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DEVELOPING A CONTEMPLATIVE CLASSROOM.
ARE THERE OTHER APPROACHES THAT USEFULLY EXTEND ANGELO
CARANFA?

Rosemary Laoulach

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy



School of Philosophy and Theology
University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney Campus

3rd February 2022

Declaration

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

Print Name: Rosemary Laoulach

Date: 3rd February 2022

Abstract

This study will explore the literature on silence and contemplation in order to develop an approach for a contemplative classroom. It will examine Angelo Caranfa's ideas on silence in education and a contemplative curriculum. The research will highlight some of the influences on his work, critiquing them and pointing out what can be further developed by outlining what a contemplative classroom might look like.

Contemplative practices will be defined broadly as silence, attentiveness, reflection, humility, attentive listening, and mindfulness. I will provide a theoretical and practical account of these to inform educators towards a holistic approach to teaching and learning and a flourishing life. This thesis will draw on both the philosophical and Christian tradition in examining silence and contemplation.

Caranfa's work is based on the assertion that silence is the very foundation of learning. Silence allows our discourse to facilitate deeper learning and self-knowledge. Caranfa draws on the ideas of Socrates, Augustine, Max Picard, and Simone Weil. They advocate for the use of silence (connected to listening and thinking) as the basis of all learning and transformation. The connection of arts and aesthetic experiences to silence is also a central theme in his work. I will extend Caranfa's model of contemplation in providing a conceptual, ethical, and experiential approach to a contemplative pedagogy. The conceptual dimensions will examine *how we might teach philosophy in developing epistemic humility for a contemplative mindset.*

The ethical component explores the importance of *attentive listening* for the classroom. The experiential offers various contemplative practices drawn from secular and religious traditions. The thesis will highlight some contemporary challenges to contemplative pedagogy. These include the neoliberal agenda, technology, and ‘inattentiveness’ within modern life. To counter these, I will argue also for the importance of the arts and humanities in helping students find meaning and habituate them towards an encounter with the greater mystery.

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SECTION A: Introduction and Literature Review.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In *The World of Silence*, Max Picard wrote that the modern world, focusing on technology, science, and “profit and utility,” has a disturbing “noise” that obliterates the pervasive silence.¹ Silence, he claims, is the underlying source of all phenomena.² According to Picard, this disturbing noise hinders our ability to be fully present to ourselves and others. Picard understood this noise as a destructive influence on our psyche, humanity, and society. Picard suggests that we must recognise and reawaken the presence of silence and the arts to counteract the influences of science, technology, and neoliberalism (which he refers to as “profit and utility”).³

Although written in 1948, Picard’s insights still resonate with significance today. Many researchers have observed that contemporary society in the West suffers from a deficit in attention, mindfulness, and wellbeing. Researcher Martin Seligman claims that many countries are not happier despite the increase in wealth by nations in the West (measured by GDP).⁴ His studies have shown that nations like the US have seen dramatic increases in depression over the past 50 years.⁵ Furthermore, Cal Newport’s observations have resonance with Picard’s insights. In his work, “Is Email Making Professors Stupid? It Used to Simplify Crucial Tasks. Now It’s Strangling Scholars’ Ability to Think,” as the title suggests, Newport claims that the distractions of technology in our daily lives are harming our attention, thinking skills, and

¹ Max Picard, *World of Silence* (Wichita: Eighth Day, 1952), 18–19.

² Picard, *World of Silence*, 18–19.

³ Picard, *World of Silence*. Heideggerian scholars will undoubtedly identify his ideas in Picard’s insights. I will discuss this further in Chapter 3. Heidegger thought that science and modern technology had an overall negative impact on society. He argued it impacted our ‘essence’ or ‘being.’ See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt. (Harper and Row, 1977).

⁴ Martin Seligman, *Flourish* (Sydney: Random House Australia, 2012), 223.

⁵ Seligman, *Flourish*, 223.

cognition.⁶ He suggests that emails (and other technologies) are not enhancing but rather *detracting us from deep thinking and reflection.*⁷

Ellen Langer spent many years observing people and their level of ‘attentiveness’ and ‘mindlessness.’⁸ One of the pioneers of mindfulness research, her studies suggest that most of us in the West are unaware of our pervasive inattentiveness. This means that many of us are distracted from the present moment and tasks at hand and are too mindless even to notice. Much mindfulness research is built on this premise of mindlessness. Mindfulness practices attempt to remedy this condition of mindlessness through various interventions such as cultivating meditation, pausing and stillness.⁹

Additionally, a growing amount of literature has emerged in recent years reacting against the fast pace, profit focus, and neoliberal influences in society (and education). This trend is evident, for example, in what is termed the ‘Slow Movement,’ with mindfulness, meditation

⁶ Cal Newport, “Is Email Making Professors Stupid? It Used to Simplify Crucial Tasks. Now It’s Strangling Scholars’ Ability to Think,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 65, no. 25 (2019): B6; Cal Newport, “When Technology Goes Awry,” *Communications of the ACM* 63, no. 5 (2020): 49–52.

⁷ In his book, *Deep Work*, Newport suggests we need to minimise our use of technology to do deep work and reflection, which he claims is declining. Newport makes a distinction between ‘shallow’ and ‘deep work’. Shallow work he proposes includes checking emails, social media, and attending meetings, which in most workplaces is considered a sign of ‘productivity.’ Deep work, on the other hand, he claims is scarcer and requires uninterrupted concentration to produce quality work, such as good writing and deep reflection. Newport proposes that we need to minimise the distractions of technology and allow more significant time and space for deep concentration and thinking. See Cal Newport, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016). See also Sophie Leroy’s work on ‘attention residue.’ Sophie, Leroy, and M. Aaron Schmidt, “Interruptions and Regulatory Focus: Effects on Attention Residue and Task Performance,” *Academy of Management Proceedings* 2016, no. 1 (2016): <https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2016.18342abstract>; Sophie Leroy, “Being Present but Not Fully There: The Effect of Switching Work Tasks on Subsequent Task Engagement and Performance,” PhD diss., New York University, 2007.

⁸ See Ellen J. Langer, *Mindfulness* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub, 1989); Ellen J. Langer, “Mindful Learning,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science: A Journal of The American Psychological Society* 9, no. 6 (2000): 220–223; and Emily A. P. Haigh, et al., “Examination of The Factor Structure and Concurrent Validity of The Langer Mindfulness/Mindlessness Scale,” *Assessment* 18, no. 1 (2010): 11-26, doi:10.1177/1073191110386342.

⁹ For example, see: Mindfulness in Schools Project, “Bringing Mindfulness to Schools,” accessed Nov. 11, 2021, <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/>; Kimberley Holmes, “Neuroscience, Mindfulness and Holistic Wellness Reflections on Interconnectivity in Teaching and Learning,” *Interchange* 50, no. 3 (2019): 445-460, doi:10.1007/s10780-019-09360-6; Kimberley Holmes, “Mindfulness as a Practice of Professional Life,” *Journal of Educational Thought* 50, no. 1 (2017): 21-42; and P.A. Jennings, *Mindfulness For Teachers: Simple Skills For Peace And Productivity In The Classroom* (New York, NY: Norton Series on the Social Neuroscience of Education, 2015); Mark Williams and Daniel Penman, *Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World* (London: Piatkus, 2011).

and books all advocating an emphasis and importance on *slowness*.¹⁰ Mindfulness, for example, has increased within Europe and the UK and is now considered a well-known practice for aiding concentration, stress relief, and dealing with depression and anxiety.¹¹ Works such as *In Praise of Slowness*, *The Slow Professor*, *Slow Living*, *Slow Philosophy*, *Slowness as a Virtue*, *How to Be a Failure and Still Live Well*, and *Deep Work* (among many others) advocate a rejection of the ‘efficiency and profit’ focused culture emerging today, and its influences within education.¹² These scholars, broadly speaking, are advocates for the need (which some might consider ironic or counter-cultural) to operate more ‘slowly’ and mindfully to enhance creativity, inventiveness, deep thinking, and wellbeing.

If the above observations are accurate or even partially true, this has apparent implications for the quality of teaching and learning. It also points to the benefits and importance of pausing, stillness, silence, and contemplative practices in general. Chapter 2 will show evidence that these practices can counteract mindlessness and stress and contribute to wellbeing. These studies also support the need for a contemplative methodology. This thesis offers a pedagogy that enables and facilitates a holistic approach to education by including a curriculum based on contemplative practices.

¹⁰ For example, Maggie, O’Neill, et al., “Slow Movement/ Slow University: Critical Engagements: Introduction to the Thematic Section,” *Forum, Qualitative Social Research* 15, no. 3 (2014): 9–15; Luke Martell, “The Slow University: Inequality, Power and Alternatives,” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 15, no. 3 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-15.3.2223>; Geir Berthelsen, “The World Institute of Slowness,” *The World Institute of Slowness*, 2018, <https://www.theworldinstituteofslowness.com/>.

¹¹ For example, see: Rebecca S. Crane and Willem Kuyken, “The Implementation of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: Learning from The UK Health Service Experience,” *Mindfulness* 4, no. 3 (2012): 246-254, doi :10.1007/s12671-012-0121-6.

¹¹ Daphne M. Davis and Jeffrey A. Hayes, “What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness? A Practice Review of Psychotherapy-Related Research,” *Psychotherapy* 48, no. 2 (2011), 200.

¹² Carl Honoré, *In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement Is Challenging the Cult of Speed* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2004); Maggie Berg and Barbara K Seeber, *The Slow Professor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Wendy Parkins and Geoffrey Craig, *Slow Living* (Oxford: Berg, 2006); Beverley Clack, *How to Be a Failure and Still Live Well: A Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020); Michelle Boulous Walker, *Slow Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018); Nicholas C. Burbules, “Slowness as a Virtue,” *Journal of philosophy of education* 54, no. 5 (2020): 1443–1452; Cal Newport, *Deep Work: Rules For Focused Success In A Distracted World* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016).

The thesis will show how Angelo Caranfa's theoretical framework on silence leads to contemplative education. This will be defined broadly as stillness, pausing, deep reflection, attentive listening, and mindfulness. In this introductory chapter, I will outline the aims and objectives of the thesis, explaining how the thesis will draw initially on the works of Caranfa and his influences to show how contemplative education can provide a positive and holistic approach to education. I will also highlight what is missing in Caranfa's model and develop an outline of what a contemplative classroom might look like.

This chapter will include a preface that explores anecdotal reflections on the importance of silence and contemplation in the classroom and its significance. The chapter will also discuss some limitations of the neoliberal influences on education and propose that a contemplative approach to teaching and learning seeks to address these. An outline of the methodology and limitations of this thesis will also be discussed, as well as the reasons why Caranfa views silence as necessary for education and holistic learning. Chapter 1 will lay the groundwork for justifying the central claim *that silence and contemplation are essential parts of holistic education*.

1.1 *Aims/objectives*

This thesis will:

- (i) explore the literature on silence and contemplation (in Chapter 2), section A
- (ii) explore Caranfa's ideas on silence in education and a contemplative curriculum, and highlight some of the influences on his work (in Chapters 3, 4, 5), section B
- (iii) critique them and point out what can be further developed (in Chapters, 3, 4, 5 and 6), section B

- (iv) provide an outline of what a contemplative classroom might look like (in Chapters 7, 8, 9), section C.

I put forward a curriculum for the contemplative classroom centred on Caranfa's writings (1999–2016). His work is based on the claim that *silence is the foundation of learning*.¹³ He argues that we need to allow silence within our pedagogical practices for our discourse to facilitate self-knowledge, deeper understanding, stillness, mindfulness, listening and humility. These skills and dispositions can be usefully developed to inform a contemplative educational curriculum.

Caranfa argues that the aim of education should be to reconnect *dialectics with silence*.¹⁴ Silence allows self-knowledge by integrating the *self's emotional, spiritual, and rational aspects*.¹⁵ This integration permits learning to become meaningful and engaging rather than abstract and remote. The silence emerges from questioning and discussion (employing the Socratic method); this reflection with silence is acknowledged as a *distinct type of discourse*. Silence and dialectic inquiry are synthesised by exploring subjective meanings, ideas, thoughts, and students' feelings.¹⁶ The *arts and aesthetic* experience are central components in Caranfa's work. He proposes that the aesthetic experience, through its connection to silence, leads to the divine, God, and personal transformation. These pedagogical practices of self-knowledge,

¹³ Angelo Caranfa, "Silence as The Foundation of Learning," *Educational Theory* 54, no. 2 (2004): 211–230, doi: 10.1111/j.0013-2004.2004.0angelo_abstract.x; Angelo Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," *Educational Theory* 60, no. 5 (2010): 561–585. doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.2010.00377. x.

¹⁴ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning"; Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence"; Angelo Caranfa, "The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 44, no. 2 (2010): 63–82. doi:10.1353/jae.0.0085.

¹⁵ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning"; Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence"; Caranfa, "The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil."

¹⁶ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning"; Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence"; Caranfa, "The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil."

deeper learning, stillness, listening, and humility (which emerge from an engagement with silence) are intertwined and, I will argue, lead toward a holistic approach to education.

Holistic education is a term primarily used when discussing the broader aims of education. It generally implies that what is needed to develop the ‘whole person’ is more than practical or academic skills and knowledge (which implies reasoning skills). Other dimensions, such as affective, imaginative, and sometimes spiritual aspects of the self, which lead to a sense of wellbeing, are generally considered necessary in the development of all aspects of the students. While most within education seem to aspire to this goal, *how* we achieve it, and precisely what constitutes holistic education and wellbeing, is not always clearly defined.

Caranfa’s definition of holistic education, as will be developed in this thesis, explores the rational, the aesthetic, and the spiritual. Drawing on Plato, Weil, and Alfred Whitehead, Caranfa proposes that the ‘aesthetic spiritual’ in education that results from silence demonstrates his approach to achieving holistic education. Silence in the arts (such as sacred music) and silent reading and writing develop an ‘integration of the self’, which points to his understanding of holistic education in the broad sense.

In addition to Caranfa’s understanding of holistic education, other sources will be included to develop this concept further. For example, the notion of *Bildung* and other figures within the philosophy of education. These sources advocate for education as teaching wisdom and a flourishing life. They contribute to an understanding of holistic education worthy of incorporating within a contemplative pedagogy.

In Chapter 4, Aristotle’s concept of contemplation is briefly examined to address a significant gap in Caranfa’s understanding of silence, thinking, and contemplation. In doing so, the connection between thinking, silence, contemplation, wisdom, virtue, and a flourishing life is

highlighted. In addition, Pierre Hadot's works are essential to consider in the contemplative dimensions within the philosophical tradition of the Stoics. Hadot argues that these philosophers sought 'spiritual exercise' as part of the process of transformation and living a flourishing life. Martha Nussbaum's work also echoes similar themes and will be briefly noted. These elucidations extend Caranfa's model and shed further light on themes useful in our understanding of contemplative teaching and learning. As mentioned, in Chapter 7, others such as Josef Pieper, Sean Steel and Martin Heidegger also extend Caranfa's notion of flourishing and holistic learning. This thesis will therefore draw on both the philosophical and Christian tradition in examining silence, thinking, and contemplation.

