value hold an educational potential for us to transform our thinking from a rigid and purely sceptical epistemology to a way of embracing our finitude. In her discussion of poetry from a Cavellian lens, Hannah Vandergrift Eldridge argues that texts, like lyric poetry, 'shape and create orientations to others and the world' in ways of acknowledgement.[568] Cavell considers the 'idea of romanticism as calling for a new relation, a kind of union or completion of work between philosophy and literature' to orient his concept of romanticism as a serious response to scepticism.[569] Perhaps one of the best examples of a romantic perfectionist text that responds to scepticism, according to Cavell, is Thoreau's *Walden*. It pays attention to the relationship between 'the subject of knowledge and its object' in a way that their existence is acknowledged as in proximity to us (in nearness and nextness).[570] It also explores the relation to feelings, sensations, subjective reflections, and things in themselves. Reading a text as such gives us a sense of intimacy with the world and allows us to see the extraordinary in things that we may not pay much attention to in our daily lives. In *Walden*, Thoreau writes: 'Next to us the grandest laws are continually being executed. Next to us is not the workman whom we have hired, with

[566] Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxxii.
[567] Paul Standish, 'A Review of: Becoming Who We Are: Politics and Practical Philosophy in the Work of Stanley Cavell by Andrew Norris', *Contemporary Political Theory* 19, no. S4 (December 2020): 239–242.
[568] Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 27–28.
[569] Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America*, 4.
[570] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 95–105; Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 28–29.

whom we love so well to talk, but the workman whose work we are'.[571] Realising our nextness and neighbouring to things in the world is a transcendental experience in an ever expanding and unending process of education as growth. It leads us to realising our *doubleness*: our own *neighbouringness* to our next unattained self. The value of the romantic text is in the way it takes its writer's words to the *everyday* and redeems them from common-sense postulates by revealing their extraordinariness. This romantic practice of realising our nextness and neighbouring to things in the world shows us the possibility of something that most of us can catch a glimpse of without universalising assumptions. In one of his lectures, Cavell recalls being invited by the Japan Institute of Harvard University to participate in a symposium on 'the fantastic in Japanese literature'.[572] He construes his experience with the uncanniness of the papers he read, which describe a literature that he is unfamiliar with. However, at the same time, the description feels so familiar to the point that he feels as if he has known what they discuss all of his life. What evokes that familiarity with these literary texts is the journey they describe:

> 'The papers invoked such ideas as that of the imaginary journey, especially in quest of the self; and such ideas as that of being on some boundary or threshold, as between the impossible and the possible; and ideas of the confrontation of otherness; and of some adverse relation to the modern scientific sensibility'.[573]

What Cavell describes here is exactly what education as a journey is. The romanticism in these texts is something that permeates the human experience; it allows us to reflect on our journey in a holistic way that takes our education beyond the accumulation of information and scientific facts. Romanticism takes us even further beyond morality itself to deliver us to a romantic 'demand for' or 'promise of' 'redemption' and 'self-recovery';[574] it is that aspect of seeking a *remedy* to our difficult condition in education that I discussed before.

The perfectionist romantic engagement with text applies to reading as well as writing. Cavell sees reading and writing as variations of each other:

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[571] Thoreau, *Walden*, 134.
[572] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 182.
[573] Cavell, 183.
[574] Cavell, 26.

> ‘Reading is a variation of writing, where they meet in meditation and achieve accounts of their opportunities; and writing is a variation of reading, since to write is to cast words together that you did not make, so as to give or take readings’.[575]

He remarks that this ‘interplay’ of reading and writing is what Thoreau considers to be philosophy in itself. He then emphasises that the act of philosophising does not need to be exclusive to reading books of philosophy but of ‘whatever is before you’.[576] Thus, this type of reading is perfectionist in nature; it allows us to live philosophically with whatever text we choose and relate to. It is an educational practice in which philosophy becomes an everyday practice and not just a mere academic topic. Texts, including works of fiction if read philosophically, become perfectionist friends on our journey of education. I mentioned earlier that the reader of the perfectionist text (who practises a perfectionist reading of a text) is someone who is in search of something; they are striving for growth and self-transcendence as well as intelligibility of the self and other. When Cavell brings about perfectionist examples through his readings of philosophical texts, fiction, theatre and film, he is engaging in perfectionist conversations with these forms of expression using his own words[577] and this similarly applies to the writer of a perfectionist text, as the perfectionist journey includes finding the language to have a conversation. To write as a way to navigate this journey is to write from self-reliance ‘in word and in deed’ and ‘in words that are deeds’.[578] Therefore, writing is also a way to seek out the directions for ‘overcoming a self-imposed sense of strangeness’.[579] Writing then is a way to navigate lostness in the oddness and uncanniness of the familiar and ordinary existence of ourselves and the world around us. It is a way to deal with an ever changing human condition in which familiarity dwindles or becomes difficult to deal with.[580] Thus, in the journey

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[575] Cavell, 18.

[576] Cavell, 18.

[577] Johansson, ‘Perfectionist Philosophy as a (an Untaken) Way of Life’.

[578] Stanley Cavell, *Emerson’s Transcendental Etudes*, ed. David Justin Hodge (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press ;, 2003), 190; Saito, *The Gleam of Light*, 52.

[579] See, Cavell, *Quest of the Ordinary*, 165-166.

[580] I would like here to include a passage from *In Quest of the Ordinary*, which I consider to be one of Cavell’s personal expressions of his relationship with writing, and it goes as follows: ‘To write knowing that your words emit a breath of virtue or vice every moment, that they communicate the means by which you are expressing your desires, know them or not, is to leave your character unguarded. To leave what I say unguarded has been a point of honor with me, even though I know that some risks are not worth taking. If one could not write better than one is, and understand a writer better than he or she may understand themselves, if we were not

of education, we write as an educational practice to continuously renew a sense of wonder in the everyday and seek what is extraordinary in the ordinary. In education, writing can be a way of 'finding' ourselves by 'founding' our philosophy. It also contributes to the process of transfiguring our preexisting epistemological 'founding' through finding ourselves again and again in a perpetual process of leaping towards the unattainable in expanding circles.[581] Writing could aid us in the upheaval of expressing our unknownness (the inner mood of our voice) to regain the power to make ourselves known to the other and have authority in our experience in education and other journeys of life. An aesthetic experience of education evokes an aesthetic judgement that is entangled with our moral judgement, which forms our engagement with politics and the practice of language. Saito argues that '[t]he interrelationship between the aesthetic, the political and language is at the heart of Cavellian education for self-knowledge, where this is understood as a matter of self-criticism.[582] Skilbeck argues that our use of language—to 'word the world'—is closely related to our capacity to express ourselves in terms of the way we speak and perform our words, e.g., passionately, urgently, with conviction, in confusion, etc.[583] He highlights the Cavellian idea of taking responsibility for both the clarity of what we speak and that which moves us to say what we say.[584] This idea illuminates other forms of human expression that could be represented in different art forms, like drama or the performance arts, for example. One could say that these other forms of human expression can also be understood in terms of philosophical reading and writing, and this gives a newly felt meaning to these practices. Yet, the romantic educational experience is not exclusive to the way of words and language. It invites us to embrace a sense of beauty in our education that is beyond words. It allows our

capable of better obedience than we have shown, obedience to something better, then the case of writing would be more pitiable than it is, because then it could propose no measures for putting itself aside, no relief for writer or reader. It follows that I am at any time subject to indictment by what I set down, or else it goes for nothing'. See: Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 25.

[581] See a discussion by Cavell about the ideas of finding as founding as well as founding as finding in: Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America*, 77–118.

[582] Naoko Saito, 'Taking a Chance: Education for Aesthetic Judgment and the Criticism of Culture', *Ethics and Education* 10, no. 1 (January 2015): 96–104.

[583] Skilbeck, '"A Thin Net over an Abyss": Greta Thunberg and the Importance of Words in Addressing the Climate Crisis'; Skilbeck, 'Serious Words for Serious Subjects'.

[584] Skilbeck, '"A Thin Net over an Abyss": Greta Thunberg and the Importance of Words in Addressing the Climate Crisis', 970; Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 185.

moods and feelings to take a legitimate place side by side with 'onward thinking' as we discover and rediscover our genius. Thus, it leaves space for the ineffable: for that which is felt beyond our capability of expression.

At times, we perceive knowledge solely from a sensation. Our *whim* can be awakened by something unfathomable and ineffable beyond our ability to express it. Yet, this pillar of our educational experience is something that is generally undermined in education and research systems, where text as a form of expression reigns supreme.[585] In the introduction to her most recent book *The Touch of the Present*, Sharon Todd reflects on the way our sensory and educational experiences permeate each other.[586] She recalls how, in her own memory of being in educational institutions, the experience of learning was inextricably linked to the materiality of the world around her. She conveys, for example, how learning mathematics in school was linked to the feeling of the smooth surface of her textbook, the pencil between her fingers and her hunched shoulders over the desk, how cursive writing lessons were linked to the sound of the scratches of her fountain pen on paper, or how learning the history of European colonialism was 'inseparable from the musty smell of the colonial wall maps with their fading colours'. She even seems to attempt to express the feeling that the memory of these history lessons left her with as she describes the portrayals of Indigenous peoples and their colonisers in the textbooks as 'disturbing' and 'grotesque'. These sensory associations between the self and the curriculum (Todd calls them *encounters*) are created through 'touching and being touched by the world', which creates a sense of the self in education and generates a 'sense-scape' that portrays the 'intimate' experience of education;[587] I would call it education as an intimate experience with the world. A relationship to the materiality around us is a relationship of acknowledgement of the external world—as it is of other minds—and it is

[585] *Unflattening*, a PhD dissertation by Nick Sousanis from the Teachers College, Columbia University, challenges the primacy of word over image in education. This dissertation was developed as a comic and approaches images not as subordinate to words but rather as equal partners in the articulation of thought. It follows the journey of sleepwalking figures as they step out of the limit of their predetermined ontological reality and aspire to explore other dimensions. For example: a two-dimensional figure A. Square meets a three-dimensional sphere that exposes it to extraordinary possibilities. In expressing their otherness to each other, the figures portray the need to go beyond the constraints of the ways we conventionally approach knowledge. This dissertation/comic showcases words and images as inextricably linked and demonstrates their coming together in collaboration, through a visual-verbal dance, to free us from the limitations of our education. See: Nick Sousanis, *Unflattening* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[586] Todd, *The Touch of the Present*, 2.

