Chapter: Neoliberalism, Freedom, and the Educational Relationship

Introduction

Writing in a time prior to the advent of neoliberalism, Murdoch was concerned with the place of the moral agent within liberalism. At times this agent is illuminated by her rejections of what the human is not in relation to liberalism, and at other times she elucidates what the human is (or should be) in relation to her own philosophical outlook. With relevant concern for the ways in which these forms of de/construction sketch an image of the human, this chapter will negotiate between these undulating movements of the philosophical pendulum to illustrate the Murdochian ideal. Following this, a section focussing on the discourses of neoliberalisms, and its relevance to early childhood education will be explored. The dominant image of the human within the neoliberal mode of governance is that of the *homo oeconomicus* (Foucault, 2008), or the 'rational autonomous individual'. The vision of the individual embedded within the 'third way' of governance (Sahlberg, 2011), a form of governance which promotes the neoliberal vision for the world through a "hybrid discourse insinuating the economic into the democratic and vice versa" (Roberts & Peters, 2008, p. 31) is also explored. It is this vision, and the projection of this image into educational policy (and subsequent practice) which will be brought into question by Murdochian theory within the final section of this chapter.

The Moral Individual and liberal freedom

The image of the moral agent is fundamentally impoverished within liberalism. Responding to the domains of Anglo-Saxon and French philosophy (which she identifies as: enlightenment, romanticism, liberalism) to piece together the human of her time, Murdoch (1998) takes the stance that these western philosophical traditions have created "far too shallow and flimsy an idea of human personality" (p. 287). Liberalism, and the rise of the welfare state has resulted in the loss of philosophical concepts necessary to the debates relevant within the liberal tradition: the notion of freedom and autonomy. Murdoch writes that "Our central conception is still a debilitated form of Mill's equation: happiness equals freedom equals personality" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 290). Murdoch (1998) writes:

> We no longer use a spread-out substantial picture of the manifold of virtues of man[1] and society. We no longer see man against a background of values, of realities, which transcend him. We picture man as a brave naked will surrounded by an easily comprehended empirical world. What we have never had, of course, is a satisfactory Liberal theory of personality, a theory of man as free and separate and related to a rich and complicated world from which, as a moral being, he has much to learn. We have bought the Liberal theory as it stands, because we have wished to encourage people to think of themselves as free, at the cost of surrendering the background (Murdoch, 1998, p. 290)

Hume, Kant, Hobbes, and Mill are identified as chief players in this 'flimsy image', and "with friendly help from mathematical logic and science, we derive the idea that reality is finally a quantity of material atoms and that significant discourse must relate itself directly or indirectly to a reality so conceived" (Murdoch, 1998, pp. 287–288). This is a concept that has been debated within the previous chapter, but it is of significant importance here also: the scientific demarcation of the individual, and the necessity for 'hard' evidence to make claims towards an understanding of the human. One of Murdoch's central criticisms of liberal traditions is that they fail to satisfactorily represent the intricate reality of the human individual, a failure that is composed of two parts "not only the erosion of the available conceptual resources for thinking about the self, but of a more general loss of the kind of theorizing that made such thinking possible, namely 'metaphysics'" (Antonaccio, 2012, p. 217).

Liberal tradition is concerned with advancing the freedom of the human, but in doing so delimits the realm of the metaphysical, and reduces the moral individual to 'rational decision-maker'. She writes:

> …we derive from Kant, and also Hobbes and Bentham through John Stuart Mill, a picture if the individual as a free rational will…in Stuart Hampshire's book…he is, morally speaking, monarch of all he surveys and totally responsible for his actions. Nothing transcends him. (p. 288).

[1] Murdoch uses the term 'man' in much of her writing. At times when her text is quoted directly or when a term such as 'The Ideally Rational Man' is used, it is necessary to use the gendered term 'man' in order to remain consistent with Murdoch's writing. However this is not to say that Murdoch was only referring to the male gender in her arguments. At the time of Murdoch's writing, using the term 'man' was not uncommon Murdoch is remaining consistent with the accepted terms at the time of her writing. Consequently the term 'man' must be considered in that context, and not considered to be delimiting the argument from the inclusion of women.