In section B, there will be an examination of Caranfa's influences and a thematic discussion of his work on silence and contemplation. As stated, contemplation in this thesis is understood in the broad sense of incorporating *silence, attentiveness, deep listening, mindfulness, reflection, and humility*. From the outset, it is important to highlight some of the main themes that will emerge throughout these chapters that reflect my interpretation of Caranfa's main ideas on silence and contemplation. These include:

1. Silence as dialogue and discourse. There is a connection between listening to silence and speech.
2. Philosophy's connection to reason and the dialectic. The philosophical inquiry leads to contemplation, wonder, humility, and self-knowledge.
3. The limitation of reason (and exclusion of feelings) and link/progression to silence, mystery, and transcendence. This theme moves into the discussion of negative and apophatic theology and will be examined throughout section B (Chapters 3, 4 and 5).
4. Caranfa argues that when reason has reached its limits, the self is transformed through art and the aesthetic experience. Silence is best understood through art and the aesthetic experience. The arts are also important in the development of holistic learning.
5. It will be argued throughout this thesis that the intention of silence is to engage in internal dialogue, its consequences resulting in self-knowledge and humility. The

characteristic of silence shows itself in the contemplation process, which includes, for example, stillness and listening – listening to the silence of the inner dialogue within the subjective self. The notion of listening also extends to listening to the voice of divine beauty and the Christian idea of God.

This thesis will discuss some of the limitations of Caranfa’s work. His interpretations of the philosophers he cites could be further developed. Furthermore, Caranfa does not provide examples of *implementing* the aesthetic–spiritual approach within the classroom. Neither does Caranfa address the difficulty of managing a modern-day student body and classroom. Issues such as young people’s religious/spiritual development or the neoliberal influences that affect teaching and learning today are omitted. Chapter 6 will highlight these challenges and draw on young people’s religious/spiritual development literature (his intended audience). In doing so, some of the practical and theoretical difficulties that Caranfa’s contemplative model faces come to light.

Considering some areas that could be further developed in Caranfa’s writings, in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, Caranfa’s model is extended to propose a contemplative curriculum that may appeal to the minds of young people. This will be aimed toward secondary education and the tertiary sector. This educational model will include a theoretical and experiential component. As suggested in Chapter 2, researchers observe that mindlessness, lack of attention, and distraction are the state of affairs within our current education. As mentioned, Langer’s research, for example, proposes that most people today are unaware and are ‘too mindless’ even to notice.¹⁷ If these researchers’ observations are accurate, these issues impact learning within the

¹⁷ Langer, *Mindfulness*; Haigh, “Examination of The Factor Structure and Concurrent Validity of The Langer Mindfulness/Mindlessness Scale.”

classroom. However, my interest here is not just in achieving better learning outcomes (which may occur in the process) but in a more holistic approach to education.¹⁸

One of the areas that will be extended in Caranfa's work is his understanding of the dialectic. While Caranfa does not dismiss the use and importance of reason and the dialectic within education (as shown in Chapters 3, 4 and 5), he favours the aesthetic–spiritual experience over reason. While the aesthetic–spiritual experience benefits learning and contemplation, as will be shown in Chapter 2 (on benefits of aesthetic education), this approach is problematic. One of the ideal aims of education, at least in the West, is that our education system develops logic and reasoning skills. These skills are essential when considering the broader aims of education from a Socratic tradition related to independent and critical thinking. So, a question emerges from examining Caranfa's work: how do we combine the use of 'reasoning skills' with the call for contemplation within the classroom? How do we develop and recognise contemplative skills, dispositions, attitudes and values, such as humility, mindfulness and deep thinking within the classroom?

I aim to integrate these seemingly opposing views through a *conceptual, ethical* and *experiential* approach to a contemplative pedagogy. In doing so, Caranfa's model will be extended in the following ways:

1. In Chapter 7, Caranfa's theme of *epistemic humility* will be extended. The aim will be to explore *how* we can teach towards a notion of epistemic humility within a contemplative classroom. The underlying conceptual framework will explore reasoning and 'critical thinking' within a contemplative framework. It will propose that teaching

¹⁸ For example, see: Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning"; Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence"; Caranfa, "The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil."

philosophy as a subject is critical for developing skills and dispositions within a contemplative pedagogy and developing what a ‘contemplative mindset’ might look like. Further, it will draw on the elucidations of Socrates and Simone Weil, and others such as Jacques Maritain, Josef Pieper, and Sean Steel. Much of what these later philosophers pointed to is essentially similar to Martin Heidegger’s epistemology and descriptions of thinking. The importance of Heidegger’s ‘meditative thinking’ as a way of ‘thinking about thinking’ for a contemplative pedagogy will be examined.

2. In Chapter 8, Weil’s notion of attention, as discussed by Caranfa, will be further developed to incorporate an *ethical dimension*. As Caranfa examines, Weil claims that attention to learning is an essential skill for academic pursuits and developing the soul. Weil extends this notion of attention to deep listening and receptivity towards the other, especially to suffering. This dimension of attention needs further development in Caranfa’s writings and will be my focus in this chapter. In developing the notion of listening and empathy, other writers such as Edith Stein will be examined. This component provides a holistic approach to the contemplative classroom, incorporating the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* dimensions of the Christian life.
3. In keeping with the theme of attentive listening, Chapter 9 will discuss the method of Lectio Divina (or *sacred reading*) derived from the monastic tradition of St Benedict. Lectio Divina offers a way to enlighten a *contemplative way of reading and listening*. This ancient technique can help us engage with texts more deeply as we learn to read slowly and repetitively. While the origin of this ancient practice is for monastic life, many of its elements can be extrapolated to the modern classroom and used to extend Caranfa’s model. This *experiential dimension* includes the practice of silence,

mindfulness and prayer, which is best noted in the tradition of St Benedict.¹⁹ Other approaches, such as Lawrence Freeman’s Christian meditation, are valuable practices that could be applied to the classroom today. Confucian education also offers practical methods linked to the Benedictine tradition. This is particularly evident in their approach of ‘attentiveness’ and rote learning within the classroom. Additionally, mindfulness practice has shown to be effective in stress and anxiety and can be usefully incorporated within an educational setting.

This thesis will show that to be contemplative and a listener of silence is not to betray some of the broader aims of education concerning critical thinking but instead transcend them. While reasoning and logic have their place, authentic learning, as Socrates and others have taught, is ultimately about ignorance and humility. This idea, another critical theme proposed by Caranfa, will also be extended in my work. The quality of humility facilitates a further sense of *wonder* about the world, ironically leading to inquiry and deep understanding.²⁰

In addition, a holistic approach to contemplative pedagogy would benefit from an ethical dimension. Learning to listen more attentively and empathically is a skill we can all learn to improve our relationships. This can help to develop more caring and ethical responses to others, especially those suffering. In this sense, this approach addresses the active and social justice

¹⁹ Caranfa mentions this in one of his works, however, I will develop it in more depth. See Angelo Caranfa, “Whitehead’s Benedictine Ideal in Education: Rhythms of Listening, Reading and Work,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44, no. 4 (2012): 386–402, doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00716. x.

²⁰ Many philosophers, mystics, and researchers within education have observed this process, for example, in Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Glenn Gray (New York: Perennial Library, 1976), 168–69. Heidegger explores the notion of the teacher’s humility as they relate to their students. See also Li Jin, “Humility in Learning: A Confucian Perspective,” *Journal of Moral Education* 45, no. 2 (2016): 147–165; Emma C. Gordon, “Intellectual Humility, Spirituality, and Counselling,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 46, no. 4 (2018): 279–229; Jonathan L. Kvanvig, “Intellectual Humility,” *Res Philosophica* 93, no. 3 (2016): 509–532.

dimensions within Christian theology. This is a critical component of a contemplative classroom.

Chapter 9 includes a range of constructive tools to enhance the practical dimensions of contemplation within the classroom. These are drawn mainly from the Benedictine tradition and extend to include Confucian education and mindfulness to appeal to a diverse student body. Mindfulness is a contemplative tool understood and practised from an explicitly secular framework.

Moreover, my argument is also for the importance of the arts and humanities (e.g., sacred music and literature) in a well-rounded education in helping students find meaning.²¹ This inclusion is helpful within a contemplative classroom framework in which silence is a vehicle for habituating students towards an encounter with mystery and recognising their ignorance and need for epistemic humility. Another central argument is that silence through engagement with the arts and humanities can help facilitate a sense of wonder, self-knowledge, and awareness of ignorance that can potentially lead to epistemic humility. These are qualities and values that we should strive for in education if we are serious about holistic education, not just upskilling people to get work.

I will propose that one of the consequences of contemplative pedagogy is humility. Humility should be the hallmark of education *par excellence*. To embrace humility is to be an authentic seeker of truth. It is an enabler of deep learning. Humility brings to our awareness that our knowledge of the universe is never complete since uncertainty, rather than certainty, can give

²¹ I will draw on many of Caranfa's influences in developing this theme. The most obvious are Simone Weil, Alfred Whitehead and Max Picard. I will also include the works of Martha Nussbaum, Iris Murdoch, and Azi Nafisi. In addition, the influence of Martin Heidegger's writings on the arts and critique of the science in Caranfa and Picard's writings will be highlighted in Chapter 3. Heidegger's arguments clearly provide support for much of Caranfa and Picard's assertions on role of the arts and critique of the sciences.

birth to new ideas. Humility and understanding our ignorance also lead to an encounter with the mystery. Despite all we know and discover, as many great minds have testified, the world remains mysterious. This insight can propel people into a state of fear or wonder.²²

This presence of mystery that pervades the universe is the basis of our intuitive religious faith. In other words, we sense intuitively that the world is mysterious. For some of us, this points to the reality of a God and creator that resides within this mystery that we cannot fully comprehend through logical reasoning.²³ Therefore, it is within all possibility that this ‘realisation’ and encounter with mystery and God is a viable process which we can, with humility and grace, guide students towards within a contemplative classroom context.²⁴

1.2 State of education today: The broader neoliberal agenda, which is the antithesis of contemplation, silence, attentiveness and listening.

As Bertrand Russell writes:

The emphasis on competition in modern life is connected with a general decay of civilised standards such as must have occurred in Rome after the Augustan Age... The trouble arises from the generally received philosophy of life, according to which life is a contest, a competition, in which respect is to be accorded to the victor. This view leads to an undue cultivation of the will at the expense of the senses and the intellect...²⁵

The increasing emphasis on visible outcomes which can be measured and quantified for utilitarian and profitable purposes (a mode of operation within the corporate world) has increasingly found its way into the education sector. As illustrated by Russell, a focus on competition espoused by a neoliberal and capitalist approach has detrimental influences on

²² For more see, Rosemary Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: a Practical Resource for Students and Teachers* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2019) Chapters 1 and 2. See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of The Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey. 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University, 1950), which describes the ambiguous experience of the divine as eliciting both fear and a sense of wonder.

²³ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, Chapters 1 and 2.

²⁴ There is an attempt to achieve this in the textbook *Inquiry*, which explores in the first chapter (on epistemology) what is ‘truth,’ knowledge, and certainty and leads to a discussion on mysticism and religion in the last chapter. It also explores the limitations of reasoning and logic as a doorway into an awareness of mystery and religious faith. This linear process that can lead to faith is essential to develop within a contemplative classroom. This approach can also potentially appeal to the curiosity of young people. For more see, Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*.

²⁵ Bertrand Russell, *The Conquest of Happiness* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2013), 54–55.

society. While many scholars have observed this, it has been largely ignored by educators, particularly policymakers in the West.²⁶ The neoliberal framework leaves little space for the proper recognition of the benefits of silence and contemplation within the classroom. Essentially, as will be argued in this thesis, these skills and dispositions cannot easily be ‘quantified’ for immediate utilitarian and profitable purposes. Nevertheless, they remain essential for a holistic approach to teaching and learning. Wendy Brown likewise argues,

All conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetised. In neoliberal reason and domains governed by it, we are only and everywhere homo economicus, which itself has a historically specific form.²⁷

Many contemporary scholars have written on the ideology of neoliberalism. As shown above, Brown describes neoliberalism as a type of reasoning that is ‘all pervasive,’ a way of organising government and all of society. Researchers have contested the pervasive influence of neoliberalism on education. They argue that neoliberalism has negative implications for teaching and learning. These scholars include Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Sandel, Martha Nussbaum, Wendy Brown, Brian Hudson, and Ewan Ingleby (among others).²⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, for example, claims this framework has filtered throughout the language of discourse within education and is reflected within the bureaucratic nature of the state.²⁹ Furthermore, he

²⁶ For example: Picard, *The World of Silence*; Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (London: Penguin 2013); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Søren Harnow Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*, ebook, 1st ed. (Switzerland: Springer, 2018), 67, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73186-5_5. Neoliberalism can be broadly defined as an economic system whereby the free market is the pivotal factor affecting many social and political aspects within society.

²⁷ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 10.

²⁸ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1986); Benjamin Baez, *Technologies of Government* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2014); Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and The Limits Of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press., 2010); Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*; Nussbaum, *Not for Profit* Brown, *Undoing the Demos*; Brian Hudson, “Education And Social Justice: Democratizing Education,” in *In The European Conference In Education* (Brighton, 2016), <http://iafor.org/conferences/ece2016/>; Ewan Ingleby, “Teaching Policy And Practice: Early Years, Neoliberalism And Communities Of Practice,” *Contemporary Social Science* 8, no. 2 (2013): 120–129, doi:10.1080/21582041.2012.751505; Joseph Stiglitz, *Reduce Inequality, Increase Economic Growth* (New York: NYU Press, 2015); Henry Giroux, “Neoliberal Fascism As The Endpoint Of Casino Capitalism,” *Fast Capitalism* 16, no. 1 (2019): 7-24, doi:10.32855/fcapital.201901.002.

²⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

argues that neoliberalism influences the autonomy of scientific research and dictates the type of research undertaken.³⁰

The increase in the managerial model of leadership and bureaucracy within education is a by-product of neoliberalism observed in Australia and the UK. In Australia, we have seen greater accountability and evidence-based practice as teachers and schools increasingly must demonstrate evidence of their effectiveness in teaching and learning. NESA, an educational governing body, requires its teachers to show ongoing professional development.

Australian educational researcher, Alan Reid, claims the education in Australia is too narrow, focusing on literacy and numeracy deemed necessary for the workplace.³¹ He claims that often policymakers are not educators, and they narrowly define the aims of education as having an economic focus. Reid suggests we need to rethink our approach to education and include a more holistic goal, which includes focus on other skills such as social development and metacognition. In her work, *Teacher*, Gabbie Stroud recounts how the increase in standardisation and bureaucracy led her to reconsider her career choice.³² She first-hand illustrates the negative impacts of government regulation on her students, which she observed impacted their wellbeing and learning. Likewise, Brendan Murray's book, *The School*, illustrates the real-life experiences of teenagers in Australian schools. He highlights the inability of teachers to effectively address critical issues which teenagers face due to time constraints and a range of added pressures on teachers (e.g., numerous classes and the increase

³⁰ Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 250.