[587] Todd, 2.

similarly a relationship that we are capable of denying a moral commitment to. We are often distracted from this experience by our reluctance to 'take an interest' in it.[588] Therefore, this view of education as *encounters* is far from common in the way it is conventionally viewed and thought about today. This understanding is considered too soft and flowery, perhaps too subjective and intangible. Thus, it plays on the strings of our sceptical fear of meaninglessness and unknownness. Education today trains our senses so 'they conform to a predetermined field of the visible and audible'.[589] We, after all, still live in an era where an 'experience of wonder', as Cavell puts it, is still associated with 'the explanations of science rather than...the recognition of our relation to things as they are, the perception of the extraordinariness of what we find ordinary (for example, beauty), and the ordinariness of what we find extraordinary (for example, violence)'.[590] Through its embrace of the beautiful, education as a journey delivers us to an 'epistemology of moods' that blurs the line between subjectivity and objectivity and allows an aesthetic feel for the world and a spiritual dimension to our education that is secular and grounded in the common, the ordinary, the everyday of our lives. This romantic element is a process of finding education in uncanny places. It is also about being present in our education in mind, body and soul as it exists in the everyday, in the here and now. Our bodies and sensations are part of our educational 'encounters'; we bring them into our relationship with the objects of study, with 'the novel, the poem, the equation' that we learn.[591] Todd argues that centering these encounters at the heart of our educational practices 'decouples' them from instrumentalism, functionalism and socialisation (what she means by socialisation here is close to Cavell's idea of conformity).[592] When we conform to 'unseeing' tragedies on the streets or 'unsmelling' the toxicity in the air in an environmentally deteriorating world, we are also being unfelt, unseen and unheard in our education systems. A romantic and aesthetic approach to our education, especially one that acknowledges our moods and senses as they respond and reflect on the materiality of the world around us, allows us to breach our preconceived knowledge. It 'throws off pre-constituted political modes of seeing and acting, belonging and identifying'.[593] Thus, a romantic

[588] Fischer, *Stanley Cavell and Literary Skepticism*, 117; Eldridge, *Lyric Orientations*, 29.
[589] Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education*, 4.
[590] Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 33–34.
[591] Todd, *The Touch of the Present*, 20.
[592] Todd, 35.
[593] Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education*, 5.

and aesthetic approach aids our endeavour towards nonconformity for the sake of justice on our educational journey.

Summary

In this chapter I discussed education in the light of EMP more precisely. I returned to examining the condition of education but from the Cavellian lens of EMP. I addressed the benevolent language that neoliberalism uses to create a facade of equality in education while masking true socioeconomic disadvantages in its systems. This facade also affects the personal experience of students who blame themselves for failing to meet standards and who experience shame and guilt. I clarified that while perfectionist shame is a response to realising our conformity and a catalyst that pushes us towards self-overcoming, the shame that is evoked by instrumental education is completely different. It is rooted in self-blame for not conforming enough with standards and has the potential to make us want to conform even further. So, we become lost, unhappy or even apathetic towards the educational process, which stifles our growth. Another issue that I addressed is how positivist assumptions sideline emotions, especially in research. This is yet another symptom of our unbalanced reliance on assumptions and science-based methods that grant superiority to cognition and logic over emotions and senses, even when discussing the complex human experience. All in all, education today is marked by exclusion and a lack of sensitivity to the invisible and silent of our human condition. As a result, it is marked by tragedy and violence. I argued that what we really need is an education that reignites our gleam of light and encourages us to seek nonconformity with what restrains our moral judgement and prevents us from seeing the humanity of others; however, this is not something that can happen without a tremendous and revolutionary change to the political and economic systems that govern and control education. Therefore, I clarified that this thesis cannot provide clear-cut solutions, but it can harness EMP to point out the way towards how we can deal with the condition of education. The way to set out on the endeavour of education as a perfectionist journey starts with shame when we realise that we are philosophically lost but that

journey is always marked by hope. Our shame awakens our understanding of conformity and sets us on a path of self-overcoming. In education, this path starts with questioning the systems themselves and using our discovery of our genius as a survival mechanism by embracing our moral and aesthetic experience with education. Within our journey, we find elements of perpetual and open-ended transformation and intelligibility that give our endeavour a sense of freedom. In this chapter, I also discussed how education as a journey helps us to truly sense the silence, find our voice and use it for justice. It also aids us in understanding our confrontations with the other as conversations with friends in an enterprise towards both acknowledgement and finding our position to express ourselves. As for educators, the journey aids us in continuously re-examining and reflecting on our scepticism, our methodologies, on what we mean when we say that we are engaging in the educational process, and how that manifests in our roles. I also discussed how concepts of morality and justice are rationalised and contained within subject-limited notions in education and how our journey can help us to go beyond that because nonconformity towards injustice is rooted in its Cavellian philosophy. Moreover, I elaborated on how finding our voice within a community works, how we can navigate what we conform and not conform to within it, and how we can critically approach the social contract. I then moved on to focus on the position of teachers within our journey, and argued that they are on a journey of their own. I used the example of *Gaslight* to portray how a teacher can contribute to our lostness or to our finding. I discussed how the value of teaching is often stifled by notions of performativity and how teachers struggle to escape such confinement, which hinders any effort towards a holistic and transcendent approach to education. After that, I focused on teachers and their own journey in education. I discussed the many difficulties that they face, and I laid out a description of the idea of the perfectionist teacher. Finally, I reflected on the importance of seeing the romantic and aesthetic side of our educational journey and discussed the importance that Cavell conferred to romantic texts and the practices of reading and writing. I also reflected on the ineffable and felt in education as important components to the affirmation of both our experience in the here and now of the everyday and our break away from preconceived notions of knowledge on our journey.

Final Remarks

This dissertation has addressed what I hold to be two major problems of education today, which underlie the way we think about, approach, plan and manage it. The first issue is that education is dominated by instrumentalism, which is fortified by an increasingly dominant neoliberal paradigm. This dominance creates a version of education that functions as a mere tool for economic prosperity, one that presents a facade of equality and democratic rhetoric while reinforcing the opposite. However, due to the logocentric nature of its philosophical grounding, education has always been susceptible to this impact, as it relies on a notion of seeking final truths and fixed ends. This brings us to the second problem of education. In its endeavour towards the difficult task of seeking final fixed ends, education (as rooted in Western philosophy) tends to rely on postulates and universalised notions of subjectivity, which dismiss that which is other. To combat these problems, many philosophers of education suggest alternative non-instrumental approaches to education. Yet, these approaches are not always immune to falling for the trap of universalism and the totalisation of fixed ends. This thesis has worked to avoid this trap by adopting an open-ended perfectionist approach to education as a never-ending endeavour. It has relied on Stanley Cavell's Emersonian moral perfectionism (EMP) to put forth the concept of education as a journey as a different non-instrumental way to think about and consider education. The way this approach stands out is in the way it brings together a transcendental perfectionist notion of education as growth in a way that pays balanced attention to the self as well as the other. A perfectionist journey of education is a journey that the self takes side by side with the other; it is marked by a sense of nonconformity to unjust conditions and a struggle to find one's voice to be intelligible to oneself and the other as well as to be attuned to the intelligibility of the other. A journey of the self is one of continuously seeking the next unattained self in a process of growth in all directions in expanding circles; it refuses to limit education to fixed notions or final ends. Furthermore, it encourages us to think about our place in the world—both the self and the external world—as not being fixed. Thus, our experience in the world is always in a perpetual succes-

sion of states, modes and moods. Education as a journey also centres the concept of realising our conformity and unintelligibility. Thus, it evokes two major elements of taking our journey alongside others, which are issues of justice and voice. Finding our voice, as well as the words to express our condition, allows us to communicate ourselves to the other, and that goes hand in hand with attuning to the other's words and acknowledging their existence as something that the self cannot completely know or decipher. The other on our journey of education is a 'friend' that demands acknowledgement and confrontation through conversation. Our self-transcendence and transformation to the next self cannot occur without a transfiguration that is achieved through seeing the other as they are and having a conversation with them. The transcendence of the self in education as a journey is a process of resisting self-centeredness and aspiring towards acknowledgement, towards seeing the other in the realm of justice, towards the whole. Therefore, the notion of education as a journey—as based on Cavell's EMP—also responds to the second problem of education that I refer to at the beginning of this thesis, which is its dismissal of the other.

Education today is dominated by neoliberal practices that fortify a staunch version of instrumentalism through its focus on performativity and efficiency. In this condition, those who do not fit this paradigm often find themselves plagued with guilt for not fulfilling the required standards. They become lost, unhappy, unheard, unseen, and unfelt, which often leads them to either struggle with a toxic sense of shame or become apathetic towards the educational process all together. So, they go through education systems like ghosts, mere listeners to waves of information that go in one ear and out the other, as the saying goes. This condition stifles their growth and muffles their voice and gleam of light. Seeing education in the light of EMP and approaching it as a perfectionist journey could aid us in dealing with this difficult condition. The perfectionist journey turns our shame into a perfectionist one: it points to the need to both set ourselves free of our conformity and seek to abandon our attained self to move towards the next unattained one. Through this approach, we see education from a wider perspective beyond the prominent sub-divided, specialist-oriented and subject-limited views we have today; we unlearn the habit of limiting our understanding of what education is and what it is for; and we learn to think of it as a complex perpetual human experience that exists within and without a system. Another element of this journey is to understand that our confrontation with the other is education in itself if we turn our focus

away from an epistemological obsession with knowing towards acknowledgement. Through befriending the other and engaging in a conversation with them, we become education for one another. Teachers, who are also travellers like us through the journey, take on the responsibility of being enablers and conduits of these perfectionist conversations. What the notion of education as a journey gives us is not a clear-cut solution to our problems in education but a way to rethink our condition and deal with it. It requires a sense of acknowledgement of the potentiality of education as an open-ended and never-ending process, which in itself is the process of making ourselves inteligible to ourselves and others.[594] Describing education as a continuous never-ending process does not mean a complete rejection of ends. As I discussed in chapter 2, what I mean by this is education in which each end in sight is an end and a beginning at the same time in the expanding circles of attaining the unattainable self. On the perfectionist journey of education, we continuously venture in a state between the attained and unattained, the known and the unknown, the possible and the impossible, somewhere between knowledge and acknowledgement. Cavell argues that whatever we do to find the way again, 'what alternatives we can take and must take are not fixed, but chosen; and thereby fix us'.[595] Every movement from one circle to the other, from one self to the next is a *leap*; it carries the potential of an educational experience, of education as growth and transcendence.