Liberalism creates an image of the human which is rational, detached, free, and externally observable. It would appear that Murdoch wholeheartedly rejects the liberal image of the human. But her relationship with this individual is more complex than it appears. As illustrated by Antonaccio (2012), Murdoch was also enamoured with some aspects of the liberal individual, particularly the liberal tradition's vehement defence of the 'real impenetrable person'. Antonaccio (2012) writes that Murdoch demonstrated a "passionate commitment to what she saw as a central liberal value" (pp. 212-213). Murdoch (1998) defines this value as "a respect for the individual person as such, however eccentric, private, messy, and generally tiresome he may be" (p. 275). Although she raises questions about the individualistic and egocentric natures which are essential to the 'Kantian man-god', she also defends the concept of the liberal individual as a "substantial, impenetrable, individual, indefinable and valuable" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 294).

In more unequivocal terms, Murdoch (1998) articulates individuals as "not isolated free choosers, monarchs of all we survey, but benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy" (p. 293). The liberal individual is "the offspring of the age of science, confidential rational and yet increasingly aware of his alienation from the material universe which his discoveries reveal…the ideal citizen of the liberal state" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 365-366). Murdoch states we are characterised as "anxiety-ridden" (p. 369) and "continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying *veil* which partially conceals the world" (p. 369, author's emphasis). She expands upon this depiction further, writing "we are largely mechanical creatures…The self is a divided thing, and the whole of it cannot be redeemed any more that is can be known. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 381-382). One could ask, if this is the image of the human, how can there be any redemption for it? Why should there be any redemption for it? As selfish and deluded individuals, surely we do not and cannot move beyond this delusion into any other understanding of ourselves? Here Murdoch draws from Plato's analogy of the cave to further elucidate her redemption of the human. She argues that the prisoners in the cave are first drawn to the shadows created by the fire, yet the point of the analogy is for the prisoners to move beyond the fire and into the true light of the sun. Here, Murdoch (1998) defines the fire as the "self, the old unregenerate psyche, that great source of energy and warmth" (p. 382). If we are not aware of anything beyond this narcissistic source of fascination, we will not move beyond the fire: "the fire may be mistaken for the sun, and self-scrutiny taken for goodness" (p. 383). Through the projection of the liberal individual, we are not encouraged to move beyond the fire. Murdoch explains "When Kant wanted to find

something clean and pure outside the mess of the selfish empirical psyche…His enquiry led him back again into the self, now pictured as angelic" (p. 368). Kant, Murdoch asserts, tried to move beyond the 'empirical psyche' yet produced an image based upon the primacy of 'reason'. The moral agent is "pictured as an isolated principle of will, or burrowing pinpoint of consciousness…On one hand, Luciferian philosophy of adventures of the will, and on the other natural science" (p. 338).

Murdoch seeks an image of what she calls 'human excellence', and this is defined by its relationship to goodness. Human excellence is sought due to Murdoch's position that philosophy should be concerned with commending 'a worthy ideal'. Goodness, Murdoch argues, "is a concept which is not easy to understand, partly because it has so many false doubles" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 375). In considering the concept more fully it is necessary to understand that goodness cannot collapse into self-interest when it is focussed correctly, and may not be represented within the world presently despite our endeavours to seek it out. Yet we remain certain that 'great' does not equate to 'perfect'. Murdoch explains:

> We see differences, we sense directions, and we know that the Good is still somewhere beyond. The self, the place where we live, is a place of illusion. Goodness is connected with the attempt to see the unself, to see and to respond to the real world in the light of a virtuous consciousness. 'Good is a transcendent reality' means that virtue is the attempt to pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 376-377).

In 'joining the world as it really is, Murdoch's position that 'human nature' should be the focus of philosophical consideration comes to the fore. In order to join the world one needs to progress towards an understanding of moral concepts which hints at their unity: courage is an act of wisdom and love; freedom involves humility. Yet Murdoch resists the notion that moving towards unity involves losing focus on the particular: goodness involves the ability to not only perceive the world in a unified manner, but the capacity to grasp the particulars of each situation in order to discern "just modes of judgement and [the] ability to connect with an increased perception of detail" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 379). There needs to be a balance between a consideration of the unity of transcendent goodness, and attention to the particulars of each situation. This undertaking is something that can be attained through

> an attention which is not just the planning of particular good actions, but an attempt to look right away from the self towards a distant transcendent perfection…a turning of attention away from the particular [which] may be the thing that helps most when

> difficulties seem insoluble, and especially when feelings of guilt keep attracting the gaze back towards the self. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 383).