³¹ Allan Reid, *Changing Australian Education: How Policy Is Taking Us Backwards and What Can Be Done About It* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

³² Gabbie Stroud, *Teacher: One Woman's Struggle to Keep Her Heart in Teaching* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2018).

in bureaucracy). These added pressures, Murray suggests, are detracting from teachers' ability to adequately support many adolescents in schools.³³

The effects of an increase in regulation by the state, such as OFSTED in the UK, are described by Ewan Ingleby as leading to a growth in bureaucratic roles, followed by detrimental impacts on teaching and learning. He claims that this has consequently resulted in a division amongst the teacher profession about best practices and increased pressure experienced by educators.³⁴ By adopting a competitive approach in education (in responding to market forces), Ingleby points out that the broader aims of education espoused by Plato and the philosophers are compromised. He claims that neoliberal influences such as increased bureaucracy are diminishing the quality of education. Ingleby writes:

Moreover, the interventionist nature of neoliberalism witnesses a generation of bureaucratic standards attempting to regulate the early years' educational context. The resulting labyrinth of professional practice may be characterised by fragmentation and discord... This draws attention to the moral criticisms of the neoliberal approach to education. Coffield (2006) argues for a return to the Platonic notion of 'philosopher kings' who make policies based on expertise. The moral objection to neoliberalism within education rests in a series of policies that are based on economy and heavy-handed managerialism. Such approaches are less likely to 'draw individuals out of themselves to look at the world in a different way.'³⁵

Furthermore, the mounting neglect of the arts and humanities, and greater funding of the sciences and economics, is a growing trend in tertiary institutions in the West. The recent Australian government initiative to provide financial incentives for students studying science and economics subjects, which excludes the arts and humanities, is an example of this.³⁶

³³ Brendan James Murray, *The School: The Ups and Downs of One Year in The Classroom* (Sydney: Picador, 2021).

³⁴ Ewan Ingleby, "Teaching Policy and Practice: Early Years, Neoliberalism and Communities of Practice," *Contemporary Social Science* 8, no. 2 (2013): 120-129, doi:10.1080/21582041.2012.751505.

³⁵ Ingleby, "Teaching Policy and Practice: Early Years, Neoliberalism and Communities of Practice," 127.

³⁶ Anisa Purbasari Horton, "Why Australia Is Doubling Fees for Arts Degrees," *BBC*, Jul. 28, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200728-why-australia-is-charging-more-to-study-history>.

A strong advocate of the arts and humanities, Martha Nussbaum, argues that their neglect is at our peril. She proposes that the arts and humanities positively impact the development of the person (especially that espoused by John Dewey), interpersonal relationships and the notions of democracy.³⁷ Nussbaum's critique of neoliberalist influences neglecting the arts and humanities, favouring more 'usefulness,' as in the sciences, has ramifications on how silence and contemplation can be recognised and harnessed within the classroom.

As argued throughout this thesis, for Caranfa, silence is experienced through the arts, which lead to self-transformation and the development of the 'whole person.' Nussbaum and Caranfa would view the neglect of the arts and humanities (which continues today) as detrimental to developing a holistic approach to education. Nussbaum writes:

...If we do not insist on the crucial importance of the humanities and the arts, they will drop away, because they do not make money. They only do what is much more precious than that, make a world that is worth living in, people who are able to see other human beings as full people, with thoughts and feelings of their own that deserve respect and empathy, and nations that are able to overcome fear and suspicion in favor of sympathetic and reasoned debate.³⁸

In addition, we can see the impact of economic rationalism in many Western countries over the past 30 years or so (especially in US and Australia) as leading overall to a greater division in society between rich and poor and greater inequities. Other researchers have also made these observations. Social researcher Hugh Mackay, for example, in his work *Reimagining Australia*, argues that we need to re-evaluate the current way decisions impact social, cultural, and individual life. He paints a challenging and provocative picture of Australian society. Mackay

³⁷ Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 128.

³⁸ Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 143,128.

highlights a growing gap between the rich and poor, an increase in people living on the poverty line, and upsurges in anxiety and depression, all impacting the social fabric of society.³⁹

In support of the above claims, a study (trends taken before the COVID outbreak) on poverty in Australia conducted by the University of NSW and Australian Council of Social Service found that 3.24 million people in Australia (13.6% of the population) live below the poverty line. This includes 774,000 children under the age of 15 years. This figure of poverty exceeds the number in OECD nations.⁴⁰ These are alarming statistics for a country that claims to be egalitarian, and they pose serious implications for our democracy. Furthermore, these figures call into question some of the educational aims which claim ‘equity and access’ for *all* Australians present within educational documents.⁴¹ You cannot expect a child living below the poverty line (with all its challenges) to adequately pay ‘attention’ to learning. This also poses challenges for the implementation of contemplative pedagogy.

It will be contended throughout the thesis that the presence of silence can only be adequately acknowledged and applied within a pedagogy that appreciates and explicitly endeavours to incorporate a ‘qualitative’ approach to education, contrary to the quantitative framework that serves the goals of neoliberalism.⁴² The quantitative approach will be defined as a focus on content, ‘facts’ and ‘visible outcomes’ within a utilitarian and economic framework. Equally,

³⁹Hugh Mackay, *Australia Reimagined: Towards A More Compassionate, Less Anxious Society*.

⁴⁰Peter Davidson, et al., “Poverty in Australia 2020 Part 1: Overview” (Sydney: University of New South Wales, Australian Council of Social Service, 2020), <https://apo.org.au/node/276246>.

⁴¹ For example, See *Council of Australian Governments Education Council*, "Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration," Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019, https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/final_-_alice_springs_declaration_-_17_february_2020_security_removed.pdf.

⁴²A quantitative approach is a general tendency within education that emphasises ‘more content’ rather than considering a ‘qualitative’ approach. My definition of qualitative is that the contemplative practices defined above, which I am arguing broadly speaking, are missing in education. One can see how mindfulness has attempted to meet this education gap by offering these contemplative practices within a secular framework. However, these also have their conceptual limitations. For further discussion on this issue, see Laoulach, “Silence, transcendence and therapy.”

I will argue throughout the thesis that silence essentially points to a *contemplative practice* focusing on the ‘qualitative’ aspect of teaching and learning. This approach focuses on skills such as pausing, stillness, listening and deep thinking. They are often not identified by educators as crucial for teaching and learning. These skills and dispositions are not easily measurable. They do not fit neatly into the aims of a neoliberal framework of education that is essentially aimed at showing ‘visible evidence’ for economics and profit.

Silence, as understood within a contemplative framework, however, can lead towards self-transformation, meeting existential needs, and the development of the whole person. Which, broadly speaking, appears to be incompatible with the aims of a neoliberal vision, that Picard describes as profit and utility.⁴³ As the literature review in Chapter 2 will demonstrate, evidence suggests that despite the positive benefits of silence and contemplation for learning, and while there are some movements and institutions that are embracing this methodology, broadly speaking, this remains on the margins within our classrooms. Chapter 2 will show that classrooms, overall, are not silent places, nor are they contemplative, and are more like what Picard would describe as ‘full of noise.’⁴⁴ This is no surprise, as generally speaking, it can be said that the classroom only reflects the values of the wider society and culture, and according to Picard, our modern society has ‘lost silence.’ He writes:

NOTHING HAS changed the nature of man so much as the loss of silence. The invention of printing, technics, compulsory education – nothing has altered man as this lack of relationship to silence, this fact that silence is no longer taken for granted, as something as natural as the sky above or the air we breathe.⁴⁵

⁴³ Perhaps profit and utility need not be seen as opposing to ‘spirituality’ or the life of the soul. As Aristotle points out, having enough wealth is an ingredient to a happy life. Nevertheless, the accumulation of wealth and power that sometimes goes with it has been discouraged as a sole goal in life by many, for example, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, and Pope Francis. These old questions raised by philosophers and theologians are not easily resolved. For more on this issue, see Rosemary Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers*, 284–291, 303–305.

⁴⁴ Picard, *The World of Silence*.

⁴⁵ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 221.

Moreover, as Picard alludes, technology has affected our engagement with silence. Anecdotal observations tell us that most educators have experienced a student with a laptop or phone that became distracted and off task. While technology in the classroom has enabled quicker access to information and an ability to engage in a range of activities, it has also led to further ‘inattentiveness’ within classrooms. The focus on technology in the classroom is generally not conducive to developing the skills and dispositions proposed in this thesis.

1.3 Methodology/limitations

It will be argued in the thesis that silence through contemplative practices provides positive implications for pedagogy within education. The research is predominately a theoretical paper with some practical implications, initially drawing on the works of Caranfa. It will be primarily drawn from theoretical literature and will include some empirical studies. This work forms part of discussions within the Philosophy of Education literature.

This research will focus primarily on the contemplative practices that emerge from silence, which, as mentioned, I will term a *qualitative* approach. These contemplative practices include pausing, facilitating inquiry, introspective reflection, presence, deep listening, and solitude, which lead to self-knowledge and transformation. Caranfa’s work provides a theoretical framework that explains these practices. What emerges in his work is an *existential ontology* drawn from silence. This is explored predominately through Caranfa’s philosophical and theological literature (drawn chiefly from Socrates, Augustine, Picard, Weil, and Whitehead, among others).

Caranfa’s work is a *qualitative* approach that includes contemplative practices within the context of an awareness of what is commonly referred to within religious literature as the

unknown/mystery/transcendence. In teaching, this is best espoused by adopting the aesthetic–spiritual model (Weil and Whitehead) and humility within teaching practice. It also points to the somewhat harmful effects of technology on the practice of silence and teaching and learning (Picard).

In surveying the literature on silence (in Chapter 2) and drawing out the distinctiveness of Caranfa’s use of silence, I will show how his conceptual and theoretical approach provides positive implications for (secondary and tertiary) education. However, also critiqued are some of the limitations of Caranfa’s model. This will be mainly in terms of its practical implications and applicability for education today, particularly in terms of relevance to high school and tertiary institutions (mainly in Chapter 6) and also his interpretation of some philosophers.

Caranfa’s work will be extended in a model that includes the *conceptual, ethical, and experiential*. This can provide further resources for educators who are interested in contemplative pedagogy. Postulated will be an outline of what a contemplative classroom might look like. The conceptual will examine how we might teach towards epistemic humility (Chapter 7). In Chapter 8, an ethical approach based on Weil’s notion of attention is developed. Chapter 8 will discuss the practical dimensions of contemplation.

It will be argued in the thesis that contemplative pedagogy provides an *effective theoretical and conceptual framework for pedagogical practices adopting a qualitative approach*. The research focuses on how introducing the notion of silence, rather than indicating ‘absence’, has meaning and significance concerning personal transformation, knowledge, and possibly professional practice within a contemplative classroom framework. This qualitative dimension, through silence and contemplation, will be the distinctive contribution of the thesis toward the ongoing discussions of best practice. A framework that is particularly relevant given the

dominant and unquestioning inclusion of technology and increasing neoliberal agendas, which focuses primarily on short-term *quantitative* outcomes.

As noted, this thesis is a theoretical exploration of silence and contemplation that identifies some of the positive benefits of deep thinking and holistic learning. Therefore, this work is relevant to Australian education (secondary and tertiary context) and has international significance.

Limitations

Some limitations are inherent within the complex nature of the topic itself. The exploration of silence cannot necessarily be adequately understood through modern empiricism, logic, or language, yet it has intrigued and engaged artists, theologians, and philosophers for centuries. Another limitation of this research is the focus on Western and Christian thinkers. The vast literature on silence, especially from Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, and Islamic traditions, is omitted. The nature of the study, therefore, may not speak to the agnostic or atheist reader. Some implications of a contemplative approach to education may speak to a broad audience. For example, engaging in silence, pausing, slow reading, and deep reflection can help reduce stress and wellbeing. However, some of the focus on Christian theology through the works of Caranfa, Picard, and Weil (and others) may alienate the non-Christian reader, educator, or student.

The theoretical emphasis in this work could be seen as a weakness by many researchers who see empirical frameworks as the only viable context of good research.⁴⁶ It could therefore be deemed redundant, providing no utilitarian or pragmatic purpose. Another limitation could be

⁴⁶ These researchers can sometimes forget the importance of sound conceptual and theoretical frameworks for good research.

its practical applications within the classroom. Could silence be considered a legitimate presence in a climate where outcomes and utilitarian approaches to teaching and learning dominate education in most Western nations (with overcrowded curriculums)? Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 6, one may ask, are young people at the appropriate cognitive and emotional stage of life to engage fully in the level of spiritual and aesthetic experience proposed by Caranfa?⁴⁷ These are complex and challenging issues that are not easily resolved.

1.4 *Why is silence important for Caranfa?*

Caranfa's views on silence are essential for learning. Caranfa's work is based on the claim that silence is the very foundation of learning.⁴⁸ He argues that we need to allow silence within our pedagogical practices for our discourse to facilitate self-knowledge and deeper learning. Caranfa, like many philosophers before him (for example, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Dewey), advocates an education system based on the mental, moral, and spiritual development of the person. Caranfa combines the ideas of philosophers such as Socrates (Socratic method), Augustine, and the spiritual and poetic writings of Picard and Weil. They advocate for the use of silence (connected to listening) as the basis of all learning.

Caranfa argues that the aim of education should be to reconnect *dialectics with silence*.⁴⁹ Silence is crucial as it allows self-knowledge by integrating the *emotional, spiritual, and rational* dimensions of self.⁵⁰ This integration permits learning to become meaningful and

⁴⁷ There does not seem to be a consensus on the developmental stages best appropriate for the spiritual and religious experience, if they indeed occur at all. From anecdotal observations, we can see that people at the later stages of life tend to be more engaged in religious and spiritual activities than younger people or adolescents. These complex issues will be explored further in Chapter 6.

⁴⁸ See Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning"; Angelo Caranfa, "Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 37, no. 2 (2003):99–113. Doi:10.2307/3527458; Angelo Caranfa "Socrates, Augustine, and Paul Gauguin on The Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no. 4 (2013): 577-604, doi:10.1111/1467-9752.12042.

⁴⁹ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning."

⁵⁰ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning."

engaging rather than abstract and remote. The silence emerges because of questioning and discussion (employing the Socratic method); this reflection with silence is acknowledged as a *distinct type of discourse*.⁵¹ Silence and dialectic inquiry become a synthesis in exploring students' subjective meanings, ideas, thoughts, and feelings.⁵² The *arts and aesthetic* experience are central components in his work.

Caranfa's work provides a *synthesis* between philosophy and theology to discuss the nature and complexity of silence. His distinctive contributions are evident in the way he draws on and weaves together these domains, resulting in an understanding of silence that is multifaceted, complex, and relevant to the modern day. Caranfa places silence into a contemporary understanding of discourse and claims that silence is distinct and essential discourse. Caranfa points out that thinking alone is limited in education, and what is missing is the feeling which can be evoked through art and silence. Caranfa proposes a model of education which combines the critical method with the silences evoked through the aesthetics and art to promote the contemplative and feeling dimensions within a classroom. He writes:

...A theory of education that is based on silence and that captures or fosters the students' creative potential: students see learning primarily as a silent activity and embedded their feelings and thoughts in it...open their hearts and minds of students enabling them to catch a glimpse of their hidden or unknown self...⁵³

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the aims and objectives of the thesis. It will support the claim that silence and contemplation are an essential part of holistic education and contemplative

⁵¹ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning."

⁵² For example, see: Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning"; Caranfa, "Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe"; Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine, And Paul Gauguin on The Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education."