For educators who are looking for the potentiality of introducing education as a journey or Cavell's moral perfectionism in general to their practices, its potential comes from EMP's open-endedness. Since it is not a specific competing moral theory but a philosophical dimension, outlook or tradition of the moral life, EMP can be introduced to or coupled with already existing practices in today's education. The potentiality of this introduction is stronger in educational practices or theories that already have a certain something in common with EMP. For example, *Bildung*, which remains fairly popular in western and northern European education, focuses on self-cultivation and personal growth and development. It would be interesting to draw a connection between Bildung and the notion of education as a journey.[596] Yet, the journey in

[594] Roth, 'Making Ourselves Intelligible—Rendering Ourselves Efficacious and Autonomous, without Fixed Ends'.
[595] Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 324.
[596] You can see a reference to the use of the term ' journey' in regards to Bildung in: Øivind Varkøy, 'The Concept of "Bildung"', *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 18, no. 1 (2010): 85–96.

Bildung seems to be incomplete without the figure of the friend that is an essential element of EMP's journey. It is no surprise that in the many interpretations of Bildung, the way eventually leads to a limited sense of individualism. Introducing the Emersonian idea of 'being averse to our condition' to Bildung, provides space for the notion of nonconformity, which in EMP leads to a concern with the other and conditions of justice. EMP completes the journey of self-cultivation and bestows a transcendental dimension upon Bildung that allows for further democratic practices in education, like the perfectionist conversation with others.[597] Another example of integrating EMP to existing practices in education would be to introduce Cavellian and Emersonian concepts, including EMP, to the work of John Dewey, which is wildly popular in the field of education, worldwide. In many of her books and articles, Naoko Saito couples Dewey with EMP despite the fact that Cavell is famous for distancing himself from Dewey's pragmatism. Yet, Saito diligently draws many similarities and meeting points between the two, like the idea of education as growth and perfection without a final perfectibility. She argues that EMP can 'rescue' Dewey's idea of growth from a 'totalising tendency' and reclaim the aesthetic dimension of a Deweyan education through the role of the gleam of light—which she describes as 'prophetic'.[598] She also argues that a critical Cavellian approach to Dewey allows space for further resistance to such a tendency and puts emphasis on the role education plays in establishing democracy as a way of life.[599] Other work on the potentiality of introducing EMP to existing concepts in education is portrayed through a PhD thesis from the department of education at Stockholm University by Viktor Johansson. The thesis uses a Cavellian perfectionist approach to pay attention to everyday interactions between children and their parents. It examines issues of our attunement to dissonant voices, particularly the voice of the child. Through a perfectionist engagement with children's literature, the thesis showcases that dissonance is a natural element of the way we interact with children. It also highlights how a perfectionist reading of children's literature can help us to both

[597] See an account on introducing Emersonian variations, particularly the concept of becoming averse to our condition to Bildung, as a therapeutic element and a way to further evoke conversion of justice in education in: Schumann, 'Aversive Education'. Also see a discussion of a Cavellian–Emersonian reworking of a Kantian version of Bildung in early childhood education in: Viktor Johansson, 'Wildly Wise in the Terrible Moment: Kant, Emerson, and Improvisatory *Bildung* in Early Childhood Education', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 51, no. 5 (April 2019): 519–530.

[598] Saito, *The Gleam of Light*.

[599] Naoko Saito, 'Philosophy as Education and Education as Philosophy: Democracy and Education from Dewey to Cavell', *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 40, no. 3 (August 2006): 345–356.

understand the complication of our interaction with children and help us find 'tranquillity' in our lostness through our attempt at a pedagogical understanding of children.[600] Many other useful discussions can be found in *Conversations: The Journal of Cavellian Studies* and a special issue on Cavell, Kant and education in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*.[601] What all of these examples have in common is the greatest and most encompassing potentiality of the concept of education as a journey, which is the emphasis on the fact that self-cultivation and self-overcoming cannot occur without a transcendence that acknowledges the other (the friend). In a difficult condition of a staunchly instrumentalised and neoliberalised education, this emphasis carries the seed of nonconformity to an unjust condition, it carries the potential of democracy as a perfectionist empathetic endeavour. The importance of the perfectionist journey remains in its potentiality due to the non-teleological nature of EMP; it is not about providing a check-list of practices to implement to achieve a specific goal. It does not lead us to an end in which we can say: Now we have done it! We have applied and achieved justice, democracy and transcendence! The perfectionist journey is rather about the hopeful resistance under difficult conditions, the appreciation of moments of lostness and the striving towards the next leap.

The perfectionist journey carries a sense of hope under difficult conditions. It harbours a romantic and aesthetic approach to education that allows us to see those who are unseen in education systems, hear those who are unheard, and acknowledge the pain of those who are in pain. It frees us from the restriction of the reductionist paradigm of skewed positivism in education to give space to that which is emotional and felt. It encourages us to find our voice, find the words to express our condition as well as use that voice to establish a just condition. This is particularly true for those of us who 'feel left out of their sway' in education systems, for those who feel silenced, unheard and unseen. Education as a journey is the process of planting a seed within the dim and intimidating condition of lostness and nursing it until it grows to the surface. This seed is a seed of gradual and soft revolutionary change in education, a process of finding hardness in the soft and power in the silent and

[600] Viktor Johansson, 'Dissonant Voices : Philosophy, Children's Literature, and Perfectionist Education' (Monograph, Stockholm University, 2013).
[601] Klas Roth, Martin Gustafsson, and Viktor Johansson, 'Introduction: Perfectionism and Education—Kant and Cavell on Ethics and Aesthetics in Society', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 48, no. 3 (2014): 1–4; 'Conversations: The Journal of Cavellian Studies', n.d., https://uottawa.scholarsportal.info/ojs/index.php/conversations.

unseen. I do believe that no matter which direction you examine it from, the notion of education as a journey as rooted in EMP always leads to the issue of justice. Its nonconformity, its befriending and dialoguing with the other, its refusal of fixed ends and assumptions, its romanticism; all of these are elements of its endeavour towards a perfect condition of justice. Of course, this endeavour is a continuous and never-ending process. The condition of education today can make us feel as if our individual efforts are not enough unless they make a large and tangible impact. The culture of measurements deludes us into thinking that fighting for a just condition is futile; it makes us feel as if we will remain helpless unless we take a position of power. Yet, we can argue that many liberating conditions in our human history came through small acts of protest, which compiled and grew with time. By planting a seed, by adopting an idea, by a little 'futile' action here and there, a speck of sand is thrown into a small pile, and with time, that pile grows into a mountain. In a world where this seed is planted early in the lives of our children, the potential of seeking a just world is much greater through them, and we do not need to invent a new theory to do so. Aspects of the notion of the perfectionist journey in education already exist. They exist in the experience of encountering a transformative conversation, in the experience of meeting a teacher who inspires us to find a passion, in the experience of realising our ignorance and acting to rectify it. The journey is far from a novel concept, it is how life works. It is not a 'new' theory to be implemented and applied in education but rather something that already exists in fragments. What I am inviting us to do in this text is to collect these fragments and give them a home, to emphasise their importance, to give them a name, to create a balance on the scale of fragments of self and other, to build a lighthouse out of them so that we can find the way amidst a storm.

Epilogue: Beyond Journey's End

'And the awful thing was that Grenouille, although he knew that *his* odour was his odour, could not smell it. Virtually drowning in himself, he could not for the life of him smell himself!'.[602]
I often pondered this scene from Patrick Süskind's novel *Perfume*, when Grenouille, a man who understands the world almost purely through his sense of smell, who is obsessed with odour to the point of madness and murder, discovers, to his horror, that he has no odour of his own. That moment, when he emerges from his cave after years of isolation and saturation with his mental archive of scents, he resurfaces into the world again with full awareness of his otherness and existential void. He emerges with a quest to create the supreme scent of awe and adoration to fill this void, a synthesised scent that would not only grant him an identity but also a god-like presence. I often think about how we emerge from our own caves of saturation, how we recover from lostness without descending into madness. The experience of writing a PhD thesis can be a maddening one. It is a mental upheaval that could feel like being lost in a dark labyrinth of confusion and stress. Yet, it is more like a journey that contains some labyrinths and caves along the way, and the process of writing is only one of them. How do we then recover from the condition of doctoral studies without leaving our research topic behind out of exhaustion and saturation? This is what I find myself wondering about as I finalise this project.