The individual is a moral being and can be someone who is capable of more than conceited self-reflection or unrealistic judgements. She argues that this is something which has been the cause of detailed investigation by philosophers, and "what the ordinary person does by instinct" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 377).

Yet still, who is the ideal individual? Murdoch is cagey about this person, she posits that we cannot sum up human excellence due as "the world is aimless, chancy and huge, and we are blinded by the self" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 382). More importantly, she posits another reason we cannot fully encapsulate human excellence based upon Plato's analogy, namely it "is *difficult* to look at the sun…it is easier to look at the converging edges than to look at the centre itself" (Murdoch, 1998, 382, author's emphasis). Our looking is through the 'just and loving gaze'; Good and Love are interconnected through attention. However, neither Good nor Love should be identified as "we are dealing with very difficult metaphors" (Murdoch, 1998, 384). Love, good, and freedom are interconnected. Murdoch asserts that love is a concept which is disregarded within the philosophy of her time, stating "although the constantly talk of freedom, they rarely talk of love" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 299-300). Yet through the concept of attention, freedom and love (and the good) are necessary cohabiters.

In the liberal tradition the relationship between goodness and freedom is in tension. Liberal freedom is connected to autonomy: the 'unfettered will'. The notion of a transcendent goodness shackles the will, binds it to a necessity which is external and inalterable. Within the liberal notion of freedom, goodness is constructed as "an empty space into which human choice may move" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 380). By rendering the good as a 'void' into which the will may move unimpeded, goodness no longer has a hold upon the individual. The indefinite nature of liberal goodness is connected to this desire for an unimpeded will, and translated through an argument about individual choice regarding values. Love does not feature within this image. Good inhabits a space which is considered "as empty and almost trivial, a mere word" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 381). Yet in Murdoch's view, goodness is not a matter of choice, and creates an entirely different relationship to the notion of freedom; one which is not representative of an 'unfettered will' but more closely resembles 'obedience'. She writes,

> If I attend properly I will have no choices and this is the ultimate condition to be aimed at. This is in a way the reverse of Hampshire's picture, where our efforts are supposed to be directed to increasing our freedom by conceptualising as many different

> possibilities of action as possible…The ideal situation, on the contrary, is rather to be represented as a kind of 'necessity'…presents the will not as unimpeded movement, but as something very much more like 'obedience'. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 331).

In this way, the ideal individual can be characterised as one who acquiesces to this 'obedience', someone who Murdoch identifies as 'the humble man'.

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

> …if we consider what the work of attention is like, how continuously is goes on, and how imperceptibly it builds up structures of value round about us, we shall not be surprised that at crucial moments of choice most of the business of choosing is already over. This does not imply that we are not free, certainly not. But it implies that the exercise of our freedom is a small piecemeal business which does on all the time and not a grandiose leaping about unimpeded at important moments. (Murdoch, 1998, p. 329).

This notion of freedom is not concerned with the freedom of the individual from external ties, but rather the humility to accept the choices which will be made as a direct result of the ties which bind us to others in the world. Moreover, this notion of freedom is not concerned with the 'unfettered will' of liberalism, for "explicit choice seems now less important: less

decisive (since much of the 'decision' lies elsewhere) and less obviously something to be 'cultivated'" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 331). This notion of freedom is moving against the image of the human as an 'impersonal rational thinker' and towards the image of the human as "a unified being who sees, and who desires in accordance with what he sees, and who has some continual slight control over the direction and focus of his vision" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 322).