⁵³ Caranfa, "Silence as the foundation of learning," 230.

pedagogy. What this work offers is an alternative pedagogy for teaching and learning based on the inclusion of silence and contemplation.

The limitations of neoliberal educational influences were examined, concerning how they may compromise some of the aims and values of contemplative education. This thesis will draw initially on the works of Caranfa and his influences to show how contemplative education can be a positive and holistic approach to education. It will also highlight what is missing in Caranfa's model and develop an outline of what a contemplative classroom might look like. These include conceptual, ethical, and experiential dimensions of contemplation.

Additionally, the methodology in this research is predominately a theoretical discussion on silence and contemplation. This theoretical exploration will involve a practical dimension in its discussion of implications and importance to education, primarily relevant to high school and tertiary institutions. In an environment where outcomes and utilitarian approaches to teaching and learning dominate education in most Western nations (with overcrowded curriculums) silence may not be considered a legitimate presence or viable discourse.

To counteract some of the negative influences of the neoliberal agenda (with its emphasis on speed, efficiency, profit and outcomes of evidence-based learning) the contemplative approach will endeavour to introduce the notion of a *qualitative* approach to teaching and learning. This qualitative approach points to the practices of pausing, presence, solitude, attention, stillness and feeling which emerge from silence. A silence that also facilitates inquiry, introspective reflection, deep listening, and humility, which will be argued are imperative to quality education. These dispositions can also be supported by the inclusion of the arts and humanities.

This qualitative dimension through silence will be the distinctive contribution of the thesis toward the ongoing discussions of best practice. A framework that is particularly relevant,

given the dominant and unquestioning inclusion of technology and increasing neoliberal agendas that broadly focus on short-term quantitative outcomes. These are often at the expense of the qualitative dimensions mentioned above. Silence, as understood within a contemplative approach to teaching and learning, can lead to self-transformation, meeting existential needs, and the development of the whole person.

The next chapter will discuss the literature on silence and contemplation. There is evidence to show, broadly speaking, how silence and contemplation have led to positive learning outcomes by reducing stress and regulating emotions. These research areas have varied their focus from silence to meditation, mindfulness, aesthetics, and contemplation.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The level of mindlessness, and lack of ‘attentiveness’ in modern society, has been noted by many researchers. These include Ellen Langer, Carl Newport, Rick Hanson, Tara Brach, and Mark Williams (among many others).¹ Ellen Langer spent many years observing people in terms of their levels of ‘attentiveness’ or ‘mindfulness.’ She suggests that many people live in a state of ‘mindlessness.’² Hence these observations would support the need for a contemplative approach to education. They also support the contemplative curriculum proposed in this thesis, which aim toward a holistic education approach.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the thesis’s aims and objectives, which will focus on supporting the claim that silence and contemplation are essential parts of holistic education. In this chapter, I will examine evidence suggesting that contemplative practices such as mindfulness, silence, and stillness improve wellbeing and learning within the classroom. I will explore the literature (primarily empirical) on silence and contemplation in the classroom, which has shown positive learning outcomes in reducing stress and regulating emotions. Researchers in this area have varied their focus from silence to meditation, mindfulness, aesthetics, and contemplation. Most researchers on silence and contemplation have concluded that more research was needed. My findings within the literature confirm this. I will also discuss some of the limitations of the empirical approach in understanding silence and how Caranfa’s work fills this gap.

The literature on silence and contemplation is vast: ranging from the arts, to philosophy, theology, and science. The concept of silence is examined in the works of Paul Ricœur, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Raimon Panikkar, Thomas Merton, Henry David Thoreau, Sara Maitland, Colum

¹ Ellen J. Langer, *Mindfulness* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub, 1989); Mark Williams and Daniel Penman, *Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World* (London: Piatkus, 2011); Cal Newport, “Is Email Making Professors Stupid? It Used to Simplify Crucial Tasks. Now It’s Strangling Scholars’ Ability to Think,” *The Chronicle of higher education* 65, no. 25 (2019): B6–; Cal Newport, “When Technology Goes Awry,” *Communications of the ACM* 63, no. 5 (2020): 49–52. Tara Brach, *Radical acceptance* (New York: Bantam Books, 2003); Rick Hanson, “The Mind, the Brain, and God,” *Enrahonar* 47 (2011): 213–. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/enrahonar/v47n0.173>.

² See Ellen J. Langer, *Mindfulness* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub, 1989); Emily A. P. Haigh et al., “Examination of The Factor Structure and Concurrent Validity of The Langer Mindfulness/Mindlessness Scale,” *Assessment* 18, no. 1 (2010): 11-26, doi:10.1177/1073191110386342.

Kenny, John Cage, Thich Nhat Hanh, Shindo Endo, Susan Sontag, Susan Cain, and David Malouf (among many others).³ Mindfulness has an explicit presence within the educational practices of Montessori and Steiner schools.

Silence has a long trajectory of presence within the literature and practice of religious traditions. Silence, for example, emerges in the rules of the Quaker community. Diarmaid MacCulloch's work explores the contemplative development of silence within the Christian tradition through significant figures such as Julian of Norwich, St John of the Cross, Augustine, Ignatius, Teresa of Avila, Eckhart, Cassian, and Merton.⁴ Bernard Dauenhauer's extensive philosophical work explores an intentional analysis of silence, focusing predominately on the ontological justification for silence.⁵

What is contemplative education?

The term 'contemplation' can be understood in its broad sense to refer to a disposition of slow attentiveness, reflection, and mode of being. Etymologically, 'contemplate' derives from the Latin *contemplari*, meaning "to gaze attentively."⁶ Contemplation is known within both a religious and secular context. The literature on 'contemplative education' has varied from

³Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Humanities Press, 1961); Paul Ricœur, *Oneself As Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021); Paul Ricœur, *A Hermeneutics Of Contemplative Silence*, trans. Michele K. Petersen (Lexington Books, 2021); Raimon Panikkar and Robert R. Barr, *The Silence Of God* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1989); Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, trans. Walter Harding (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995); Thomas Merton, *Echoing Silence*, trans. Robert Inchausti (Boston: New Seeds, 2007); Colum Kenny, *The Power of Silence* (London: Karnac, 2011); John Cage, *Silence* (Hanover NH: Wesleyan University Press 1973); Sara Maitland, *A Book of Silence* (London: Granta Books, 2008); Susan Sontag, *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969); David Malouf, *An Imaginary Life* (US, George Braziller, 1978); Susan Cain, *Quiet: the Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2013); Ramon Panikkar, *The Silence of God* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Silence* (UK: Random House, 2015); Endō Shūsaku, *Silence* (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1979); Other works include: Diego Irarrázaval et al., *Silence* (London: SCM Press, 2015); Dennis Kurzon, *Discourse of Silence* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1998); Salomé Voegelín, *Listening to Noise and Silence Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2010).

⁴ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Silence: A Christian History* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

⁵ Bernard P. Dauenhauer, *Silence, The Phenomenon And Its Ontological Significance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

⁶ "Contemplation | Search Online Etymology Dictionary," 2021. *Etymonline.Com*. Accessed September 18. <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=Contemplation>

focusing on aesthetics and the arts to meditation, yoga, mindfulness, slow reading, and silence within the classroom. It is not in the scope here to cover all these works in depth. However, I will focus mainly on silence within education, as this is the area Caranfa explores, touching on aesthetics education and pointing out some distinctions in Caranfa's approach. I have categorised the literature under various headings (keeping in mind that some issues and content overlap). These include:

2.1 Contemplative education in the broader sense:

- I. Mindfulness
- II. Meditation
- III. Aesthetic education

2.2 Literature review on silence in the classroom as part of the broader topic of contemplative education

- I. Silence in the classroom. Empirical data on silence in the classroom.
- II. Silence as participation
- III. Silence and culture
- IV. Silence embedded within core subjects
- V. Critique of the empirical approach: focus on Helen Lees' work

2.1 Contemplative education in the broader sense

I. Mindfulness

In recent years, we have seen research on mindfulness's positive effects on health, wellbeing, and learning.⁷ It is now taught in some schools in the West to enhance concentration and reduce stress. Mindfulness programs include Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). This approach involves the

⁷ For example, see: What Mindfulness? et al., "Mindfulness In Schools – For The Flourishing Of Young Minds"; Kimberley Holmes, "Neuroscience, Mindfulness and Holistic Wellness Reflections on Interconnectivity in Teaching and Learning", *Interchange* 50, no. 3 (2019): 445-460, doi:10.1007/s10780-019-09360-6; Kimberley Holmes, "Mindfulness as a Practice of Professional Life," *Journal of Educational Thought* 50, no. 1 (2017): 21-42; Jennings, P. A. *Mindfulness for teachers: Simple skills for peace and productivity in the classroom*. (New York, NY: Norton Series on the Social Neuroscience of Education, 2015); Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Meditation Is Not for the Faint-Hearted," *Mindfulness* 5, no. 3 (2014): 341-44. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-014-0307-1>.

practice of meditation, including breathing exercises and practising mindfulness in everyday life. Essentially, this is the practice of cultivating awareness of thoughts and emotions. The skills taught aim to develop an *awareness* of bodily sensations, breath, thought processes, and emotions. Hence one can identify *the silence as emerging from within this process*. Research has found that mindfulness practice has an impact on psychological symptoms, such in treating depression.⁸

Mindfulness promotes metacognitive awareness, decreases rumination via disengagement from perseverative cognitive activities, and enhances attentional capacities through gains in working memory; these cognitive gains, in turn, contribute to effective emotion regulation strategies.⁹

Elizabeth Dorman conducted a three-year longitudinal action research study on 149 pre-service teachers in the US, exploring the impact of mindfulness practice within the classroom.¹⁰ Her findings were that mindful practices such as silence and centering positively impacted participants. She found that while many students had not practised this approach and initially resisted the practice of silence and stillness, they began to settle into it and experience its positive benefits in stress reduction, greater focus, and calm.¹¹ As she explains:

Recent research suggests that building teachers' social-emotional competence, including mindfulness training, can improve teachers' overall effectiveness and

⁸ Crane and Willem's work in the UK demonstrated that Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) was effective in treating depression. Rebecca S. Crane and Willem Kuyken, "The Implementation of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: Learning from The UK Health Service Experience," *Mindfulness* 4, no. 3 (2012): 246-254. Doi :10.1007/s12671-012-0121-6.

⁹ Daphne M. Davis and Jeffrey A. Hayes, "What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness? A Practice Review of Psychotherapy-Related Research," *Psychotherapy* 48, no. 2 (2011), 200.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Dorman, "Building teachers' social-emotional competence through mindfulness practices." *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue* 17, no. 1-2 (2015), 6.

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A437059664/AONE?u=slnsw_public&sid=AONE&xid=d38a6df5.

¹¹ One student said the following about the practice of silence and mindfulness, "At first, I struggled with the silence and centering because I am one of those people who likes to always be doing something ... I also thought that it was kind of a strange thing for a teacher to have her class do. I had never had a teacher do something like this in class before, and I wasn't quite sure how to react to it. However, after a few weeks of doing it, I learned to really appreciate the fact that there was some time during my day where it was perfectly acceptable for me to just relax and not have to be doing anything." Dorman, "Building teachers' social-emotional competence through mindfulness practices," 6.

wellbeing, help equip them with the tools needed to respond to the unique stressors of the teaching profession, and potentially reduce burnout and attrition.¹²

Dorman refers to what is termed the “Engaged Teaching” framework aimed to assist teachers in understanding the significance of encouraging an “open heart, engaging the self-observer, being present, establishing respectful boundaries, and developing emotional capacity.”¹³ She claims that mindfulness practice helps achieve the goals of the Engaged Teaching framework in developing a holistic approach to learning. It can do this by addressing the mind, heart and what she describes as “inner and outer” life.¹⁴ Dorman defends the benefits of mindfulness as a practice that enables her to settle into the silence and become aware of distractions in her mind. Her awareness of the distractions allows her to let them go. As illustrated below, this process leads to a greater understanding of students’ needs that “cultivates a culture of a caring learning environment.”¹⁵ *This research would suggest that becoming aware of one’s interiority and distractions through the practice of silence and mindfulness can facilitate a more attentive response in attending to student needs.* It also may point to the observation that, generally, more is accomplished if we are more attentive to the task at hand; this claim is suggested by much of the research mentioned. Dorman describes this point in the following ways:

As a teacher educator, I greatly look forward to beginning each class session with a time for all of us – teacher and students alike – to centre ourselves and prepare our minds, hearts, and bodies for the learning experiences at hand. It is a way for me as an instructor to shed any stress or distractions, be mindfully focused on my students’ needs, and cultivate a caring learning environment characterized by self-awareness.¹⁶

¹² Dorman, “Building teachers' social-emotional competence through mindfulness practices,” 1.

¹³ Dorman, “Building teachers' social-emotional competence through mindfulness practices,” 3.

¹⁴ Dorman, “Building teachers' social-emotional competence through mindfulness practices,” 3.

¹⁵ Dorman, “Building teachers' social-emotional competence through mindfulness practices,” 10.

¹⁶ Dorman, “Building teachers' social-emotional competence through mindfulness practices,” 10.

II. Meditation

Lea Waters and Barsky Adam et al., examined 15 peer-reviewed studies related to school meditation programs (in various forms) which attempted to show outcomes about wellbeing, social skills and academic accomplishments of students in Australian schools.¹⁷ The number of participants analysed was approx. 1,700 students, with results showing that more than half showed positive changes due to the meditations.¹⁸ They established that meditations allow for greater student functioning and emotional regulation.¹⁹ The findings also showed that Transcendental meditation had a higher positive effect than other types of meditation, such as mindfulness.²⁰ However, this was not conclusive and may be attributed to other factors such as the delivery and setting of the program.

Contemplative education challenges and supports students in ways that greatly expand on traditional academic approaches. This innovative form of education equips students with perspectives and techniques useful in connecting the mind and heart.²¹

Waters and Adam et al., include a broad definition of contemplation; referring to Grossenbacher and Parkin, they define contemplation as connecting mind and heart, which alludes to the holistic goals of contemplative education.²² As we shall see in the thesis, this is the approach Caranfa takes. However, the research of Waters and Adam et al., has some limitations. Despite being able to show the positive benefits of meditation (drawing on a large

¹⁷ Lea Waters et al., "Contemplative Education: A Systematic, Evidence-Based Review of The Effect of Meditation Interventions in Schools", *Educational Psychology Review* 27, no. 1 (2014): 103-134, doi:10.1007/s10648-014-9258-2.

¹⁸ Waters et al., "Contemplative Education: A Systematic, Evidence-Based Review of The Effect of Meditation Interventions in Schools," 103.

¹⁹ Waters et al., "Contemplative Education: A Systematic, Evidence-Based Review of The Effect of Meditation Interventions in Schools," 103.

²⁰ Waters et al., "Contemplative Education: A Systematic, Evidence-Based Review of The Effect of Meditation Interventions in Schools," 103.

²¹ Waters et al., "Contemplative Education: A Systematic, Evidence-Based Review of The Effect of Meditation Interventions in Schools," 1.