To pursue a recovery, I harbour an intention to capitalise on what I find to be intellectually alluring. I ask myself: How can the Cavellian notion of education as a journey go beyond this doctoral thesis? I think about what to do; I write a list of ambitions and plan their chronological order in a way that allows me to communicate what I found to be interesting to share with the world, not just through what I wrote in this thesis but also what I acquired through the entire journey of my doctoral studies. I previously referred to the idea of planting a seed as an initial utilisation of the concept of education as a perfectionist

[602] Patrick Süskind, *Perfume : The Story of a Murderer*, 1985, 138.

journey—as I see it. In writing this text, I myself planted a seed; I laid a foundation of something to come. Although this foundation is perhaps still a seedling in a small pot on my own academic balcony, my hope is to nurture it until it grows many leaves and branches and one day finds a place in an orchard. I would like to use this dissertation as the basis for multiple future academic endeavours. Introducing the concept of education as a journey from the Cavellian perspective in the form of a journal article or a book chapter to reach a wider academic audience would be a good first step. Another prospect is to expand on the Cavellian concept of friendship and conversation in education; it could be coupled with either other reflections on friendship from an Emersonian perspective, like the work of George Kateb, or with a completely different approach, like Derrida's or Arendt's political dimension of friendship. Other than that, I have two future projects in mind that I have given more attention to. The first one is exploring the idea of education as a journey from a feminist perspective. In an article titled 'The Genius of Feminism: Cavellian Moral Perfectionism and Feminist Political Theory', Sarah Drews Lucas argues that while the mainstream male-dominated community of political theorists usually focus on 'Cavell's importance to politics in his reading of Emerson', feminists tend to be more interested in the revolutionary feet that the Cavellian/Wittgensteinian project of ordinary language has accomplished.[603] Returning words from their metaphysical to their ordinary meaning and paying attention to the ordinary of the everyday, brings to the surface feminist issues that are usually conceived as 'too ordinary' to be acknowledged, such as, domestic violence and sexual harassment.[604] Drews Lucas also adds that there are many feminist themes in Cavell's work, including, 'the ethics of care, the relational nature of selfhood, the complexity of moral and political judgement making'.[605] These themes sit very well with ideas that are at the core of EMP, for instance, nonconformity and acknowledgement of the other. The connection between Cavell and feminism was made by other scholars in philosophy and literature like Sandra Laugier and Toril Moi, who wrote about the possible contribution of Cavellian philosophy to discussions of women's voices but with a primary focus on the Wittgensteinian aspect of Cavell's work.[606] My

[603] Sarah Drews Lucas, 'The Genius of Feminism: Cavellian Moral Perfectionism and Feminist Political Theory', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 49, no. 10 (December 2023): 1158.
[604] Drews Lucas, 1158.
[605] Drews Lucas, 1158.
[606] Sandra Laugier, 'Cavell on Feminism and the Ethics of Care', *Conversations: The Journal of Cavellian Studies*, no. 6 (December 2018): 55–80; Toril Moi, 'Thinking Through Examples: What Ordinary Language Philosophy Can Do for Feminist Theory', *New Literary History* 46, no. 2 (March 2015): 191–216.

ambition in regards to this topic is to explore the concept of education as a journey through the feminist lens and test the length to which the transcendental aspect of EMP could take this issue. This is where the expansion of Cavell's open-ended list of texts would prove to be useful. In my exploration of *Convenience Store Woman* for this thesis, I found the phenomenon of addressing women's journeys of self-overcoming in contemporary Japanese literature—which explore concepts of societal expectations, emotional resilience and the female voice—to be a very alluring area to explore further in relation to the themes of this dissertation. Perhaps this could be a potential future project. Elements of Cavellian romanticism and his readings of film and literature are also pivotal to a feminist discussion of the potential of the perfectionist journey in education. Of course, this project requires further explorations of Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophy, as is the case for many future prospects of EMP's concept of education as a journey.[607] As I mentioned earlier, my choice to focus mainly on the Emersonian rather than the Wittgensteinian side of Cavell's work was not meant as an underappreciation or undervaluing of the latter but an attempt to focus on the concept of the ordinary and the everyday from a particularly transcendental lens. It is also important to point out what a feminist reading of Cavell could do for his work rather than the other way around. For example, Michelle Devereaux points out a dose of 'paternalism' in Cavell's view of friendship between men and women in his reading of film.[608] A feminist point of view on the Cavellian notion of the heroine in the stories he reflects on could aid us in addressing these issues and developing a way out of them in the structure of the perfectionist journey.

The second future project I have in mind is related to the romantic and aesthetic dimension of EMP. During my studies, I found great pleasure in two different PhD courses that I took out of intellectual curiosity; yet, they ended

[607] Toril Moi argues that ordinary language philosophy might not seem so intriguing for feminists at a first glance as it does not offer 'a theory of sex, or gender, or sexuality. Nor does it claim that power is an intrinsic part of language'. However, its significance is in its discussion of 'what it means to be an embodied creature sharing a world with others'. She adds that even though the work of Wittgenstein, Austin and Cavell does not discuss the experience of being a woman in the world (except Cavell's address of female characters in film and literature), there is still something that can be harnessed by feminists out of the idea of the ordinary and its focus on the lived experience of individuals. See: Moi, 'Thinking Through Examples: What Ordinary Language Philosophy Can Do for Feminist Theory', 192.

[608] Michelle Devereaux, 'It's My Party and I'll Die Even If I Don't Want To: Repetition, Acknowledgement, and Cavellian Perfectionism in Russian Doll', in *Television with Stanley Cavell in Mind*, ed. Sandra Laugier and David LaRocca (University of Exeter Press, 2023), 104.

up genuinely influencing my experience. The first one was called 'Place and Experience', which was taught by professor Sharon Rider at Uppsala University. The course focused on the relationship of place and time with concepts of subjectivity and objectivity. It dealt with everyday practices of reasoning and the way we think about and make sense of the past and future, self and other, centre and periphery, pertaining to personal, historical, political and cultural concepts. The second one was 'Memory, Heritage and Geography: Methods', which was a collaboration of multiple researchers from Stockholm University and Uppsala University. It discussed unconventional qualitative research methods in memory and heritage research, like the use of mobility—especially walking—and sensory perceptions of materiality in the world around us as methodology. These two courses solidified an existing interest in the value of the sensed and felt perceptions of the world that I have always cherished. As I was exploring Cavell's work, it felt very serendipitous to discover the importance that he placed on the ordinary and the uncanniness of the everyday which is tied directly to those sensed details of our experience that normally go unnoticed and unconsidered. The romantic essence of this perception of the ordinary as extraordinary ties directly to how seriously Cavell took the emotional reflections of the fictional characters of film and literature, their aesthetic expression, even their primal instincts of hunger (in the case of Ellie in *It Happened One Night*). I felt that serendipity again only a few pages into Sharon Todd's latest book *The Touch of the Present*, which she starts by reflecting on the sensory perceptions of her memories of being in education systems, the sight, the touch and even the smell of being a student. I was almost relieved that someone like her, who has spent decades writing about different issues in education, has come to a point where she has found the aesthetic value of education to be something that she needed to dedicate a book to. I find myself eager to further explore the romantic and aesthetic dimensions of the perfectionist journey in education and the lasting impacts of our experiences within education systems after they have become memories. I am interested in the implications of our relationship with place and time on our journeys of self-overcoming and how they could be experienced in extraordinarily difficult circumstances, like during and after war and displacement. I find myself particularly attracted to the concept of walking as an educational experience, as journeying in itself. An obvious connection to Cavell and EMP here would be *Walking* by Thoreau, but I am sure once I embark on this endeavour, further paths will be lit up along the way.[609] Finally, as someone from a non-Western

[609] Henry David Thoreau, *Walking* (Chump Change, 1851).

background, and particularly from a place that has suffered through the devastating experiences of war and colonisation, I remain mindful of the voices of those who have lived through such experiences. Concepts of aesthetics, mobility, sensory perceptions of materiality and how they relate to memory and the everyday are all ideas that harbour a profound depth within the experiences of victims of war, displacement, colonisation and migration. I mentioned earlier how we ought to think not only about what Cavell can do for feminist thought but also what feminist thought can do for Cavell. The same bidirectional potentiality can be applied to looking into the lived experiences of victims of war, poverty, exploitation and oppression in general. I can think of how this exploration could be connected with the Cavellian ideas of the other, justice, aesthetic judgement and the ordinary, and how it could even enrich a discussion around certain criticisms of Cavell's philosophical project, particularly—in my opinion—his thoughts around the idea of *America*. I can see many other possibilities on the horizon. Now that the storm has started to settle down and dissipate, I am ready for this voyage to continue towards a new port of call.

Swedish Summary

Sammanfattning på svenska

Utbildning och andra resor – jaget, den andre och Stanley Cavells moralisk perfektionism

Introduktion

Det finns en tendens idag att se utbildning som ett verktyg för ekonomisk tillväxt och välstånd, ett synsätt som starkt förespråkar de instrumentella målen med utbildning, istället för dess betydelse och plats i våra liv. Detta perspektiv är också ett som de dominanta paradigmerna nyliberalismen och ”new public management” propagerar för, vilket gör utbildning till ett reduktivt, instrumentellt, kundinriktat begrepp, som på det sättet internaliserar fasta och förutbestämda mål. För att uppfylla dessa mål lutar sig utbildningsplanering mot antaganden som underminerar den mänskliga erfarenhetens komplexitet och förbiser den Andre som begrepp. Mitt mål med den här avhandlingen är att tydliggöra filosofiska grunder till dessa problem och föreslå ett alternativt icke-instrumentellt perspektiv på utbildning baserat på Stanley Cavells begrepp *emersonsk moralisk perfektionism*, vilket inbegriper idén om utbildning som en resa. Cavell hävdar att EMP rör sig kring två huvudteman. Det första temat handlar om hur det mänskliga jaget alltid är i varande – som på en utbildnings- och utvecklingsresa. Det andra temat handlar om att vi sätter ut på denna resa tillsammans med den Andre, som finns med på resan genom att anta skepnaden av en ”vän”.

Sammanfattningsvis är målen med avhandlingen följande:

I. Definiera vad jag anser vara två sammanvävda problem med hur utbildning genomförs idag, problem som är förkroppsligade i en dominant instrumentell och rationell planeringsprincip, som stärks av nyliberal policy. Dessa

problem utgör grundläggande brister i vårt utbildningssystems filosofiska grund.

II. Presentera begreppet *utbildning som en resa*, som ett icke-instrumentellt perspektiv på att tänka kring och överväga vad utbildning innebär. Begreppet grundar sig i Stanley Cavells perfektionism, som han benämner emersonsk moralisk perfektionism.