While Murdoch asserts that this notion of freedom is not to imply that there is no freedom, it is incompatible with a narrow interpretation of the liberal notion of freedom, and the notion of autonomy. To be bound as such by acts of 'just love' is another shackle (like the aforementioned shackle of a transcendent goodness). However, Antonaccio (2012) argues that Murdoch's philosophy contains a level of complexity which can accommodate "multiple forms of human aspiration" (p. 213). The narrow image of freedom presented within liberal ideology compartmentalises the individual, yet this is not to say that there is no merit in the struggle that the liberal tradition has undertaken to promote the freedom of the individual. Murdoch argues that the technique of becoming free is more complicated than that which is realised through liberalism, and in order to accommodate freedom "we need to be enabled to think in terms of degrees of freedom, and to picture, in a non-metaphysical, non-totalitarian and non-religious sense, the transcendence of reality" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 293). In order to do so, Murdoch advocates for the realisation that there is incredible complexity within the consideration of the moral life (which is in effect all aspects of life in Murdochian philosophy), and in order to appreciate this complexity we equally need to enhance the subtlety of our comprehension of moral concepts through the practice of attention. Attendance to the reality which is presented through a freedom which "is not strictly the exercise of the will, but rather the experience of accurate vison which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 354) If the act of attention is undertaken over the course of time, and relationships developed through this act of attention, freedom is not the same as it was without this undertaking. To move towards the inevitability of actions created through the act of attention is to move away from the individualistic ego, into an "obedience to reality as an exercise of love". (Murdoch, 1998, p. 333).

The Neoliberal Subject and Early Childhood Education

Neoliberal effects on governance have been felt most strongly within educational and social policies due to the advancement of the competitive business model in these domains. Within neoliberalism, economic rationality is considered to be the appropriate approach to

governance, and individuals and groups working within these domains need to comply in order to remain 'competitive' (Peters, 2011). Peters and Tesar (2018) assert that the theory of neoliberalism "takes the view that individual liberty and freedom are the paramount goals of human subjects in the civilisation" (p. 2), but that the practices of neoliberalism are varied and diverse, and do not always align with the theory. Likewise, in articulating the necessity of considering neoliberalism within early childhood education, Vintimilla (2014) highlights the distinction between neoliberalism as a set of economic policies, and the experiences of neoliberalism as a lived rationality, something pervasive which "which expands its normative ideology and values to other spheres of our lives through specific discourses and practices" (p. 80). As such, neoliberalism is a "doctrine, an ideology, which argues that free market – and the market exchange – is an ethic in itself, constantly capable of re-inventing itself and acting as a guide for all human subjects' actions" (Peters & Tesar, 2018, p. 5). Early childhood education experiences differing forms of growth under 'left' and 'right' wing governments, yet economic 'sensibilities' have been adopted by both 'liberal' and 'conservative' governmental parties, leading to commonalities in governance. Despite changes in governance, there has been little movement away from the market model for early childhood educational provision; due to the pervasiveness of the neoliberal mode of governance within western society (Olssen & Peters, 2005) several governments, organisations and industries maintain the tenets of neoliberalism. Functioning as "a malleable, adaptable ideology, capable of surviving and indeed flourishing under both centre-left and centre-right governments" Stewart and Roberts (2015, p. 239) argue that neoliberal discourse is conceived more clearly as a set of discourses rather than as a single unitary perspective or position, thus it is important to identify multiple *neoliberalisms* "each with their own distinctive features, but with some underlying ideas in common" (p. 239). There is a necessity to remain sensitive to the slippery nature of neoliberalism(s) as policy, practice, and lived experience(s) within early childhood education: the ubiquitous nature of neoliberalisms within education overflow into other lived experiences of the lives of children, families and teachers. Resisting the temptation to codify neoliberalism into a single homogeneous entity moves the focus away from a singular narrative, towards a vision which embraces complexity. In respecting the difference between ideology and lived experience, there are the grounds to generate an understanding of neoliberalism in accordance with the Murdochian drive to respond to persons and develop a theory that is grounded within human experience. This orientation will prove crucially important over the course of this study.

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

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

only through the circumstantial power of the market that she or he can be made to behave carefully; individuals actions are rewarded for the value attributed to them by others within the social setting forcing individuals to be responsive to the demands of the community.