²² Peter G. Grossenbacher and Steven S. Parkin, "Joining Hearts and Minds: A Contemplative Approach to Holistic Education in Psychology," *Journal of College and Character* 7, no. 6 (2006), doi:10.2202/1940-1639.1203 in Lea Waters et al., "Contemplative Education: A Systematic, Evidence-Based Review of The Effect of Meditation Interventions in Schools," 104.

sample of students), their ‘measure of contemplation’ was solely focused on meditation, omitting other attributes of contemplation, such as silence, pausing, attentive listening and deep thinking (which are included in Caranfa’s approach).

In some of the literature discussed earlier, mindfulness has been attributed to behavioural changes, such as acts of compassion and empathy.²³ The implications of these studies have raised some interesting contentions within the literature, that are not easily resolved and not within the scope of this chapter to explore. However, despite its proven success, mindfulness approaches silence from an empirical framework and mostly refrains from any epistemological discussions concerning the *nature* of silence. Furthermore, this approach does not explicitly engage in religious or philosophical discussions on silence or contemplation.²⁴

III. Aesthetics Education

Many scholars have put forward the importance of aesthetic education for holistic learning.²⁵ This includes the works of Caranfa, drawing on Weil, Whitehead and Plato, who become part of his contemplative classroom. It is not in the scope here to explore this vast body of literature in depth but to point out some studies that testify to its importance for teaching and learning and briefly highlight Caranfa’s distinct approach.

²³ Waters et al., “Contemplative Education: A Systematic, Evidence-Based Review of The Effect of Meditation Interventions in Schools”, 1; See also: Martin Lamothe, et al., “Developing Professional Caregivers’ Empathy and Emotional Competencies through Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR): Results of Two Proof-of-concept Studies,” *BMJ Open* 8, no. 1 (2018): E01842; Sue Dean et al., “The Effects of a Structured Mindfulness Program on the Development of Empathy in Healthcare Students.” *NursingPlus Open* 3, no. C (2017): 1–5.

²⁴ For more on this issue see: Rosemary Laoulach, “Silence, transcendence and therapy,” *Thresholds, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Summer edition: 2015, 13-16.

²⁵ For example, see: Spy Dénommé-Welch and Jennifer Rowsell, “Epistemologies of Silence.” *Brock Education* 27, no. 1 (2017): 10; Phillip Montague, “Learning Aesthetic Concepts and Justifying Aesthetic Judgments” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13, no. 1 (1979): 45. doi:10.2307/3332088; Jinyuan Xu, “Aesthetic Education: Toward A Possible Aesthetic Life,” *Knowledge Cultures* 7, no. 1 (2019): 7-13; Karin Priem, and Christine Mayer, “Learning How to See and Feel,” *Paedagogica Historica* 53, no. 3 (2017): 199-213; Katia Lenehan, “The Human Being as a Unity in Aesthetic Perception and Its Possible Meaning for Aesthetic Education in the Global Age,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 49, no. 4 (2015): 55–70.

It is important to note that some of the literature has focused on teaching aesthetics which, for the most part, has included the teaching of literature, music, and fine arts. Teaching aesthetically has pointed to an attempt to include a form of aesthetic appreciation (e.g., enhanced by eliciting awareness of the senses, emotions, imagination, and silence) within the teaching and learning pedagogy. These distinctions are not always made clear within the literature and overlap. Moreover, it is essential to highlight that, unlike Caranfa, most researchers do not frame aesthetic education as part of the ‘contemplative process’ within the classroom.

A large body of literature on the philosophy of music points to the significance of music for education.²⁶ Deborah L. Pierce is an educator who promotes the importance of music for holistic learning.²⁷ Her studies explore how music appreciation can be enhanced in the classroom through a reflective and inquiry approach to teaching and learning.²⁸ Pierce found that when students were asked productively and purposefully *how* and *why* music was significant personally and present in society, they could provide profound and positive responses.²⁹

...An important criterion of artistic merit may often be, to put it roughly, the extent to which a work gives an original and perceptive vision of nature, of contemporary society, or of some other aspect of the human condition. That is, such a fresh, imaginative, incisive vision of an aspect of life may be one of the central criteria of artistic merit. And that is to say that, through the arts, it is very often possible to

²⁶For example, see: Alexandra Kertz-Welzel, “Lessons from Elsewhere? Comparative Music Education in Times of Globalization.” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 23, no. 1 (2015): 48–66; Laura A. Stambaugh, and Brian E. Dyson. “A Comparative Content Analysis of Music Educators Journal and Philosophy of Music Education Review (1993-2012).” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 64, no. 2 (2016): 238-54. It is important to note the significance of John Cage’s work on silence and music for example see, John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press); Kahn, D. “John Cage: Silence and Silencing,” *The Musical Quarterly* 81, 1997: 556–598. doi:10.1093/mq/81.4.556.

²⁷ Deborah Pierce, “Redefining Music Appreciation: Exploring the Power of Music”, *The College Music Symposium* 55 (2015), doi:10.18177/sym.2015.55.sr.10871. Plato and Weil of course understood the importance of music for the soul as I shall explore in Chapter 4, See, Angelo Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence,” *Logos* 18, no. 2 (2015): 150-174. Doi :10.1353/log.2015.0012.

²⁸ Pierce, “Redefining Music Appreciation: Exploring the Power of Music.”

²⁹ Pierce, “Redefining Music Appreciation: Exploring the Power of Music.”

encourage a fresh, imaginative and incisive vision of and attitude to life itself. There could hardly be a more important aim in education.³⁰

As outlined above, David Best proposes that the importance of the arts is to give expression to a unique and original perspective to some aspect of the human condition.³¹ He argues that this contribution from the arts makes it invaluable and of great benefit for education.³² Similarly, Maxine Greene describes the importance of literature to education, and, for similar reasons to Best, argues that the teaching of literature should be seen as part of aesthetic education.³³ Literature (and other art forms) can evoke our imagination, emotions and creativity. Ralph A. Smith and Christiana M. Smith, similarly, propose that aesthetic education allows for a richer experience of life and ultimately leads towards transformation, describing it in the following way:³⁴

...Aesthetic education offers alternative examples of better, richer, more worthwhile forms of experience, in the hope that persons will come genuinely to prefer what they have come to know as being better...The tendencies that pseudo-art merely confirms, real art trains and transforms.³⁵

³⁰David Best, "The Dangers Of 'Aesthetic Education,'" *Oxford Review of Education* 10, no. 2 (1984):159–167, doi:10.1080/0305498840100205.

³¹ David Best, "The Dangers Of 'Aesthetic Education.'"

³² Best distinguishes between the aesthetic experience, and the arts, which he argues are not always connected. For example, the aesthetic experience can be evoked while admiring a beautiful sunset. In contrast, a work of art may not necessarily elicit the same appreciation of beauty, which is part of the aesthetic response.

³³Maxine Greene, "Literature in Aesthetic Education," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 10, no. 34 (1976): 61, doi:10.2307/3332062.

³⁴ Ralph A. Smith and Christiana M. Smith, "Justifying Aesthetic Education," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 4, no. 2 (1970): 37, doi:10.2307/3331546. As a counter argument to what has been posited, Marla Morris while identified some of these points raised by scholars who advocate for the teaching of aesthetics within the classroom however, he also pinpoints the *dark side of aesthetic experience* which is not mentioned within aesthetic education. Morris explores the artistic expression is not only concerned with beauty, but also pain, depression, negative experiences, and emotions. He highlights that a lot of artists were not happy people, and their work came from the dark side of human experiences. He states, "I suggest that we must be careful not to turn something awful into something good. What is awful is awful. We may choose to make art out of the awful – and that art might be beautiful – but still the experience remains awful. Creation and destruction, as Michael Eigen (2005) points out occur throughout our lives as he says, "There are creative as well as destructive storms" ...These storms to which Eigen refers are what he calls "emotional storms," as the title of his book suggests. The question is, do most people experience emotion as a storm? Some people do and some do not. People who lack affect hardly ever experience life in highly dramatic ways. See Marla Morris, "Aesthetic Curriculum Concepts." *Counterpoints* 499 (2016),16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45157332>.

³⁵ Smith and Smith, "Justifying Aesthetic Education," 51.

Erick Anderson explores the concept of silence as part of an “aesthetic appreciation, assessment and appraisal.”³⁶ He argues that an aesthetic theory of silence should move beyond the traditional art-centred approach towards a broader concept that recognises the multifaceted ways silence can be experienced not only in art, but also in the environment and everyday lives.³⁷ Anderson maintains that to appreciate silence we need to cultivate the practice of discipline, in order to develop a sensitivity to silence.³⁸ While Anderson doesn’t explicitly use the term ‘contemplative,’ his claims, however, echo some of the contemplative writers on silence (e.g., Weil) who claim that to appreciate silence, one has to develop stillness and ‘empty’ the mind. What Anderson observes is that silence can be identified in the ordinary experiences of everyday if we have the ‘attentiveness’ and awareness of mind to notice. Anderson distinguishes silence as emerging in the everyday, in “quiet, stillness and partial silence.”³⁹

What Anderson advocates is that we need to learn how to notice the silence amongst the noise, what he terms as the “borders of silence.”⁴⁰ Drawing from the works of John Cage, Anderson proposes that paradoxically, even noise, for example traffic, can be a form of silence.⁴¹ Furthermore, he claims if a plane flies overhead we hear its noise, then there is silence, a silence which is heard on ‘the borders’ so to speak.⁴² Anderson draws us into what he describes as the “ebb and flow” of silence in the everyday, as it appears, and disappears.⁴³ His illustrations of

³⁶ Anderson, “In a silent way,” 3.

³⁷ Anderson, “In a silent way,” 8.

³⁸ Anderson, “In a silent way,” 2.

³⁹ Anderson, “In a silent way,” 2.

⁴⁰ Anderson, “In a silent way,” 2.

⁴¹ Anderson, “In a silent way,” 2.

⁴² Anderson, “In a silent way,” 6.

⁴³ Anderson, “In a silent way,” 6.

how silence is experienced lend themselves to an aesthetic appreciation that he claims has ontological implications. Anderson describes this experience of silence in the following ways:

So, rather than attending to sounds rendered appreciable, another thing we might do is attend to the borders of the silence which frame and articulate it ... We listen attentively to the silence as it comes and goes, enjoying it via the ebb and flow of its borders. A plane flies overhead, and then the silence returns. I can now hear the soft pecking and crackling of a downy woodpecker dislodging a piece of bark to reveal a delicious wormy treat beneath. Then an even deeper quiet drops in and stays for a bit, only to be broken eventually by a family of jays moving in, bobbing up and down, squawking, whispering, whistling, croaking, rattling. And then as these avian borders move on, the silence returns. This opens a space for the rustle of the birch leaves in the intermittent wind. All of that attention to the borders of the silence takes a lot of cognitive work. Was that rushing water or howling wind? A downy or a hairy woodpecker? Thunder or plane? To address such questions properly, I might need the help of an acoustics expert...or some other specialist. This is instructive, for it points to yet another way to appreciate the silence, one which any non-specialists can do: attending to the silence in a silent way. This involves resting the mind, freeing it from the grasping, interpreting, and categorizing which characterize its normal practical activity. Attending to the silence in a silent way is what is required in order to, as Cage recommends, appreciate the traffic as silence. For Cage, silence is not the total absence of sound, but rather, the absence of intentionally produced sounds...⁴⁴

Anderson's descriptions of how silence can be experienced in everyday life (above) echo the works of Bernard Dauenhauer. He systematically analyses silence, exploring its structure within speech and its ontological significance.⁴⁵ Dauenhauer explores two modes of how silence is linked to utterance, what he described as the "intervening and fore-after silence." He defines intervening silence as the presence or sequence of silence that "punctuates both the words and phrases of a spoken sentence and the string of sentences which fit together in discourse."⁴⁶ This can be seen, for example, in the pacing of literary works, such as word phrases, musical notes, gestures, painting or sculpted shapes, which belong to an utterance

⁴⁴ Anderson, "In a silent way," 6.

⁴⁵ Bernard P. Dauenhauer, *Silence, The Phenomenon And Its Ontological Significance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

⁴⁶ Dauenhauer, *Silence, The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, 6.

taken as a whole.⁴⁷ Intervening silence functions both “methodologically” and “rhythmically.”⁴⁸ Its methodical role, for example, involves an apparent closing-opening operation between sounds.⁴⁹ An intervening sound terminates one sound phrase and, in some way, clears the way for the next sound phrase.⁵⁰ The rhythmic role of silence, for example, in a musical work is important to the rhythm of the totality of the work.⁵¹ The duration of silence impacts the totality and unity of the sound phrases. Intervening silence A, for example, occurs between sound phrases A and B and has its own unique time structure. Each intervening silence, like each sound phrase, is temporarily complex.⁵² Dauenhauer’s descriptions of the structural way silence engages with speech reflect some of Anderson’s observations about how silence is experienced, stating, we “attend to the borders of the silence which frame and articulate it.”⁵³

There is a lack of current research promoting teachers’ understanding on the concept of aesthetics and the use of aesthetics as an agent of change to alter pre-service teachers’ early preconceptions of teaching. The research reported in this article, therefore, sought to explore how pre-service teachers interpret, apply and create different ways of teaching through aesthetics.⁵⁴

Jugathambal Ramdhani and Sarita Ramsaroop conducted a multimodal study that sought to explore the effects of aesthetic teaching in education for pre-service teachers in South Africa within a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. They observed how a

⁴⁷ Dauenhauer, Silence, *The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, 5. For further analysis of this, see pp 8–9. This type of silence is the basis of Mary B. Rowe’s work on ‘wait time’ discussed earlier in the literature review. See Mary B. Rowe, “Wait Time: Slowing Down May Be a Way of Speeding Up” *Journal of Teacher Education* 37, no. 1 (1986), 43–50.

⁴⁸ Dauenhauer, Silence, *The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, 6.

⁴⁹ Dauenhauer, Silence, *The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, 6.

⁵⁰ Dauenhauer defines “sound phrases” as “the components of any sort of utterance,” see Dauenhauer, Silence, *The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, 6.

⁵¹ Dauenhauer, Silence, *The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, 7.

⁵² Dauenhauer, Silence, *The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, 8.

⁵³ Anderson, “In a silent way,” 6.

⁵⁴ Jugathambal Ramdhani and Sarita Ramsaroop, “The Reawakening of Teaching Through Aesthetics in Education: Students’ Perspectives,” *Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 80, no. 2 (2015): 4, doi:10.19108/koers.80.2.2227.

multidisciplinary approach that included the aesthetic teaching method and framed within a constructivist model would work in a classroom.⁵⁵

They concluded that the aesthetic and constructivist approach results in positive experiences for student learning. However, there are some limitations to this study. Firstly, the sample size of students observed is not mentioned. Secondly, although Ramdhani and Ramsaroop acknowledge the lack of research in understanding aesthetic education and how to teach it, they do not address the issue in this article. Additionally, there is no definition of their own understanding of aesthetics or a discussion of its theoretical underpinnings and *how to* teach this approach other than the use of reflective questions and class discussions. It is no surprise that one of the conclusive findings in their observation was that teachers were at a loss in knowing ‘how to apply’ aesthetic strategies within the classroom; they write the following:

However, some pre-service teachers experienced difficulties applying aesthetic strategies such as group work in large classes. They acknowledged that they still needed to improve their content knowledge when managing class discussions.⁵⁶

While Mark Jackson also does not provide an outline of how to implement aesthetic education within the classroom, he does posit some theoretical accounts of the aesthetic process. Jackson proposes that our understanding of the aesthetic experience can be grounded in the transcendent, as Immanuel Kant discussed in his *Critique of Judgement and Aesthetic Judgement*, which have implications for education.⁵⁷ Jackson, drawing primarily on Denis J. Schmidt’s reading of Kant, explores Kant’s notions of reflective judgement about his concept of taste.⁵⁸ He examines Kant’s view of nature and human invention about art, and his

⁵⁵ Ramdhani and Ramsaroop, “The Reawakening of Teaching Through Aesthetics in Education: Students’ Perspectives,” 1.