Två problem med dagens utbildningssystem

Nyliberalismen förde med sig ett marknadsanpassat utbildningssystem, vilket förvaltas som ett företag för att uppnå önskad produktivitet, performativitet och kompetens. Detta nyliberala paradigm drivs av konkurrens och en tillit till prestationsmått och standardiserade produktionsmål som kan mätas och förstås utifrån givna fakta. Det är därför vi idag ser ett stort intresse för rationell utbildningsplanering där specifikt förutbestämda utbildningsmål sätts och på så sätt reducerar utbildning till en evidensbaserad praktik. Men att uppnå specifikt satta mål beror mycket på antaganden och instrumentella postulat. Detta beroende har inte sitt ursprung i det nyliberala paradigmet, utan har sina rötter i den västerländska filosofins logocentrism och entusiasm för en slutgiltig sanning samt slutgiltiga och fastställda mål, vilket innebär att komplexiteten i subjektiv förståelse förbises och att den Andre som idé avfärdas. Den Andre som begrepp har alltid varit en källa till ängslan och skepticism inom västerländsk filosofi. Denna ängsla leder till att desarmera, tysta eller till och med ignorera den Andre istället för att acceptera denne. Många filosofer inom pedagogisk filosofi förespråkar icke-instrumentella alternativ till sättet vi tar oss an utbildningsplanering. Vissa av dem ifrågasätter också helt och hållet idén, inom utbildning, att sätta specifika slutliga mål. John Dewey argumenterar för att de verkliga målen i utbildning är strävansmål som utvecklas i själva utbildningsprocessen och kan vara mål och medel på samma gång eftersom varje mål är medel till nästa mål. Ur det här perspektivet är utbildning en pågående och öppen utvecklingsprocess utan slut. Genom att sammankoppla Dewey med Cavell och Emerson argumenterar Naoko Saito för att utbildning som utveckling inte leder ner bara en väg, utan istället rör sig som expanderande ringar som oändligt utvidgas i alla riktningar. Det här perspektivet utmanar instrumentalismen genom att vägra idén om en slutlig perfektion. Den cavellska idén om en emersonsk moralisk perfektionism omfattar begreppet om expanderande cirklar i relation till jagets oändliga transcendens från ett tillstånd till nästa. Dock är denna transcendens en resa som jaget inte kan sätta ut på själv

utan att ta hänsyn till den Andre. I emersonsk moralisk perfektionism talas om en balanserad reflektion kring jaget och den Andre, något som är mycket värdefullt när det handlar om att överväga ett icke-instrumentellt holistiskt sätt att organisera utbildning.

Emersonsk moralisk perfektionism

Emersonsk moralisk perfektionism (EMP) strävar inte efter att upnå ett slutgiltigt tillstånd av perfektion utan innebär en kontinuerlig tranformations- och självövervinningsprocess. I EMP är perfektion en process utan fasta slutmål. EMP är inte en teori utan ett perspektiv på en tradition relaterad till det moraliska livet. EMP är ett öppet tema som varken är teleologiskt eller deontologiskt utan fokuserar på frågan "Hur lever vi våra liv?". EMP är en process som strävar efter att fullända jaget genom en kontinuerlig utveckling utan slut, genom expanderande cirklar, från ett jag-tillstånd till nästa. Cavell hävdar att EMP innebär en motvilja mot samhällets krav på likriktning, vilket Emerson anser vara ett misslyckande i självförströstan och att vara begriplig för sig själv och andra. EMP innebär också ett åtagande gentemot det moraliskt nödvändiga och att tillämpa ett reflexivt omdöme, vilket gör begreppet rättvisa centralt. Vidare har EMP sina rötter i ordinär språkfilosofi, vilket betyder att EMP äger rum här och nu i vår vardag. Detta gör EMP till ett begrepp av största vikt. Cavell lägger grunden till EMP genom ett filosofiskt engagemang med ett antal texter han anser vara "perfektonistiska texter". Det är texter vi engagerar oss i och relaterar till filosofiskt. De talar till oss snarare än om oss, och vårt engagemang med dem är att praktisera självförtröstan. De hjälper oss att möta vår vilsenhet i världen och vägleder oss mot självförståelse och att hitta vår röst för att uttrycka det tillstånd vi befinner oss i. Cavell lämnade både EMPs kännetecken och listan på texter öppna för förändring.

Från EMP kommer begreppet *utbildning som resa*. EMP är resan som självövervinnande och jag-transcendens; det handlar om att kunna hantera vår vilsenhet och att gå från det jag vi uppnått till nästa ouppnådda jag. Idén om utbildning som en perfektionistisk resa har sitt ursprung i det alldagliga och uppvisar en viss romantisk karaktär. Cavell försvarar Romantiken som en seriös filosofisk rörelse och anser den som oundviklig, oemotståndlig och som en räddning från skepticism. Romantiken avvisar också det sunda förnuftet som idé, vilket gör vår utbildningsresa exklusivt vår egen i det alldagliga här och nu. Dock betyder inte detta perspektiv att reducera det rationellas hårdhet till något mjukt; istället handlar det om att finna hårdhet i det mjuka.

Jagets resa

Cavell, via Emerson, utmanar separationen mellan den inre subjektiva erfarenheten och den yttre objektiva verkligheten. Varken den ena eller den andra av dem befinner sig i ett statiskt tillstånd. Vår erfarenhet av vår värld är en följd av stämningar, vilket betyder att sättet vi erfar världen på är förkroppsligad. Detta flytande tillstånd utmanar idén om det statiska och antaganden om den Andre. Den intima, känslomässiga och sinnliga förbindelse vi har med världen formar vår erfarenhet, vilket är något som måste uppmärksammas i utbildningssammanhang. Jagets perfektionistiska resa är en resa för att upptäcka det extraordinära i det ordinära. Det är en resa som handlar om att vakna upp varje dag till världens förunderlighet, som om vi alltid var i färd med att upptäcka den. Sålunda kan vårt jags utbildningsresa vara ett kontinuerligt återtagande av och återhämtning från världen vi lever i och vår kunskap om den. Det betyder att resan inbegriper att gå vilse och återfinna den rätta vägen genom en kontinuerlig process. Att vara vilse och förlorad är en tragedi men en oundviklig del av det mänskliga varat och, således, av varje utbildning. EMP ställer upp hoppet som en springande punkt i all slags utbildning och erbjuder en väg att navigera och övervinna vilsenhet genom begreppet övergivenhet. Detta begrepp är jagets väg som leder till att komma ut ur vilsenheten mot fortsatt tänkande. Övergivenhet är rörelsen som lämnar eller hoppar från en cirkels horisont till en annan. Det är ett ögonblick av transcendens till nästa ouppnådda jag. Detta språngets ögonblick är också ett förfiningens ögonblick, som förebådas av det glimrande skimret av vårt inre ljus, vår intuition och vår känsla för vilka vi är, vår briljans. Skimret av ljus är en estetisk och romantisk dimension av vår utbildningsresa som inte kan formas eller mätas.

Efter det att vi hittat ut ur vår vilsenhet börjar vi återerövra vår röst och vår plats i världen. I hjärtat av vår resa finner vi vår konformitet som vi skäms för. Denna skam är det som driver oss att söka återerövra vår röst och våra ord. I sin diskussion om film, specifikt genren *den okända kvinnans melodrama* påvisar Cavell dessa filmers hjältinnors kamp genom tysthet. Deras utanförskap bekräftas inte av andra och deras intima förhållanden saknar vänskap. De vidkänns till slut sin känsla av övergivenhet och lämnar sina förhållanden som ett sätt att återerövra sina röster. Den cavellska idén om röst undersöker *subjektet som röst*, en idé som betonar vår inre röst jämte vårt yttre språkuttryck (talet). Cavell varnar oss för att se vår inre röst som någonting okänt och överge vårt ansvar att tillkännage oss för andra. Detta eftersom det här ansvaret är en del i

en bildningsprocess. Det är en omvälvande och svår process, men en kamp vi måste genomgå för att finna vår självinsikt. Att hitta vår röst betyder också att ta ansvar för att göra oss begripliga för andra, att samtala med dem och på så sätt ge uttryck för tillståndet de och vi befinner oss i.

Resan med den Andre

Den perfektionistiska resan är en resa som jaget ger sig ut på tillsammans med den Andre. Den Andre som begrepp utmanar skepticism och den västerländska filosofins ontologiska grund och dess entusiasm för fasta mål. Cavell hävdar att vårt misslyckande att relatera till den Andre inte uppkommer på grund av att vi inte *känner* dem utan för att vi inte *erkänner* dem. Skeptikerns rädsla för den Andres obegriplighet leder ofta till antaganden om eller ett förnekande av den Andre helt och hållet. Antaganden i sig själva kan också vara en form av att förneka den Andre eftersom de försöker radera ut den Andres utanförskap. Cavell kallar vår vägran att erkänna den Andre för undvikande, ett undvikande som har sin orsak i vår oförmåga att leva med det mänskliga tillståndets ofullständighet och vår egna mänskliga ändlighet. Vad utbildning som en resa kan ge oss är insikten att erkännandet av den Andre är jagets ansvar, och ett åtagande gentemot att erkänna den Andre är ett åtagande att erkänna sig själv. Dock är detta ansvar något som människan är förmögen att förneka och dagens utbildningssystem hjälper oss inte att undvika ett sådant moraliskt nederlag. Jagets transcendens i utbildning som en resa bottnar i att övervinna motsägelserna i den mänskliga naturens självcentrering och att sträva mot att erkänna vårt moraliska åtagande gentemot den Andre. Till skillnad från Emmanuel Levinas betraktar Cavell den Andre som lika ändlig som jaget. Den Andre är inte transcendent i relation till jaget, utan bredvid det i en position som är angränsande. Jaget har således makten att erkänna den Andres existens eller inte, och i denna situation ligger möjligheten att avvisa den Andres tilltal. Tragedin i vårt förhållande med den Andre är alltså vår förmåga att förneka vår moraliska skyldighet gentemot den Andre. Således går den cavellska idén om den Andre bortom ansvar och mot vår förmåga att svara upp mot den Andres moraliska tilltal. Den perfektionistiska resan manar oss att sträva mot erkännande genom samtal. När vi stöter på den Andre i en konfrontation i en utbildningssituation möter vi nya möjligheter för jaget att utvecklas bortom sin konformitet, speciellt om vi vänder konfrontationen till ett samtal. Den Andre i den situationen är den cavellska figuren *vännen*, som framkallar en känsla av skam i oss på grund av vår likgiltighet och har potentialen att dra

oss bortom oss själva och ta del i fortsatta moraliska undersökningar. Vännen är en följeslagare på vår perfektionistiska bildningsresa; det är med dem vi för perfektionistiska samtal. Men dessa samtal behöver inte nå tillfredsställande resultat hela tiden; deras bildningsvärde ligger snarare i själva dialogen och vår *villighet* att ta del av den Andres ståndpunkt.