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

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

The 'lazy, indolent' individual is viewed through Thatcher's words. If you are not looking to yourself first you are casting your problems out to others to deal with. The government must set up the situation where the circumstantial power of the market will enable individuals to 'behave carefully' and reward those who are engaging in acts which are of value within their community. This is the theoretical understanding of neoliberalism, but as articulated earlier, the practices and indeed lived reality of neoliberalism are quite different.

Originally conceived as a community driven venture (May, 2013), early childhood education presently functions in the neoliberal competitive market. This situation has been written about in length by numerous scholars within many socio-political and cultural contexts (Lee, 2012; Moss, 2009; Osgood, 2006; Ritchie, Skerrett, & Rau, 2014; Sims & Waniganayake, 2015; Smith et al., 2016). 'Integral' aspects of children's experiences and the overall direction and constitution of early childhood education in many countries have been heavily affected by the neoliberal model and its effects upon early childhood education; families are characterised as 'individual consumers' seeking to participate within the competitive market (Peters, 2011) and children are positioned as (future) human capital to advance the value of the state (Smith et al., 2016). Community based-organisations are in demise, while corporate-run early childhood centres flourish due in part to the presentation of the neoliberal model as 'the only truth' (Moss, 2009): rather than being seen as one option

amongst many, the market model is presented as the optimum means to promote competition (which is argued to drive up 'quality') to allow families the 'choice' to determine the experiences they want for their children. Families who participated within early childhood education as a part of being in the local community are now encouraged to do so for the educational advancements of their children; privatised education situates education as an individual benefit and responsibility – the responsibility for education is placed more within the hands of the individual rather than in the realm of the state.

Within neoliberal governance, the state "seeks to create an individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur" (Peters, 2011, p. 44). Neoliberalism positions children as 'future human capital'. Early childhood education is therefore repositioned as an 'investment' into which governments can realise high rates of 'returns' from initial investment, reducing later spending on other social welfare areas - health, justice, social welfare (Jenson, 2010; Lister, 2004). Within this mode of understanding, the relationship between government and children can be likened to a producer and a product. The experiences of children's present lives are based upon their future productivity, within educational institutions which are 'irresponsibilised' in order to delimit the areas of affect they can under their welfare agenda (Cradock, 2007). With the prelation of the mechanisms of competition came the concurrent ascendancy of discourses of measurement, performativity, and outputs. Early childhood teachers are expected to perform within these conditions "under the threat of spot inspections, or visits from regulatory bodies and the promise of funding" (Smith et al., 2016, p. 130). Early childhood settings are produced as spaces where children's 'potential' needs to be realised, with ramifications for subsequent pedagogy. Calls for answerability in response to 'crises' in which such potential is not realised create the conditions to illicit "demands for accountability, performativity and standardised approaches to [educators'] practice, all of which mark a pronounced movement towards centralised control and prescription, which poses a potential threat to professional autonomy and morale" (Osgood, 2006, p. 6). Yet education is not a 'product' in the common consumable (and returnable) sense, for experiences cannot be unlived and the effects of these experiences are a part of the fabric of our lives. Additionally, the point is made that "when it comes to 'childcare', parents prove more reluctant to switch their custom" (Moss, 2009, p. 18) under the assumption that their experiences are comparable to those within other early childhood settings. The 'rational' aspect of the decision making process within the free-market provision of early childhood education is brought into question here, as there are marked differences in the provision of quality between education providers, particularly

between ‘for-profit’ and ‘community-based’ providers: parents, as ‘consumers’ of early childhood education, frequently do not have the means (options/funds) or understanding (experience/knowledge of a ‘good product’) to make rational decisions (Moss, 2009). Hayek’s assertion that ‘acts of value’ within the community will be rewarded is brought into question in the domain of early childhood education. The ‘value’ and ‘rationality’ are arguably economic, and ‘similar enough’ quality means that decisions are made based solely upon cost. The theory that the free-market would enhance product quality is contested by the actuality of a ‘user-pays’ system in which varying quality and costs are generated in response to parent’s levels of affordability (Morabito & Vandenbroeck, 2014). In the early childhood ‘market’, enhanced educational experiences give cause for higher prices, low-cost early childhood education invoke reductions in quality indicators (ratios, group-sizes, qualifications).