⁵⁶ Ramdhani and Ramsaroop, “The Reawakening of Teaching Through Aesthetics in Education: Students’ Perspectives,” 5.

⁵⁷ Mark Jackson, “Knowledge, Education and Aesthetics,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49, no. 13 (2017), 1267–1276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2017.1350559>.

⁵⁸ Jackson, “Knowledge, Education and Aesthetics.”

understanding of preparation or training in aesthetic judgement, from the stances of both response and creation of artworks.⁵⁹ Although it is not in the scope here to explore these ideas in depth, I will highlight what is essential to this thesis, which is the understanding (taken from Kant) that while you may cultivate an appreciation of the aesthetic and develop students' skills in making art, ultimately you cannot 'teach' or direct the outcome or expression of an artwork.⁶⁰ Jackson concludes that the final presentation of an artwork (that moves beyond mere imitation and which is excellent art) essentially points to 'something other,' the transcendence, where the rules don't easily apply. In other words, that 'space' which leads to the expression of great art in the world is inconspicuous. Jackson described a process open to the imagination without rules and understood "within the silence of what is ineffable," he wrote:⁶¹

Yet, on all accounts, it is precisely the free-play of imagination in aesthetics ideas – as construal of such an impasse – that calls us to thinking, to a quickening of our cognitive faculties without any particular end, and to potential, within the silence of what is ineffable, to open us to expression itself – 'that admits of communication without any constraint of rules'.⁶²

The empirical research mentioned so far has pointed to the positive benefits of the arts and the aesthetics for holistic learning. However, as Jackson has indicated above, theoretical frameworks can inform our understanding of the aesthetic experience. It is essential to mention that many philosophers and scholars have viewed the importance of the arts and aesthetic experience in our understanding and relationship to the world and have provided theoretical frameworks in favour of the aesthetic. Plato, Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger, Susan Sontag, Azar Nafisi, Iris Murdoch, Martha Nussbaum, Caranfa and Simone Weil, for example, all

⁵⁹ Jackson, "Knowledge, Education and Aesthetics,"1268.

⁶⁰ Jackson, "Knowledge, Education and Aesthetics,"1274.

⁶¹ Jackson, "Knowledge, Education and Aesthetics,"1275.

⁶² Jackson, "Knowledge, Education and Aesthetics,"1275; See also: Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans, J. C. Meredith (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986), 180.

understood how the arts and aesthetic experience could enrich, and broaden our perspectives of the world, and in doing so, potentially lead to personal transformation.

Nussbaum is a strong proponent of the arts and humanities within education. She claimed these subjects were necessary to develop the whole person. The theme of art education found in Nussbaum's work (drawing on John Dewey and Tagore) states that in ignoring the arts and literature in education, we do so at the detriment to our humanity and democracy.⁶³ The arts allow cultivation of the imagination, independent thinking, and empathy which, she argues, are the pinnacles of a democracy. Azar Nafisi also develops this theme through her advocacy for the teaching of literature in education (particular within her own context of higher education). The importance of literature she argues (like Nussbaum) is that it allows the imaginative elements to emerge, which she claims forms part of the "life of the spirit within."⁶⁴ Hence for Nafisi, the need for literature is in preserving and 'developing this internal subjective inner life'. As we will see in the thesis, this theme is also echoed in Caranfa's writings; the difference, however, is that in his work (unlike Nafisi and Nussbaum) the subjective 'inner life' is explicated within the context of a transcendent reality connecting it to a religious dimension of experience.

I think good art is good for people precisely because it is not fantasy but imagination. It breaks the grip of our own dull fantasy life and stirs us to the effort of true vision. Most of the time we fail to see the big wide real world at all because we are blinded by obsession, anxiety, envy, resentment, fear. We make a small personal world in which we remain closed. Literature stirs and satisfies our curiosity, it interests us in other people and other scenes, and helps us be tolerant and generous. Art is informative and even mediocre art can tell us something, for instance about how other people live. But to say this is not to hold a utilitarian or didactic view of art. Art is larger than such narrow ideas. Plato at least saw how tremendously important art is and he raised interesting questions about it. Philosophers on the whole have not written very well

⁶³ Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Not for Profit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), xi.

⁶⁴ Azar Nafisi, *The Republic of Imagination* (London: William Heinemann, 2014), 11.

about art, partly because they have regarded it as a minor matter which must be fitted in with their general theory of metaphysics or morals.⁶⁵

As illustrated above, Murdoch upholds that good literature can engender us to connect with a reality greater than ourselves and counteract the small egoic preoccupation with the self. She explores in-depth the importance of the arts as a vehicle for understanding not only ourselves but other people. In her work *Existentialists and Mystics*, Murdoch extends the role of the arts to a connection to mystery and transcendence. Murdoch, influenced by Weil's works (and Plato's), likewise explores the notion of attention and detachment of the ego, which she asserts good art can teach us. This disposition of detachment is also helpful for a contemplative classroom as it can enhance students' ability to experience the suffering of others in a more empathetic manner. This concept has moral implications and will be explored further in Chapter 8.

We can surmise from these writers that good literature and the arts, more broadly speaking, can be tools that can facilitate openness to the interior life. Literature, for example, can connect us with our emotions, imagination, and values. This opening to the subjective experience serves contemplative education well. As Caranfa and Weil have noted (and as discussed further in Chapter 5) the aesthetic experience, which results from an encounter with art, can potentially facilitate an opening to mystery and God, and therefore support the process of contemplation. Literature can also meet education's aims, developing critical thinking skills, challenging assumptions, and encouraging a broader perspective on the world.

While all the literature and empirical research mentioned pointed to the positive benefits of the arts and aesthetics for holistic learning, most scholars discussed omit the presence of silence or

⁶⁵ Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics*, 14–15.

contemplation within this process.⁶⁶ As pointed out, what distinguishes Caranfa's work within the aesthetic literature is *his focus and integration of silence within the aesthetic experience, which he incorporates within his model of a contemplative classroom*. As I will show in this thesis, Caranfa draws on the works of Plato, Weil, and Whitehead in weaving silence into the aesthetic experience, which has implications for the classroom. That is, Caranfa explores silence experienced within the arts (e.g., sacred music), potentially leading toward personal transformation and an experience of ultimately connecting to the divine and the Christian God. This Christian context in which he understood silence is another distinctive feature of his work. As many researchers have found above, contemplative practices are a valuable tool in the classroom. Patricia Morgan, for example, advocates for the positive implementation of contemplation in education. She draws on interviews with sixty-five students and academics in contemplative educational courses at four universities (and yoga schools) in North America.⁶⁷ Morgan's inter-disciplinary approach draws on what she describes as, "Phenomenology and Yoga philosophy which were linked, as they are both 'experiential ontologies'...that affirm the 'domain of subjectively lived experience' and promote a meditation method that maintains neutrality towards belief systems."⁶⁸ There are some limitations in Morgan's exploration of concepts, such as in the claim above, that could be developed further (which is not in the scope here to examine). Nevertheless, Morgan provides some valuable data showing the positive effects of contemplation in learning, restoring

⁶⁶ However, it is essential to note that many writers, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (such as Iris Murdoch), show the importance of silence. While they all do not focus their understanding of silence within the classroom nor connect it to Christianity, they nevertheless see its significance. For example, throughout Murdoch's fictional work, *Under the Net*, we see many references to silence often portrayed positively for she writes, "...After the dignity of silence and absence the vulgarity of speech." Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net* (London: Vintage, 2006), 161.

⁶⁷ Patricia Fay Morgan, "Following Contemplative Education Students' Transformation Through Their "Ground-of-Being" Experiences," *Journal of Transformative Education* 10, no. 1 (2012), 42–60.

⁶⁸ Morgan, "Following Contemplative Education Students' Transformation Through Their "Ground-of-Being" Experiences," 45.

fragmented thinking, and decreasing stress and depression within the tertiary environment.⁶⁹

Morgan's contemplative practices are drawn mainly from the Eastern tradition, with practices such as yoga and meditation that she now applies to an Australian educational context, primarily children.⁷⁰

Patrick Comstock explores the range of contemplative practices within education, suggesting also that students gain positive benefits in attention, metacognition, stress levels and empathy.⁷¹

He argues that the empirical and theoretical evidence to support contemplative practices is enough reason for educators to take them seriously.⁷² However, what is important to note is that Comstock (like most of the researchers mentioned) proposed that more research is desirable in this area which has significant positive implications for teaching and learning; he writes:

The need for more empirical research on contemplative practices in educational contexts is obvious, both at the K-12 level and in higher education. Over the past few years especially, a number of studies have yielded positive results, but more large-scale investigations are needed to further support the use of contemplative practices as an educational tool. At the same time, given that there are often methodological problems with research on mindfulness and meditation, the studies should involve a robust qualitative component, such as interviews with teachers and students, which would

⁶⁹ Morgan, "Following Contemplative Education Students' Transformation Through Their "Ground-of-Being" Experiences."

⁷⁰ Morgan, "Following Contemplative Education Students' Transformation Through Their "Ground-of-Being" Experiences."; Patricia Morgan, "Contemplative Education", (*ABC*, 2012),

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/spiritofthings/contemplative--education/5662584>.

⁷¹ Patrick W. Comstock, "The Retrieval of Contemplation: Mindfulness, Meditation, and Education." (Columbia University, 2015), 142. <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/retrieval-contemplation-mindfulness-meditation/docview/1674244613/se-2?accountid=8194>; Daria Pizuto has explored contemplation within higher education in four universities in the US and found that it is increasingly viewed as a positive practice amongst educators to deal with students' emotional problems and overall stress. He defines contemplative pedagogy as any activities from yoga, meditation and other spiritual practices. See Daria Pizzuto, "Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Examining Faculty Perspectives," 2018.

⁷² Comstock, "The Retrieval of Contemplation: Mindfulness, Meditation, and Education." See also, Denis Larrivee and Luis Echarte, "Contemplative Meditation and Neuroscience: Prospects for Mental Health," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 3 (2018): 960–78, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0475-0>; Judith Simmer-Brown and Fran Grace, *Meditation and the Classroom: Contemplative Pedagogy for Religious Studies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011); Stephen P. Stratton, "Mindfulness and Contemplation: Secular and Religious Traditions in Western Context," *Counseling and Values* 60, no.1(2015):100–118, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-007X.2015.00063.x>; Marc Jonathan Mermis-Cava, "Relating with Silence: Christian Meditation and the Production of Roles, Relationships, and Culture," (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2007).

yield a better understanding of the subjective impact contemplative practices have on practitioners.⁷³

Patricia Owen-Smith is another advocate of contemplative education for holistic learning. Owen-Smith makes some practical suggestion on how we can teach holistically and towards wisdom. She understood a holistic approach as that which addresses the interior and exterior dimensions in learning. Owen-Smith proposes these are best addressed through the contemplative practices grounded in the introspective acts of silence, reflection, listening and mindfulness. Incidentally, this approach supports much of what will be proposed throughout this thesis.⁷⁴ She writes the following:

Contemplative educators call for an integral model of knowing that canvasses both interior and exterior epistemologies. They argue that first-person modes are not in conflict with the more traditional, third-person classroom approaches in many of our classrooms, but rather complement, enrich, and expand. They see such practices as silence, reflection, witnessing or beholding, listening, dialog, journaling, and self-inquiry as proto-typical and critical to the classroom. All are grounded in introspection, mindfulness, and self-reflection and serve as an important means for accessing the place of interiority ...⁷⁵

2.2 Literature review on silence in the classroom as part of the broader topic of contemplative education

1. Silence in the classroom.

There are many educators who have observed in their classrooms the positive influence of silence within the learning experience. Educator John Currie discusses the importance of silence for the classroom and also argues that our Western culture, which encourages ‘speech,’ often views the silent student as not participating or learning.⁷⁶ He draws on Mary Reda’s *Between Speaking and Silence: A Study of Quiet Students*, concurring that a “destructive view

⁷³ Comstock, “The Retrieval of Contemplation: Mindfulness, Meditation, and Education.”

⁷⁴ Patricia Owen-Smith, “Reclaiming Interiority as Place and Practice,” In *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Pedagogy and Place-Based Education*, 26. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50621-0_3

⁷⁵ Owen-Smith, “Reclaiming Interiority as Place and Practice,” 26.

⁷⁶ John Currie, “Silence in The Classroom: From Reacting to Rapport,” *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 29, no. 1 (2019): 89, doi:10.1353/tmf.2019.0005.

of students' silence is engrained in a cultural story which perceives redemption through the process of 'speaking' the truth."⁷⁷ Currie's intervention, in combating this perception of silence, was to create quiet classrooms through the task of writing.⁷⁸ Jamie Thom's article, "Silence can be Golden in the Classroom," as the title suggests, also discusses the importance of silence in the classroom for deep learning.⁷⁹ As an English teacher, she proposes that although silence is not seen as a 'dynamic' strategy in the classroom, such as in debating or other activity, it nevertheless is an important space in allowing students to develop concentration. Thom employs a variety of strategies to create a silent classroom such as pausing, 'wait time,' quiet reflection, and silent modelling.⁸⁰

Peter Kaufman's article, *Gaining Voice Through Silence*, perceives silence as a negative factor within education.⁸¹ Kaufman is a secondary education teacher who was in favour of a feminist pedagogy within the classroom. He claims that *silence inhibits dialogue*, learning and egalitarianism within the learning environment.⁸² Kaufman's article draws mostly on a sociological perspective of silence. The assumption here is that to be silent is equal to lacking power or expression. Rachael Kohn examines a detailed exploration on the importance of silence in relating to the divine and its redemptive qualities, and also touches on the shadow,

⁷⁷ Mary M. Reda, *Between Speaking and Silence a Study of Quiet Students* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009) quoted in Currie, "Silence in The Classroom: From Reacting to Rapport."

⁷⁸ Currie states the following, "I argue that writing can serve as an antidote to silence, and that class discussions work best in supporting the development of the primary dialogic form for which my students and I are gathered. I differentiate between quiet students and quiet classes and recommend building rapport so as to clear the way for motivation and learning to occur," quoted in John Currie, "Silence in The Classroom: From Reacting to Rapport,"⁸⁹.

⁷⁹ Jamie Thom, "Silence can be Golden in the Classroom," *The Times Educational Supplement* no. 5310 (Jul 27, 2018). <https://search.proquest.com/trade-journals/silence-can-be-golden-classroom/docview/2078658583/se-2?accountid=8194>.