Den perfektionistiska utbildningsresan

En av farorna med nyliberalismen, i vårt utbildningssystems nuvarande tillstånd, är användandet av ett särskilt välvilligt språk för att skapa en fasad av jämlikhet vad gäller utbildning, medan det egentligen är ett språk som skyler över utbildningssystemets verkliga socioekonomiska orättvisor. Denna fasad påverkar också elevers och studenters personliga erfarenheter genom att de känner att de har sig själva att skylla för att de inte klarar kraven som ställs på dem och därför känner skam och skuld. Den här skammen är helt skild från den emersonska skammen, vilken är ett svar på vår konformitet och en katalysator som eggar oss till att övervinna oss själva. Den skam som framkallas av instrumentell utbildning har sin grund i att beskylla sig själv för att inte anpassa sig tillräckligt till krav och kriterier, vilket kan leda till att vi försöker anpassa oss ännu mer. På det sättet går vi vilse, blir olyckliga eller till och med apatiska gentemot utbildningsprocessen som hindrar vår utveckling. Dagens utbildningssystem kännetecknas av uteslutning och en brist på känsla för det osynliga och tysta i det mänskliga tillståndet.

Jag har argumenterat för att vad vi verkligen behöver är ett utbildningssystem som åter tänder vårt skimrande ljus och uppmuntrar oss att söka det ickekonformistiska gentemot det som obstruerar vårt moraliska omdöme och hindrar oss från att se andras mänsklighet. Men det här är inget som kommer att hända utan en enorm och revolutionerande förändring av de politiska och ekonomiska system som styr och kontrollerar utbildningssystemen. Följaktligen utmynnar inte den här avhandlingen i några färdiga lösningar, utan den använder sig av EMP för att visa vägen till hur vi kan hantera svåra situationer för hur utbildning genomförs. Vägen till att börja den strävan som är utbildning som en perfektionistisk resa startar när vi inser att vi är filosofiskt vilsna, men att det är en vilsenhet som alltid är märkt av hopp. Inom ett utbildningssystem börjar den perfektionistiska resan med att ifrågasätta själva systemet och att använda vår upptäckt av det ljusskimmer som är vårt, och fungerar som en överlevnadsmekanism, till att bejaka vår moraliska och estetiska utbildningserfarenhet. På vår resa hittar vi beständig och fri förändring som ger vår strävan

en känsla av frihet. Utbildning som en resa hjälper oss att verkligen känna tystnaden, hitta vår röst och använda den i rättvisans tjänst. Utbildning som en resa stödjer oss också i att förstå våra konfrontationer med den Andre som samtal med en vän, och stödjer oss i en ansats mot erkännande, och för att hitta en position från vilken vi kan uttrycka oss. Vad gäller lärare och pedagoger hjälper resan oss att kontinuerligt ompröva och reflektera över vår skepticism och hur den manifesterar sig i våra roller. Pedagoger generellt och lärare specifikt befinner sig också på en egen resa och kämpar med samma svåra situationer som elever och studenter måste hantera. Värdet med undervisning blir ofta undergrävt av idéer om performativitet. Detta begränsar lärare och hindrar alla försök de kan tänkas göra att tillämpa ett holistiskt och transcendent perspektiv på utbildning. Men lärare är inga vanliga resande. De har förmågan att vara länken som sammanför oss till att ha perfektionistiska samtal, men de har också förmågan att bidra till vår vilsenhet. Genom att införliva idén om utbildning som en resa kan lärare aspirera till att vara perfektionistiska lärare som hjälper oss i vårt försök att hitta en väg ut ur vår vilsenhet.

En annan utmaning vi kämpar med i dagens utbildning är att begrepp rörande moral och rättvisa inom utbildningssystemen rationaliseras och är begränsade till idéer om subjektet, istället för att vara hörnstenar i den utbildningsprocess som genomsyrar hela vår erfarenhet av dessa system. Genom att icke-konformism är grunden i EMP leder den perfektionistiska resan oss till att hitta vår röst inte endast för oss själva utan även för en samlad gemenskap. EMP hjälper oss i vår förståelse av vårt förhållande till våra gemensamma sammanhang och att kritiskt ta oss an det sociala kontraktet. Slutligen tillåter den perfektionistiska resan också oss att uppmärksamma den romantiska och estetiska sidan av vår utbildningsresa genom att engagera oss i texter och läs- och skrivpraktiker, tillika det outsägliga och sinnliga i vår utbildning. De romantiska och estetiska beståndsdelarna i vår utbildning blir ofta förbisedda, speciellt i forskning om utbildning, även fast dessa beståndsdelar är väsentliga och utgör en obestridlig del av vår erfarenhet.

Slutord

Genom att stå emot utbildning som enbart baseras på fasta mål och som undviker att ta den Andre i beaktande, svarar idén om utbildning som resa – baserad på Cavells EMP – mot de två problemen med utbildning jag hänvisar till i början av avhandlingen. Det den perfektionistiska resan erbjuder oss är inte en färdig lösning till problemen med utbildning generellt, men ett sätt att på nytt överväga situationen och göra något åt den. Detta kräver att vi erkänner potentialen i sättet att genomföra utbildning som en öppen och ändlös process. Eftersom EMP inte är en specifik konkurrerande moralteori, utan en filosofisk dimension av det moraliska livet, kan EMP introduceras i redan existerande utbildningspraktiker för att tillföra vissa delar som saknas i dessa praktiker. Men vad som fortfarande är den största potentialen i idén om utbildning som en resa är dess förmåga att anta en romantisk ansats som tillåter oss att erkänna det osynliga och tysta i en utbildning. Den perfektionistiska resan för med sig en känsla av hopp i en svår situation, en situation i vilken vi känner oss maktlösa och utan röst. Den perfektionistiska resan innebär en process vilken kan beskrivas som att så ett frö i ett dunkelt och skrämmande tillstånd av vilsenhet och att vårda fröet tills det gror och tränger upp genom jorden. Detta frö är ett frö som symboliserar gradvis och mjuk revolutionär förändring, en process som handlar om att finna hårdhet i det mjuka och kraft i det tysta och osedda.

نُدرك صمتنا، ونعثر على صوتنا واستخدامه من أجل العدالة. كما يساعدنا على فهم مواجهاتنا مع الآخر كمحادثات مع أصدقاء في مسعى نحو الاعتراف الفلسفي بالآخر، بالإضافة إلى إيجاد موقعنا للتعبير عن أنفسنا.

أما بالنسبة للمعلمين، فإن الرحلة تساعدهم على إعادة فحص وتفكير مستمر في شكوكهم وكيفية تجلّي ذلك في أدوارهم. المعلمون بشكل عام والمدرّسون بشكل خاص هم أيضاً في رحلة خاصة بهم ويكافحون ضمن الحالة الصعبة نفسها التي يعاني منها الطلاب. غالباً ما تُختزل قيمة التعليم بمفاهيم الأداء، مما يقيد المعلمين ويعيق أي جهود قد يبذلونها لممارسة نهج شامل وغير آداتي للتعليم. ومع ذلك، فإن المعلمين ليسوا عابرين سبيلٍ عاديين في رحلتنا، هم لديهم القدرة على أن يكونوا الوسيلة التي تجمعنا لإجراء محادثات كمالية، لكن لديهم أيضاً القدرة على المساهمة في ضياعنا. من خلال تبني مفهوم التعليم كرحلة، يمكن للمعلمين أن يطمحوا ليكونوا معلمين كماليين، يساعدوننا في محاولتنا للعثور على طريقنا للخروج من حالة الضياع.

إحدى القضايا التي نواجها اليوم في التعليم هي أن مفاهيم الأخلاق والعدالة تُعَقَّلَن وتُحتَوى ضمن مفاهيم محدودة بالموضوعات والتخصصات، بدلاً من أن تكون ركيزة من ركائز العملية التعليمية التي تتخلل تجربتنا بالكامل داخل النظام. من خلال تجذر مفهوم عدم الطواعية في الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني، تقودنا الرحلة الكمالية إلى العثور على صوتنا، ليس لأنفسنا فحسب، بل من أجل المجتمع أيضاً. تساعدنا هذه الرحلة على فهم علاقتنا مع مجتمعاتنا والتفكير النقدي اتجاه العقد الاجتماعي. أخيراً، تتيح لنا الرحلة الكمالية الانتباه إلى الجانب الرومانسي والجمالي من رحلتنا التعليمية من خلال التفاعل مع النصوص وممارسات القراءة والكتابة، وكذلك مع ما هو غير ملموس ولا يمكن التعبير عنه لغوياً. غالباً ما يتم تجاهل العناصر الرومانسية والجمالية في تعليمنا، خاصة في البحوث التعليمية. ومع ذلك، فإنها محورية ولها حضور لا يمكن إنكاره في تجربتنا.

ملاحظات أخيرة

من خلال رفضها للأهداف الثابتة واعتبارها لفكرة الآخر، تستجيب فكرة التعليم كرحلة—عبر استنادها على الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني—لمشكلتين رئيسيتين في التعليم تم الإشارة إليهما في بداية هذه الأطروحة. ما تقدمه الرحلة الكمالية لنا ليس حلاً مباشراً للمشاكل التعليمية، بل طريقة لإعادة التفكير في وضعنا والتعامل معه. تتطلب هذه الرحلة الاعتراف بإمكانية التعليم كعملية مفتوحة وغير نهائية. وكونها ليست نظرية أخلاقية معينة، بل بُعد فلسفي للحياة الأخلاقية، يمكن إدخال الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني في الممارسات القائمة بالفعل في التعليم لإضافة عناصر معينة مفقودة من هذه الممارسات. ومع ذلك، يبقى ما يعزز قوة مفهوم التعليم كرحلة هو قدرته على احتضان نهج رومانسي يُمَكِّننا من الاعتراف بما هو غير مرئي وصامت في أنظمة التعليم.