As articulated above, privatisation situates education as an individual benefit and responsibility, the benefits being that families can utilise personal resources to promote individual advancement. On the other side of the equation, the dominance of the market model produces early childhood spaces where children are enculturated into the neoliberal climate, prompting them to be “compliant, productive, employable citizens” (Sims & Waniganayake, 2015, p. 336). Children are encultured into a society of competitiveness through participation in a ‘user pays’ system which channels them into high or low quality educational provision based on their parent’s economic resources. A dominant discourse within present neoliberal early childhood education is the drive to produce ‘life-long learners’, the development of which will benefit the (future) nation-state by manufacturing a generation of citizens capable of adapting, evolving and maintaining a competitive edge in the future market. This discourse is promoted by international bodies such as the World Bank (2003) who argues that ‘life-long learning’ equips individuals to participate within the shifting market of the “global knowledge economy”, which is:

> placing new demands on citizens, who need more skills and knowledge to be able to function in their day-to-day lives. Equipping people to deal with these demands requires a new model of education and training, a model of lifelong learning. A lifelong learning framework encompasses learning throughout the lifecycle, from early childhood through retirement…Lifelong learning is crucial to preparing workers to compete in the global economy. But it is important for other reasons as well. By improving people’s ability to function as members of their communities, education and

> training increase social cohesion, reduce crime, and improve income distribution. (World Bank Staff, 2003, p. xvii).

Participation in the community is based upon participation in the 'knowledge economy', enabling individuals to 'function as members of their communities'. Functional community membership is inextricable from the directives of education to produce neoliberal beings: rational autonomous individuals who can compete within the free-market (Baltodano, 2012). In general, the situation of education within the discourse of a 'knowledge economy' is "taken for granted by governments, mass media, public opinion, and most scholars today" (Livingstone & Guile, 2012, p. xv). In early childhood education, children are prepared for their future employment and produced into 'life-long consumers' in an 'educative' space in which "market-driven identities and values are both produced and legitimated" (Giroux, 2004, p. 494).

Neoliberalism and Murdochian Theory

Central to Murdoch's criticisms of the depiction of the 'free' liberal individual was that this notion of freedom was insufficient to represent the complete moral being. This was due to two essential elements being lost: the way in which the liberal tradition eroded the diverse concepts which would enable individuals to represent their reality, and the ability to seek beyond the limited scope of this vision. Neoliberal theory aligns with Murdochian theory in its suspicion of human nature; both theories depict the human as selfish and lazy – the neoliberal image is relative to the individual's economic efficacy, and the Murdochian image is in relation to moral development. Neoliberal theory and Murdochian theory also align in the defence of the individual, seeking to secure the notion of the private individual. Yet there are many significant points at which they diverge. These will be outlined in this section, with an argument for the defence of an image of the educational relationship which is sensitive to the arguments raised by Murdoch.

The neoliberal ideology has had very similar effects upon the image of the human. Within neoliberal theory, freedom of the individual is measured by his or her access to and autonomy within the market; the 'unfettered will' of neoliberal theory is not the same as that of liberalism, where minimal intervention is the key to freedom. Within neoliberalism, individual freedom is protected only insofar as is necessary to stimulate the economy; the 'will to be competitive' is constantly shaped and enticed in order to maximise the productivity of market. Freedom within the neoliberal ideology is an intricate relationship

between the individual and the state. The extent of governmental involvement is to be extended only to this point: to encourage individual rights, and the vitality of market competition (Peters, 2011). Harvey (2005) asserts

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

This notion of freedom, which is indeed 'compelling and seductive' takes the stance that compromises to freedom threaten liaisons with totalitarianism, which are equitable to the authority of the state over the autonomy of the individual. Murdoch would argue that the compelling and seductive nature of this line of argument is due to the way in which it creates a Luciferian compulsion – the desire to substitute a fantastical argument for the reality of the situation, one based in part upon the desires of the 'fat relentless ego'. Murdoch (1998) was wary of the ways in which the ego can move humans to transmute reality into fantasy, a characteristic she argued was present within the liberal individual. She argues "reality is not a given whole. An understanding of this, a respect for the contingent, is essential to imagination as opposed to fantasy" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 294). The neoliberal imagination is the imagination of the ego – the desire to promote one's individual interests in a competitive system, to advance oneself ahead of others and to (dehumanise) limit our view of others to economic subjects.