⁸⁰ Thom, "Silence can be Golden in the Classroom," 1-3. Rita Casadei also explores anecdotally and theoretically some of the untapped power of silence within the classroom. However, Rita's lack of adequate definition of terms and argumentation results in a work that fails to be convincing. Rita Casadei, "Silence and Time: Veiled Energies in Education," *Studi Sulla Formazione* 22, no. 2 (2019):137-146. doi: <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.sl.nsw.gov.au/10.13128/ssf-10786>.

⁸¹ Peter Kaufman, "Gaining Voice Through Silence," *Feminist Teacher* 18, no. 2 (2008): 169–171.

⁸² Kaufman, "Gaining Voice Through Silence."

contradictions and limitations of silence.⁸³ Kohn gives clear examples of where silence is not only negative but has serious moral consequences. The silencing of sexual abuse victims, and women in domestic violence, for example, she points out have serious ethical implications.⁸⁴ It is important to note that while the sociological view of silence that Kaufman and Kohn explore is a feasible lens through which to examine this topic, this thesis explores a different aspect of silence.⁸⁵ In this thesis, silence is not understood as a sign of disempowerment, but rather a presence that is conducive to contemplation and inner reflection, and therefore a positive approach in the classroom.

There is a breadth and depth of literature on the contemplative approach of Montessori education.⁸⁶ Their focus is mostly aimed at primary and elementary education, which is not the target audience of this research. This thesis focuses on the high school and tertiary context. Nevertheless, there are some insights into this approach that are worth mentioning. Maria Montessori, like Caranfa and Weil (as I will show in the thesis), understood the importance of attention and silence within the process of learning.⁸⁷ In her work, *The Montessori Method*, Maria Montessori refers to the need to refrain and wait, or “suspend the lesson” if the student

⁸³ Rachael Kohn, “Reflections on Silence,” in *Sacred Silence in Literature and The Arts Conference* (Strathfield: Australian Catholic University, 2019).

⁸⁴ Kohn, “Reflections on Silence,” in *Sacred Silence in Literature and The Arts Conference*.

⁸⁵ There is much literature that explores silence in education shown from a sociological context. For example, Wayne Journell's “Politically conservative preservice teachers and the spiral of silence: implications for teacher education,” *Teacher Education Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2017): 105, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A492996029/AONE?u=slnsw_public&sid=AONE&xid=9ac89e16; Barbara Applebaum, “Listening Silence” and Its Discursive Effects,” *Educational Theory* 66, no. 3 (2016): 389-404; Brendan H O'Connor, and Ariana Figueroa Mangual, “A Time to Keep Silence and a Time to Speak,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2017): 411-19.

⁸⁶ For example, see: Benjamin Justice, “Bringing Montessori to America: S. S. McClure, Maria Montessori, And The Campaign To Publicize Montessori Education,” *Journal Of American History* 104, no. 2 (2017): 515–516, [doi:10.1093/jahist/jax237](https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jax237); Elisabeth Hiles, “Parents’ Reasons For Sending Their Child To Montessori Schools,” *Journal Of Montessori Research* 4, no. 1 (2018): 1–13, [doi:10.17161/jomr.v4i1.6714](https://doi.org/10.17161/jomr.v4i1.6714); Katarzyna Anna Stasiewicz, “The Montessori Method And Its Contemporary Contexts,” *Polish Studies Of Kyiv*, no. 35 (2019): 436-443, [doi:10.17721/psk.2019.35.436-443](https://doi.org/10.17721/psk.2019.35.436-443).

⁸⁷ Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method*, trans. Anne E. George (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1912), 360, 368, 377; See also: Angelo Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 44, no. 2 (2010): 63-82. [doi :10.1353/jae.0.0085](https://doi.org/10.1353/jae.0.0085).

did not understand what was being taught, and proceed with the lesson at another time. She writes, “the silence which follows the error leaves the field of consciousness clear, and the next lesson may successfully follow the first.”⁸⁸

Scholars have often interpreted Montessori’s work as advocating slow learning that accommodates to the needs of the student.⁸⁹ Many scholars have pointed out that this process is conducive to personalised learning and the development of creativity; and contributes to what we might call holistic learning. Cathleen Haskins, for example, explores the importance of silence for the development of student spirituality and creativity within Montessori.⁹⁰

Empirical data on silence in the classroom.

The researcher Mary Rowe began her extensive work in 1969 (and 1974, 1978, 1986, 1987) on what she termed ‘wait-time.’⁹¹ Rowe (and Tobin’s 1987) quantitative research found that the increased amount of time teachers *waited for a response* significantly enhanced student learning.⁹² Rowe (and Tobin 1987), found that the increased amount of time teachers waited

⁸⁸ Montessori, *The Montessori Method*, trans. Anne E. George (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1912), 226; See also: Caranfa, "The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil."

⁸⁹ Montessori, *The Montessori Method*, 226.

⁹⁰ Cathleen Haskins, “Exploring Spirituality through Writing Activities in the Elementary Classroom.” *Montessori Life* 21, no. 1 (2009): 28; See also, Derr, Colleen R. “The Spiritual Guidance of Children: Montessori, Godly Play, and the Future.” *Christian Education Journal* 12, no. 1 (2015), 189; David Lewin’s article, *Behold: Silence and Attention in Education*, draws on the writings of scholars such as Simone Weil and James Hillman to highlight the need for greater awareness and recognition of silence in education. Lewin brings to our awareness the complex nature of both attention and silence. He advocates for the importance of silence in education for enhancing creativity and facilitating ‘attention’ to others, the world and God. See David Lewin, “Behold: Silence and Attention in Education,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 48, no. 3 (2014): 355–69.

⁹¹ Mary B. Rowe, “Wait Time: Slowing Down May Be a Way of Speeding Up!”, *Journal of Teacher Education* 37, no. 1 (1986): 43-50, doi:10.1177/002248718603700110; Mary B. Rowe, “Wait, Wait, Wait...” *School Science and Mathematics* 78, no. 3 (1978): 207-216, doi:10.1111/j.1949-8594.1978.tb09348.x; Mary B. Rowe, “Wait-time and rewards as instructional variables, their influence on language, logic, and fate control: Part one – wait-time,” *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 11(1974a): 81–94. doi: 10.1002/tea.3660110202; Mary B. Rowe, “Science, silence, and sanctions,” *Science and Children*, 6, no.6 (1969):11–13; Julie A. Bianchini, "Mary Budd Rowe: A Storyteller of Science," *Cult Stud of Sci Educ* 3, no. 4 (2008): 799-810, doi:10.1007/s11422-008-9132-y.

⁹² Sample included over 900 students in 1974. See, Mary Budd Row, “Wait-time and Rewards as Instructional Variables, Their Influence on Language, Logic, and Fate Control: Part One-wait-time,” *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 11, no. 2 (1974): 81-94; Julie A. Bianchini, “Mary Budd Rowe: A Storyteller of Science”, Rowe, Mary Budd. "Science, Silence, and Sanctions," *Science and Children* 6, no. 6 (1969):11–13; Kenneth Tobin, “The role of wait time in higher cognitive level learning,” *Review of Educational Research* 57, no.1. (1987): 69–95; Jackie Walsh and Beth Dankert Sattes, "A New Rhythm for Responding," *Educational Leadership* 73, no.1. (2015): 46–52.

for a response, that is 1 to 3 seconds, significantly enhanced students' understanding and cognitive processing.⁹³

Rowe was able to demonstrate in her studies that consistent use of pauses within the lesson were effective for student learning. Rowe defined two types of 'wait-time.' Firstly, the *pauses that came after* teacher asked the question. Secondly, the pauses which came *after students responded*.⁹⁴ In a range of studies in elementary and secondary schools, Rowe observed that *the level of student engagement was higher when the pace of interaction between student and teacher was slower*, in comparison to a more rapid pace.⁹⁵ Hence these studies demonstrate that silence implemented through what Rowe termed as 'wait time' resulted in developing deeper inquiry and student engagement within the classroom. Many researchers on silence have drawn from the findings of Rowe.⁹⁶

Drawing from Rowe's work, Jackie Walsh and Beth Sattes, after a decade observing hundreds of classrooms in the US, found that very few teachers used pauses in their classrooms, despite the research demonstrating its effectiveness for student learning.⁹⁷ Walsh and Sattes identified factors explaining why teachers did not include silence, these include:

⁹³Jackie A Walsh, and Beth Dankert Sattes, "A new rhythm for responding," *Educational Leadership* 73, no. 1 (2015): 46–52; Kenneth Tobin, "The Role of Wait Time in Higher Cognitive Level Learning," *Review of Educational Research* 57, no. 1 (1987): 69–95.

⁹⁴ Julie A. Bianchini, "Mary Budd Rowe: A Storyteller of Science", *Cult Stud of Sci Educ* 3, no. 4 (2008): 799–810, doi:10.1007/s11422-008-9132-y.

⁹⁵ Rowe, "Wait Time: Slowing Down May Be a Way of Speeding Up!"

⁹⁶ This includes the majority of researchers mentioned in this literature review: Julie A. Bianchini, Tobin, Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis, Ollin, Jaworski & Sachdevs, Lees, Schultz, and Walsh & Sattes. These studies not only support the pedagogy of inquiry learning, but also point to the limitations of a focus on content within teaching and learning.

⁹⁷ Jackie Acree Walsh, and Beth Dankert Sattes, "A New Rhythm for Responding," *Educational Leadership* 73, no. 1(2015): 46–52.

- (1) pressure to cover the content
- (2) fear of giving up control
- (3) the broader fast-paced culture in which silence feels uncomfortable to people.⁹⁸

Adam Jaworski and Itesh Sachdev undertook a study of 319 students in secondary schools in Wales in order to understand the beliefs and attitudes about silence in the classroom.⁹⁹ Drawing on the work of Gilmore and Rowe, and their own studies, these researchers concluded that while silence in classrooms can be viewed as a sign indicating a lack of communication, feelings of negativity, conflict and a tool for use of power and control, silence is also a positive communicative tool and facilitator for learning.¹⁰⁰ What they found was that *silence enabled students to engage, organise and absorb new ideas*.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, this research also showed that silence was *generally viewed as necessary for learning rather than teaching*.¹⁰² Their conclusive findings were that *students believed that they were more silent when learning than the teachers*. This is significant, as it points to a lack of awareness and conscience amongst teachers of the importance of silence for student learning.

Ros Ollin's research demonstrates a correlation between teachers' understanding and use of silence in their personal life that extends to their professional practice.¹⁰³ Expanding on these works, Jaworski and Sachdev, Rowe and Gilmore also highlight the importance of silence in

⁹⁸ Walsh and Sattes, "A New Rhythm for Responding," 48.

⁹⁹ Adam Jaworski and Itesh Sachdev, "Beliefs About Silence in The Classroom," *Language and Education* 12, no. 4 (1998): 273-292, doi:10.1080/09500789808666754. Many other scholars have drawn on the importance of Jaworski and Sachdev's research, for example, Jim King, and Aono Atsuko, "Talk, Silence and Anxiety during One-to-One Tutorials: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study of Japan and UK Undergraduates' Tolerance of Silence." *Asia Pacific Education Review* 18, no. 4 (12, 2017): 489-499, doi: <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.sl.nsw.gov.au/10.1007/s12564-017-9503-8>.

¹⁰⁰ Jaworski and Sachdev, "Beliefs About Silence in The Classroom." See also Josephine Hoegaerts who presents the view that historically for the most part silence in the classroom was understood for the use of control and punitive purposes, in Josephine Hoegaerts, "Silence as borderland: a semiotic approach to the "silent" pupil in nineteenth-century vocal education, *Paedagogica*," *Historica*, 53, no.5 (2017): 514-527, doi:10.1080/00309230.2017.1340316.

¹⁰¹ Jaworski and Sachdev, "Beliefs About Silence in The Classroom."

¹⁰² Jaworski and Sachdev, "Beliefs About Silence in The Classroom."

¹⁰³ Ros Ollin, "Silent Pedagogy and Rethinking Classroom Practice: Structuring Teaching Through Silence Rather Than Talk," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 38, no. 2 (2008): 265-280, doi:10.1080/03057640802063528.

deeper learning. Ollin further explored teachers' conceptual understanding of silence both personally and professionally.¹⁰⁴ Ollin was also able to observe a correlation between teachers' understanding and use of silence in their personal life, which is often linked and expressed in their professional practice in the classroom.¹⁰⁵ Ann Medaille and Janet Usinger's recent work also found that teachers' apprehension of silence leaves them unable to fully appreciate or understand the silence of their students.¹⁰⁶

The findings of Stephanos Vassilopoulos and George Konstantinidis also advocate for the importance of silence and suggest that silence occurs relatively infrequently in classrooms. Their studies found that silence was used for both facilitating positive and inhibiting negative effects on teaching and learning.¹⁰⁷ Teachers used silence mostly to reason or calm students down; facilitate reflection; encourage experiencing of feelings and communicate a subtle message.¹⁰⁸ Most teachers would use silence with older students who were solving a task and assimilating the information presented.¹⁰⁹ However, they would refrain from using silence with students who may misunderstand the silence or with whom they have a poor relationship.¹¹⁰ Researchers Kim et al., observed similarly that the quality of a relationship, for example, a stranger or intimate friend, affected the extent to which silence was tolerated.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Ollin, "Silent Pedagogy and Rethinking Classroom Practice: Structuring Teaching Through Silence Rather Than Talk."

¹⁰⁵ Ollin, "Silent Pedagogy and Rethinking Classroom Practice: Structuring Teaching Through Silence Rather Than Talk."

¹⁰⁶ Ann Medaille and Janet Usinger, "Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom," *College Teaching* 67, no. 2 (2019), 13.

¹⁰⁷ Stephanos Vassilopoulos & Georgios Konstantinidis, "Teacher use of Silence in Elementary Education," *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 8, no.1 (2012).

¹⁰⁸ Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis, "Teacher use of Silence in Elementary Education."

¹⁰⁹ Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis, "Teacher use of Silence in Elementary Education."

¹¹⁰ Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis, "Teacher use of Silence in Elementary Education."

¹¹¹ Jim King, and Atsuko Aono, "Talk, Silence and Anxiety during One-to-One Tutorials: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study of Japan and UK Undergraduates' Tolerance of Silence," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 18, no. 4 (12, 2017): 489–499, doi: <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.sl.nsw.gov.au/10.1007/s12564-017-9503-8>.

Stephanos Vassilopoulos and George Konstantinidis found that learning about using silence as a technique in the classroom was mostly through teaching experience and not teacher training.¹¹² Teacher silence is a difficult skill for many beginning teachers who may feel uncomfortable with silence or experience unease through having a child in class who does not talk.¹¹³ Ollin suggests that these difficulties may be associated with a teacher's personal apprehensions or may reflect the little educational training received about using silence in their teacher training courses.¹¹⁴ Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis state that while their research is an initial starting point for further analysis, it offers limited insights into teacher perception of when, why and under what conditions they use silence in the classroom as a technique; like Ollin and Jaworski and Sachdev, they argue that greater research is needed in this area.¹¹⁵

II. Silence as participation

Many researchers on silence within education have framed it in terms of its 'legitimacy' within classroom participation. Katherine Schultz, Kay Carpenter Rosheim, Ann Medaille and Janet Usinger, Yolanda Majors and Evan Ortlieb all attempt to challenge the definition of *participation* within the classroom, claiming that silence is a feasible and positive form of participation.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis, "Teacher use of Silence in Elementary Education."