تحمل الرحلة الكمالية إحساساً بالأمل في ظل ظروف صعبة، حيث نشعر بأننا بلا صوت ولا قوة. إنها عملية زرع بذرة في حالة قاتمة ومرعبة من الضياع، ورعايتها حتى تنمو نحو السطح. هذه البذرة هي بذرة تغيير ثوري تدريجي وناعم، هي سعي نحو العثور على الصلابة في اللين، وإيجاد القوة في ما هوي صامت وغير مرئي.

لأننا لا "نعترف" به. غالباً ما يقود خوفنا الشكوكي من عدم إمكانية معرفة الآخر إلى الاعتماد على الافتراضات أو إنكار الآخر تماماً. يمكن أن تكون هذه الافتراضات في حد ذاتها شكلاً من أشكال إنكار الآخر، لأنها تحاول محو غيريتهم. يُسمّي كافيل رفضنا للاعتراف بالآخر: التجنُّب، وهو ناتج عن عدم قدرتنا على التعايش مع عدم كمال الحالة الإنسانية ومحدودية معرفتنا البشرية.

ما يمكن أن تقدمه لنا فكرة التعليم كرحلة هو إدراك أن اعتراف الذات بالآخر هو مسؤولية الذات، وأن الالتزام بالاعتراف بالآخر هو التزام بالاعتراف بالذات. ومع ذلك، فإن هذه المسؤولية هي مسؤولية يمكن للبشر إنكارها، ولا يساعد التعليم اليوم في تجنب مثل هذا الفشل الأخلاقي. إن تجاوز الذات في التعليم كرحلة متجذر في التغلب على تناقضات الطبيعة البشرية المتمثلة في "الأنانية" والسعي نحو التعرف على التزامنا الأخلاقي تجاه الآخر.

على عكس إيمانويل ليڤيناس، يعتبر كافيل الآخر محدودًا تماماً كالذات؛ فهو ليس متجاوزاً للذات أو سامي فوقها، بل بجانبها في موقع الجوار. لذلك، تملك الذات القدرة على الاختيار بين الاعتراف بوجود الآخر أو عدمه، وفي ذلك يكمن احتمال إنكار رسالة الآخر تجاهنا. وهنا، تكمن مأساة علاقتنا مع الآخر في قدرتنا على إنكار التزامنا الأخلاقي تجاههم. لذلك مفهوم الآخر في فكر كافيل لا تتوقف فقط عند تحديد أهمية مسؤوليتنا الأخلاقية اتجاهه الآخر بل تلقي الضوء أيضاً على استجابتنا لنداء الآخر الأخلاقي.

تدفعنا الرحلة الكمالية للعمل نحو "الاعتراف" من خلال الحوار. عندما نواجه الآخر في مواجهة خلال رحلتنا التعليمية، نحن أيضاً نواجه إمكانيات جديدة لنمو الذات، خاصة إذا حولنا تلك المواجهة إلى محادثة. في هذا السياق، يتجسد الآخر في فكر كافيل بشخصية "الصديق"، الذي يثير فينا شعوراً بالخجل تجاه طواعيتنا ويدفعنا إلى ما هو أبعد من ذاتنا عبر تداول المزيد من التحقيقات الأخلاقية. الصديق هو رفيقنا في رحلتنا الكمالية التعليمية، وهو من نجري معه محادثاتٍ كمالية. ومع ذلك، لا تحتاج هذه المحادثات دائماً إلى الوصول إلى نتيجة مُرضية؛ فقيمتها التعليمية تكمن في الحوار نفسه واستعدادنا لأخذ وجهة نظر الآخر بعين الاعتبار.

الرحلة الكمالية في التعليم

تتمثل إحدى مخاطر النيوليبرالية في استخدامها لغة ذات سمة "خيِّرة" ظاهرياً لخلق واجهة من المساواة في التعليم، بينما تخفي في الواقع الفوارق الاجتماعية والاقتصادية الحقيقية في أنظمتها. تؤثر هذه الواجهة أيضاً على التجربة الشخصية للطلاب، الذين يلومون أنفسهم على عدم قدرتهم على تحقيق المعايير، مما يؤدي إلى شعور بالخجل والذنب. هذا الخجل يختلف تماماً عن الخجل الإمرسوني، الذي يمثل استجابة لإدراك طواعيتنا ويعمل كحافز يدفعنا نحو تجاوز الذات. بالمقابل الخجل الذي يثيره التعليم الآداتي فهو متجذر في اللوم الذاتي لعدم الامتثال الكافي للمعايير، وقد يجعلنا نرغب في الامتثال أكثر. وهكذا، نصبح ضائعين، غير سعداء، أو حتى غير مبالين بالعملية التعليمية، مما يعيق نمونا. ويتميز التعليم اليوم بالإقصاء ونقص الحساسية تجاه ما هو آخر وغير مرئي وصامت في حالتنا الإنسانية. لذلك نحن اليوم بأمسّ الحاجة إلى تعليم يعيد إشعال بريقنا الداخلي ويشجعنا على السعي نحو عدم الطواعية مع ما يعيق حكمنا الأخلاقي ويمنعنا من رؤية الإنسانية في الآخرين. لكن هذا لا يمكن أن يحدث من دون تغيير ثوري هائل في الأنظمة السياسية والاقتصادية التي تحكم وتتحكم في التعليم. لذلك، لا تقدم هذه الأطروحة حلولاً واضحة، بل تستفيد من الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني لتوجيهنا حول كيفية التعامل مع حالة التعليم الصعبة في أيامنا هذه. تبدأ الرحلة الكمالية في التعليم عندما ندرك أننا ضائعون فلسفياً، ولكنها دائماً ما تكون مشروطة بالأمل. في أنظمة التعليم، تبدأ الرحلة الكمالية من خلال التساؤل عن الأنظمة نفسها واستخدام رحلة اكتشاف بريق الضوء الداخلي كصراع للبقاء عبر احتضان تجربتنا الأخلاقية والجمالية مع التعليم. ضمن رحلتنا، نجد عناصر من التحول الدائم والمفتوح الذي يمنح مسعانا شعوراً بالحرية. يساعد التعليم كرحلة في أن

من الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني يأتي مفهوم التعليم كرحلة. وإنها رحلة تجاوز الذات وسمو الذات، والتعامل مع شعور الضياع لدينا والتحرك من ذاتنا المحققة إلى الذات المقبلة التي لم تُحقق بعد. تُعنى فكرة التعليم كرحلة كمالية بما هو عادي ويومي في حياتنا وهي أيضاً تتصف بصفة رومانسية معينة. يدافع كافيل عن الرومانسية كمجهود فلسفي جاد ويعتبرها أمراً لا مفر منه ولا يمكن مقاومته، ووسيلة للخلاص من الشكوكية الفلسفية. كما أن الرومانسية ترفض فكرة الحس العام، مما يجعل رحلتنا التعليمية فريدة في وجارية هُنا والآن في الحياة العادية اليومية. هذا النهج الرومنسي للكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني لا يسعى إلى الحط من صلابة العقلانية و تبني مفهوماً ليّناً، بل يعني إيجاد الصلابة في اللّين.

رحلة الذات

يتحدّى كافيل، من خلال إمرسون، الفصل بين التجربة الداخلية للذات والواقع الخارجي الموضوعي. لا يوجد أي من الجانبين في حالة ثابتة. تجربتنا مع عالمنا هي حالة من تتابع المزاجات، مما يعني أنها متجسدة في الطريقة التي نختبره بها. يتحدى هذا التتابع مفهوم الثبات والافتراضات حول ذاتية الآخر. إن الاتصال العاطفي والحسي الذي نشعر به تجاه العالم يشكّل تجربتنا، وهذا شيء يجب الاعتراف به في التعليم. إن الرحلة الكمالية للذات هي رحلة اكتشاف ما هو استثنائي ضمن ما هو عادي. إنها رحلة الاستيقاظ يومياً والشعور بالغرابة تجاه العالم، كما لو كنا نكتشفه يومياً من جديد. قد تكون رحلة الذات في التعليم عملية مستمرة لاستعادة وفهم العالم الذي نعيش فيه ومعرفتنا به، وهذا يعني أنها أيضاً تنطوي على عملية مستمرة من الضياع والتعافي من ذلك الضياع.

يُعتبر الضياع مأساة لا مفر منها في الوجود البشري، وبالتالي جزءاً من التعليم نفسه. ويرسخ الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني الأمل كجزء جوهري من التعليم، ويقدم وسيلة للتغلب على الضياع من خلال مفهوم التخلّي. يمثّل مفهوم التخلّي طريقة الذات في الخروج من حالة الضياع نحو التفكير المستقبلي. التخلّي هو حركة الخروج أو القفز من أفق دائرة من دوائر الذات المتوسعة إلى الأخرى. إنها لحظة تجاوز نحو الذات التالية التي لم تُحقق بعد. تمثّل لحظة القفز هذه ما يسمى ببريق الضوء الداخلي، حدسنا وإحساسنا بمن نحن وما نحن عليه. إن بريق الضوء هو بُعد جمالي ورومانسي في رحلتنا التعليمية لا يمكن نمذجته أو قياسه.