Akin to the liberal image of the human, the neoliberal image has reduced the individual to the 'economic unit' and lost touch with the background to the human. These problems are generated both through economic theory, and the neoliberal affinity for quantifiable empirical research data. Within both of these understandings of the human, there is a limiting effect for, as Murdoch argues, they fail to recognise and appreciate the real impenetrable person which is varied and diverse. Furthermore, the neoliberal imagination is not an accurate representation of the real impenetrable person, but rather a misrepresentation in the national (global) desire to advance the economic situation of the nation-state. In creating an unnecessary dialectic between individual and community, there are significant aspects of human experiences which are omitted from the neoliberal ideology. Murdoch would argue, that the presentation of the neoliberal agenda as the only 'truth' to be adhered to is limiting

our understanding of the depth of human personality, and the abilities to be able to appreciate it.

And what of the 'inner life' which Murdoch seeks to defend? The individual constructed through neoliberal ideology is again found wanting, with no 'inner life' represented beyond the externalised movements within the market. While the moral decisions of the liberal individual were only externally measured, the neoliberal individual is measured through his or her productivity; again the measurement can only be outwardly regarded and subjected to external evaluation. The relationship between this externalised judgement, and the internal movements within the act of education need further exposition. Teachers are positioned to produce children who will compete within the future market, but are equally a part of the present market of early childhood education. In this position, teachers are 'irresponsibilised' in order to limit the chances of moving outside the neoliberal mould. Privatisation increases competition between early childhood settings, which increases accountability practices. Within early childhood education, privatisation has occasioned corporatisation, which leads to managerialism and standardisation of early childhood settings which increase externalised measurements and teacher's accountability to them. Educational practices are moulded to fit within the neoliberal model. Teaching becomes an object of externalised measurement: quantifiable, standardisable, and replicable. Pedagogy transmutes into technical practices which can be translated into any setting. Yet there is an 'inner-life' of the act of education which must be defended, one that cannot be measured externally without extensive understanding of the particulars of each setting, and indeed each relationship held between a teacher and a child. The liberal image of the individual Murdoch resisted represented 'reality' as "potentially open to different observers" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 305). In this way, an individual's reality is only represented though external observation and consensual judgement in much the way that empirical sciences encourage observation of the natural world. However, a recognition of the opacity of persons, and a respect for the complexity of individual lives which can only be appreciated through the 'just and loving gaze' give pause to those who wish to submit to the 'seductive ideals' of neoliberalism. Pedagogy is grounded within intricate human relationships. When driven to be responsive to neoliberal ideologies, education could indeed become technical and standardised, but when this path is undertaken much is lost in the reality and potential for the educational experience. As argued before, this approach to pedagogy will misrepresent the individuals within the educational relationship, both teacher and child, and lose the deep contextual understandings of the human individual that is wrought through these relationships and the potential to

progress movement towards developing our understanding of the Good in the act of education. Underpinned by neoliberal theory – to produce individuals who are 'enterprising' and 'competitive' – education functions to in a way that encultures children into a 'neoliberal normality'; manufacturing children according to an economic doctrine. In promoting the technical and standardised approaches to education. Consequently and most importantly, continuing the neoliberal agenda in education could result in a similar situation to that which most concerned Murdoch: a loss of the conceptual understandings to nurture and defend alternate visions. As argued before, goodness is not a 'void', it is not relative and selectable from equally suitable options, nor is it something that is scientifically quantifiable but that does not preclude its existence: "'not a report' need not entail 'not an activity'" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 318). The Good of education is not externally derived standardised practices which promote mechanistic procedures between teacher and child. This is a false goodness, derived from a false love generated by the ego – the love of the self and the desire for individual advancement in the (future) market. Goodness in education *is* the attentive human relationship between the teacher and the child, the application of the just and loving gaze towards an individual reality, and the progress of the practicing teacher towards a clearer understanding of the educational relationship. The intricacies of the attentive relationship defy quantification, but cannot collapse into self-interest when applied appropriately.

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