بعد أن نقفز من حالة الضياع، نبدأ في استعادة صوتنا ومكانتنا في العالم. في قلب رحلتنا يكمن مفهوم إدراك طواعيتنا والشعور بالخجل منها. هذا الخجل هو ما يدفعنا إلى السعي لاستعادة صوتنا وكلماتنا. يصوّر كافيل من خلال مناقشته للسينما، وخاصةً لنوع "ميلودراما المرأة المجهولة"، صراع بطلات هذه الأفلام مع غيريتهن وصمتهنّ. إن ذاتهن لا يُعترف بها من قبل الآخرين، وعلاقاتهن الحميمة تفتقر إلى الصداقة. في نهاية المطاف تدرك هذه البطلات عزلتهن، ويبتعدن عن علاقاتهن كمحاولة لاستعادة أصواتهن. فكرة الصوت لدى كافيل هي ليست فقط الصوت الخارجي الذي نطلقه عندما نتكلم بل هي أيضاً "الذات كصوت"، لذا فهي تأخذ بعين الإعتبار صوتنا الداخلي بالإضافة إلى تعبيرنا الخارجي عن اللغة (التحدث). يحذّر كافيل من تجاهل صوتنا الداخلي واعتباره شيئاً "مجهولاً" لأن ذلك يقودنا إلى التخلي عن مسؤولية جعل أنفسنا معروفة للآخرين، فهذه المسؤولية هي مسؤولية تعليمية. وبالرغم من صعوبتها إلا أنها صراع يجب أن نمرّ به كي نعثر على أنفسنا. إن إيجاد صوتنا يعني أيضًا تحمل مسؤولية جعل أنفسنا مفهومين للآخرين، وإجراء محادثة معهم، والتعبير عن حالتنا وحالتهم.

الرحلة مع الآخر

الرحلة الكمالية هي رحلة تتشاركها الذات مع الآخر. يتحدى مفهوم الآخر الشكوك والأسس الأنطولوجية للفلسفة الغربية وحبها للنهايات الثابتة. يشير كافيل إلى أن فشلنا في التواصل مع الآخر لا يحدث لأننا لا "نعرفه"، بل

والمُخرجات الموحدة التي يمكن قياسها وفهمها بشكل موضوعي. لذلك، نجد اهتماماً كبيراً اليوم بمبدأ التخطيط العقلاني، الذي يحدد أهدافاً تعليمية مسبقة محددة وهذا غالباً ما يؤدي إلى اختزال التعليم ليصبح ممارسة قائمة في المقام الأول على الأدلة. يعتمد تحقيق هذه الأهداف المرغوبة بشكل كبير على افتراضات ومبادئ آداتية، لكن هذا الاعتماد لا ينشأ فقط من النموذج النيوليبرالي، بل له جذور في مركزية اللّوغوس التي تتصف به الفلسفة الغربية المتمثل بحماستها اتجاه الحقائق والأهداف النهائية الثابتة، التي تتجاهل تعقيد المعنى الذاتي وتُهمل فكرة الآخر. لقد كانت فكرة الآخر مصدر قلق وشك دائم في الفلسفة الغربية. يؤدي هذا القلق إلى رغبة في تفكيك أو كتم أو حتى تجاهل غيرية الآخر بدلاً من قبوله كما هو. يشير العديد من الفلاسفة في مجال التعليم إلى بدائل غير آداتية للطريقة التي نتناول بها التخطيط التعليمي، بينما يتساءل آخرون عن جدوى تحديد أهداف تعليمية نهائية مغلقة النهاية. يعتقد جون ديوي أن الأهداف الحقيقية للتعليم هي تلك التي تُعتبر أهدافاً في الأفق (نهايات مرئية)، وهي أهداف داخلية للعملية التعليمية، إذ يمكن أن تكون هذه الأهداف بمثابة نهايات بحد ذاتها ووسائل لنهايات أخرى في نفس الوقت، فبالتالي يكون كل هدف هو وسيلة لتحقيق الهدف التالي. من هذا المنظور، يُعتبر التعليم عملية نمو مستمرة، مفتوحة النهاية وغير محدودة.

من خلال ربط ديوي بكاڤيل وإمرسون، تشير ناوكو سايتو إلى أن التعليم كعملية نمو مستمرة لا يسلك مساراً واحداً، بل يتوسع بلا حدود في جميع الاتجاهات في دوائر متوسعة. يتحدى هذا المفهوم الآداتية من خلال رفض فكرة الكمال النهائي. تناقش فكرة كاڤيل عن الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني مفهوم الدوائر المتوسعة فيما يتعلق بتجاوز الذات المستمر من حالة كمالية إلى أخرى. ومع ذلك، فإن هذا التجاوز هو رحلة لا يمكن أن تخوضها الذات بمفردها دون اعتبار الآخر. ويقدم الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني تأملاً متوازناً بين الذات والآخر، وهو أمر ذو قيمة كبيرة عند النظر في نهج شامل غير آداتي للتعليم.

الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني

لا يسعى الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني إلى تحقيق حالة نهائية من الكمال، بل إلى عملية مستمرة من التحول والتجاوز الذاتي، ويعتبر الكمال عملية تحسين دون أهداف ثابتة ونهائية. هو ليس نظرية، بل بُعد أو نظرة أو تقليد للحياة الأخلاقية. إنه أيضاً موضوع مفتوح غير غائي ولا واجبي، يركز على تسليط الضوء على السؤال: "كيف نعيش حياتنا؟". يمثل الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني عملية تحسين الذات من خلال نمو مستمر وغير محدود في دوائر متوسعة، حيث تنتقل الذات من حالة إلى أخرى، وبالتالي فهو عملية من التتابُعية وعدم تحديد الأهداف. ويزعم كاڤيل بأن الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني يتحلّى بالنفور من الطواعية المجتمعية والتي يعتبرها إمرسون فشلاً في الاعتماد على الذات وفهم الذات بوضوح. ويشمل الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني أيضًا التزاماً بالضرورة الأخلاقية والحكم التأملي، مما يجعل مفهوم العدالة محورياً فيه. كما أنه متأصل في فلسفة اللغة العادية الڤيتغنشتاينية؛ لذا هو بعد فلسفي يجري في حياتنا اليومية، وهذا ما يعطيه إحساساً بالعجلة الأخلاقية، أي بضرورة تحقيق شروط أخلاقية عادلة هنا و الآن.

يؤسس كاڤيل مفهوم الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني من خلال التفاعل الفلسفي مع مجموعة من النصوص التي يعتبرها "نصوص كمالية". هذه النصوص هي التي نتفاعل معها ونتعلق بها فلسفياً. تتحدث إلينا بدلاً من الحديث عنا، وتعتبر تفاعلاتنا معها ممارسة لتحقيق الذات. تساعدنا على مواجهة شعور الضياع في العالم وتمكننا من فهم ذواتنا والعثور على صوتنا للتعبير عن وضعنا. وقد ترك كاڤيل ميزات الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني وقائمة النصوص الكمالية مفتوحة.

Arabic Summary

ملخص باللغة العربية

التعليم ورحلات أخرى: الذات، الآخر، و الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني في فكر ستانلي كافيل

المقدمة

هناك ميلاً اليوم إلى تناول التعليم كأداة للنمو الاقتصادي والازدهار، مما يعني انجراراً أقوى نحو الاهتمام بهدفه الأداتي بدلاً من معناه ومكانته في حياتنا. يُعزز هذا الاتجاه النماذج السائدة من النيوليبرالية والإدارة العامة الجديدة، مما يجعل التعليم مفهوماً اختزالياً وآلياً ومخصصاً، موجوداً لتحقيق أهداف محددة مسبقاً. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تعتمد مبادئ التخطيط التعليمي على افتراضات تقلل من تعقيد التجربة الإنسانية وتغفل مفهوم الآخر. الهدف من هذه الأطروحة هو تسليط الضوء على الجذور الفلسفية لهذه المشكلات واقتراح نهج بديل غير أداتي للتعليم يستند إلى مفهوم ستانلي كافيل حول الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني، الذي يتمثل في فكرة: التعليم كرحلة. يزعم كافيل بأن الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني يحمل موضوعين رئيسيين: الأول هو أن الذات الإنسانية في عملية تجاوز ونمو عبر رحلة تعليمة، والثاني هو أننا نخوض هذه الرحلة مع الآخر الذي يرافقنا متمثلاً بشخصية "الصديق". لذلك، يمكنني تلخيص أهداف هذه الأطروحة كما يلي:

I. تحديد ما أعتبره مشكلتين متداخلتين في التعليم اليوم، تتمثلان في المبدأ السائد للتخطيط الأداتي والعقلاني المدعوم بسياسات النيوليبرالية. هاتان المشكلتان تمثلان عيوباً أساسية في الأساس الفلسفي للتعليم، وهاتان المشكلتان هما: مبدأ الاعتماد على النهايات الفلسفية الثابتة، وتهميش مفهوم الآخر.

II. تقديم مفهوم التعليم كرحلة كنهج غير أداتي للتفكير في التعليم والنظر فيه. هذا المفهوم يستند إلى نظريات ستانلي كافيل، وبالتحديد كتاباته حول ما يسميه الكمال الأخلاقي الإمرسوني.

مشكلتان في التعليم

أدى ظهور النيوليبرالية إلى تقديم نسخة مُسَوَّقَة للغاية من التعليم، تسعى إلى إدارته كعمل تجاري لتحقيق أجندات إنتاجية وأدائية وكفائية مرغوب بها. يُغذّي هذا النموذج النيوليبرالي المنافسة والاعتماد على مقاييس الأداء

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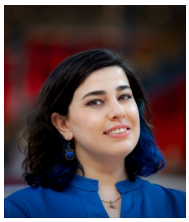
There is a tendency in the way we think about and approach education to see it in terms of its instrumental goal rather than its meaning and place in our lives. This approach renders education a reductive and customised concept that exists for the achievement of certain assumed and predetermined ends. To fulfil these ends, educational planning principles rely on assumptions that defuse the complexity of the human experience and overlook the concept of the other. This thesis argues that these problems, which are the reliance on fixed ends and the dismissal of the notion of the other, have roots in the Western philosophical grounding of education. Therefore, it aspires to present the concept of education as a journey: an alternative non-instrumental approach to education based on Stanley Cavell's concept of Emersonian Moral Perfectionism. It is an approach that views education as a perpetual, open-ended journey of growth and transcendence that we embark upon together with the other. Through overcoming the notion of fixed ends and placing the other in a neighbouring position on the same level as the self, education as a journey illuminates a way out of the aforementioned problems of education.



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