¹¹³ Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis, "Teacher use of Silence in Elementary Education."

¹¹⁴ Ros Ollin, "Silent Pedagogy and Rethinking Classroom Practice: Structuring Teaching Through Silence Rather Than Talk."

¹¹⁵ Ollin, "Silent Pedagogy and Rethinking Classroom Practice: Structuring Teaching Through Silence Rather Than Talk.;" See also Ros Ollin, "Silence, Meanings and Learning: Teachers' Constructs of Silence; and "Different Discourse of Practice in Teaching and Learning," *International Journal of Learning* 11, no. 1 (2006); Jaworski and Sachdev, "Beliefs About Silence in The Classroom."

¹¹⁶ Katherine Schultz, *Rethinking Classroom Participation* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009). See also: Katherine Schultz, *Listening* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003); Katherine Schultz and Lisa Smulyan, "Listening as Translation: Reflections on Professional Development Work in A Cross-Cultural Setting", *Learn Inq* 1, no. 2 (2007): 99–106, doi:10.1007/s11519-007-0011-3.

Schultz argues that silence in the classroom is multifaceted and can include reflection, learning, resistance, reluctance, assertion, power and protection.¹¹⁷ Schultz places silence within a sociocultural understanding, suggesting that learning and silence (which is a part of learning) are located within a social and cultural context, rather than understood as a purely internal and cognitive phenomenon removed from historical and cultural influences.¹¹⁸ Schultz claims that silence is not adequately understood amongst educators as a ‘legitimate form of participation.’ This often results in negative consequences, as teachers assume that a student’s silence is indicative of their lack of engagement.¹¹⁹ The result, which Schultz is able to demonstrate, is that silent students are labelled as ‘disengaged’, often leading to a withdrawal from classroom learning.¹²⁰ Drawing on Schultz’s work, Kay Carpenter Rosheim’s recent work proposes that teachers’ measurements for evaluating students’ engagement and learning need to include the ‘silence of students’.¹²¹ Shultz (and similarly Rosheim) state that current practices place emphasis on verbal contribution, often used for assessment of participation and progress, rather than the ‘thoughtfulness and learning’ which she argues maybe present in the ‘silent student’.¹²² Ann Medaille and Janet Usinger, concurring with this view, refer to Davis and Arend, who

¹¹⁷ Schultz, *Rethinking Classroom Participation* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009); See also, Schultz, *Listening* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003); Schultz and Lisa Smulyan, "Listening As Translation: Reflections On Professional Development Work In A Cross-Cultural Setting," *Learn Inq* 1, no. 2 (2007): 99–106, doi:10.1007/s11519-007-0011-3.

¹¹⁸ Schultz, *Rethinking Classroom Participation*, Schultz, *Listening*, and Schultz and Smulyan; "Listening As Translation: Reflections On Professional Development Work In A Cross-Cultural Setting."

¹¹⁹ Schultz, *Rethinking Classroom Participation*, Schultz, *Listening*, and Schultz and Smulyan; "Listening As Translation: Reflections On Professional Development Work In A Cross-Cultural Setting."

¹²⁰ Schultz, *Rethinking Classroom Participation*, Schultz, *Listening*, and Schultz and Smulyan; "Listening As Translation: Reflections On Professional Development Work In A Cross-Cultural Setting."

¹²¹ Kay Carpenter Rosheim, "The Quiet Continuum: Listening and Learning from Quiet Students in the Classroom." (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2018).

¹²² Schultz, *Rethinking Classroom Participation*; Schultz, *Listening*; and Schultz and Smulyan, "Listening As Translation: Reflections On Professional Development Work In A Cross-Cultural Setting." Rosheim, "The Quiet Continuum: Listening and Learning from Quiet Students in the Classroom."

state the following, “The goal is 100 percent engagement in thinking, not 100 percent speaking.”¹²³

...many teachers do not know how to interpret the silences of their quiet students and have difficulty judging the extent to which they are engaged in learning...For many teachers, silence in the classroom may represent not only an unwillingness to participate but also resistance, hostility, disempowerment, alienation or a lack of preparation, engagement, knowledge, motivation, or intellectual ability (Collins1996;McCroskey and Richmond 2005; Richmond, Wrench, and McCroskey 2013; Reda 2009; Schultz 2009, 2010).¹²⁴

Medaille and Usinger (drawing on the scholars above) continue to argue that often silent students within the classroom are misunderstood, and some of the main factors which influence a student’s silence within the classroom are personality traits, learned behaviour and situational factors.¹²⁵ Drawing on Schultz’s work (and others) these scholars present the claim that quiet students can still be very engaged in learning and that instructors need to be aware of not dismissing the silent student due to their uncomfortableness or ignorance on this topic.¹²⁶ Medaille and Usinger propose that teachers need to rethink what they understand by student ‘participation’ within the classroom that is beyond just speech. Medaille and Usinger suggest strategies that might help quiet students in learning, for example, small groups, writing tasks, and time for reflection.¹²⁷ They, like Schultz and Rosheim, also advocate for the use of inquiry learning within the classroom for silent students, claiming that this approach allows students to engage in deep reflection and learning; they propose the use of silence and inquiry within the classroom for *all* learners.¹²⁸

¹²³ James R Davis and Bridget D. Arend, *Facilitating Seven Ways of Learning: A Resource for More Purposeful, Effective, and Enjoyable College Teaching* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing 2012), 130 quoted in Medaille and Janet, “Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom,”133.

¹²⁴ Ann Medaille and Janet Usinger, “Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom,” *College Teaching* 67, no. 2 (2019):132.

¹²⁵ Medaille and Janet, “Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom.”

¹²⁶ Medaille and Janet, “Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom.”

¹²⁷ Medaille and Janet, “Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom.”

¹²⁸ Medaille and Janet, “Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom,”136; Katherine Schultz, *Rethinking Classroom Participation* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009).

While quiet college students generally do not suffer from a lack of engagement, they do struggle to communicate in ways that are similar to those of their more outgoing peers. Quiet students often enjoy independent learning and appreciate opportunities to be reflective and introspective about course material...Instructors can make room for quiet time in the classroom for students to write, practice, and reflect, and they can use silence as an effective tool for creating space for contemplation within the classroom.¹²⁹

Yolanda Majors has also observed that silence can be understood as part of a classroom culture.¹³⁰ Learning to ‘visibly’ identify silence and what it might be saying in terms of student engagement remains a complex but important task, often ignored within the training of pre-service teachers and in the educational literature at large.¹³¹ Majors argues that in learning to identify silence as part of the normal ‘culture of the classroom,’ educators begin to interpret it as useful for teaching and learning. She states:

In acknowledging the silence that permeated my classroom and labeling it an artifact of its culture, I move closer to understanding its meanings, its utility, and better yet, a pedagogical strategy....¹³²

The complexity of silence, as Majors rightly identifies, involves unpacking the assumptions inherent within the silence of students. While this insight adds to the ongoing discussion on the importance of silence within the classroom, Majors’ work does not discuss the multifaceted ways silence can be present in the classroom. Majors fails to note how the silent student can be influenced by a cultural background, individual personality styles and situational context, all of which have been highlighted by researchers mentioned earlier.

¹²⁹ Medaille and Janet, “Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom,” 136.

¹³⁰ Yolanda Majors, “Silence as Indicator of Engagement,” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 61, no. 1 (2017): 91–93, doi:10.1002/jaal.673.

¹³¹ Majors, “Silence as Indicator of Engagement.”

¹³² Majors, “Silence as Indicator of Engagement,” 93.

III. Silence and culture

In some cultures, such as those of Scandinavians, Germans, and the Swiss, communication occurs predominantly through explicit statements in text and speech, and they are thus categorized as low-context cultures. In other cultures, such as the Japanese and Chinese, messages include other communicative cues such as body language and the use of silence. Essentially, high-context communication involves implying a message through that which is not uttered. This includes the situation, re, and paraverbal cues as integral parts of the communicated message.¹³³

There are other researchers who have investigated the connection of silence and culture. The work of anthropologists Edward Hall and Geert Hofstede have provided a cultural framework which identifies the differences in styles of communication.¹³⁴ These are distinguished in two categories, high context (HC) and low context (LC) cultures. The Americans, Scandinavians, German, and Swiss, for example, communicate mostly through explicit statements and written text, categorised as low context cultures, while the Japanese and Chinese exhibit communication predominately through body language, and the use of silence is through messages which are more subtle and indirect. These differences in communication have been developed and identified by researchers in the field.

Silence as pedagogy should develop new ways to exploit types and uses of silence, assess silence, and increase sensitivity to the relationship between silence and talk ... Teachers' neglect of students' silence may amount to an oppressive act, debated by Freire (1972) as culture of silence ... In the classroom where power dynamics about speaking and silence is produced and where the greater amount of space is claimed by talkative students who assert their voice excessively, the reinforcement and misunderstanding of silence ignorantly erases students' agency.¹³⁵

¹³³ Elizabeth Wurtz, "Intercultural Communication on Web Sites: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Web Sites from High-Context Cultures and Low-Context Cultures," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11, no. 1 (2005), 274.

¹³⁴ Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, A Division of Random House, Inc, 2006); Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (Newbury Park: Sage, 2005); Timothy Paul Westbrook, "Global Contexts for Learning: Exploring the Relationship Between Low-Context Online Learning and High-Context Learners," *Christian Higher Education*, 13, no 4, (2014): 281-294, doi: 10.1080/15363759.2014.924888; See also, Wurtz, "Intercultural Communication on Web Sites: A Cross-Cultural Analysis Of Web Sites From High-Context Cultures And Low-Context Cultures", 274-299, doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101. 2006.tb00313. x.

¹³⁵ Phan Le Ha and Binghui Li, "Silence as Right, Choice, Resistance and Strategy among Chinese 'Me Generation' Students: Implications for Pedagogy," *Discourse* (Abingdon, England) 35, no. 2 (2014): 246. (Emphasis added)

Phan Le Ha and Binhui Li's qualitative study on Chinese students' use of silence in both China and Australian classrooms concluded that the complex nature of silence needed further attention from educators.¹³⁶ They observed that the classroom was often a place dominated by the talkative student, which inadvertently disadvantaged the quiet student. The silence of quiet students, they argued, is often not adequately understood. Negative stereotypes about silence failed to give it the appropriate recognition as a "useful learning mechanism".¹³⁷ The study also raised the complexity and fluidity of silence within this group. Ha and Li found that silence amongst the Chinese population was *multifaceted*. Silence, for example, could indicate individual stance, their "right, choice, resistance and strategy among these students."¹³⁸

Jennifer Jihae Park's recent work on silence amongst Chinese international students within Canadian universities also found that silence was expressed in numerous ways.¹³⁹ She conducted six in-depth interviews with Chinese students at a large university in Canada. Although a small sample, the conclusions of her research were that silence for this group of students was due to three main factors, 1. Lack of competence in the English language, 2. Previous experiences of schooling in China that were different from those in Canada, and 3. Students were silent out of fear of making a mistake and been judged by other students, and for the Chinese this is culturally known as 'saving face.'¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Ha and Li, "Silence as Right, Choice, Resistance and Strategy among Chinese 'Me Generation' Students: Implications for Pedagogy."

Ha and Li, "Silence as Right, Choice, Resistance and Strategy Among Chinese 'Me Generation' Students: Implications for Pedagogy," 246.

¹³⁸ Ha and Li, "Silence as Right, Choice, Resistance and Strategy Among Chinese 'Me Generation' Students: Implications for Pedagogy," 233.

¹³⁹ Jennifer Jihae Park, "To Speak or Not to Speak: Silence in Classrooms." (Ph.D. diss., McGill University Canada, 2019) <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/speak-not-silence-classrooms/docview/2456430972/se-2?accountid=8194>.

¹⁴⁰ Jihae Park, "To Speak or Not to Speak: Silence in Classrooms."

Likewise, researcher Jana Simonis found that his observation of international students in American universities in the Midwestern region, exhibited their silence in multifaceted ways stating. Simonis states; "While many West-centric cultures conceptualize voice and silence as dichotomous, I argue that they form a continuum that is dialogic, communicative, fluid, contextual and at times paradoxical." Reiterating what most of the researchers have concluded above, Park calls for a further reconceptualization of silence and speech and argues of the need for its consideration as a legitimate form of classroom

Kim Soonhyang et al., interviewed 45 students from a Japanese university about their understanding and comfortableness with silence.¹⁴¹ The study showed that participants' responses were equally divided between comfortable and uncomfortable, dependent on their familiarity with the person.¹⁴² Researchers Jim King and Atsuko Aono attempted to dispel the myth of stereotypes regarding the cultural tolerance of silence between what they describe as 'East vs West.' They attempted to show this by exposing Japanese and UK students to 'enforced silence' by their tutor and observed the levels of tolerance of the silence by the students.¹⁴³ A mixed method approach was used to gauge the length of silence that individual students from Japan and the UK endured during a one-to-one staged encounter with their tutor.¹⁴⁴ What they found was that, contrary to belief that Japanese students are more comfortable with silence than their Western counterparts, *all* students scored a high level of discomfort as a result of the imposed silence. The length of silence was not correlated to the level of discomfort.¹⁴⁵

participation. see Jana Simonis, "Voice and Silence Among International Students in the U.S.-American Classroom: Towards a Dialogic and Inclusive Approach to Voice, Silence, and Active Listening" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2016), 1, <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/voice-silence-among-international-students-u-s/docview/1805292948/se-2?accountid=8194>. This observation was also reiterated by researcher Osmah Alawwad who observed international students in the US coming from the Middle East, silence was polyvalent in its expression dependent on many factors such as the individual's education, marital status, language ability and age. See. Alawwad S Osamah, "Silenced Dialogue and Safe Haven among Middle Eastern International Students," (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2019). <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/silenced-dialogue-safe-haven-among-middle-eastern/docview/2311775913/se-2?accountid=8194>.

¹⁴¹ Kim, Soonhyang et al. "Ways to Promote the Classroom Participation of International Students by Understanding the Silence of Japanese University Students." *Journal of International Students* 6, no. 2 (2016): 431-50.

¹⁴² Soonhyang, et al., "Ways to Promote the Classroom Participation of International Students by Understanding the Silence of Japanese University Students," 431–432.

¹⁴³ Jim King and Aono Atsuko, "Talk, Silence and Anxiety during One-to-One Tutorials: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study of Japan and UK Undergraduates' Tolerance of Silence," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 18, no. 4 (12, 2017): 489-499, doi: <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.sl.nsw.gov.au/10.1007/s12564-017-9503-8>.

¹⁴⁴ Researchers described this study in the following ways, "...upon entering the tutorial room, each participant was asked to sit directly opposite the instructor who placed himself behind a desk at a distance of approximately 1.5 m away. Once any initial small talk had come to a natural conclusion and the moment both parties became seated, the instructor began the experiment proper by embarking upon a period of silence during which he avoided displaying any kinesic signals which might have been interpreted as a solicit or prompt to speak (e.g. direct eye contact, forward leaning body posture, positive facial expressions such as smiling). So as to ensure a natural reaction to the silence, prior to the data collection sessions participants were not informed about the specific topic under investigation. See, King and Atsuko, "Talk, Silence and Anxiety during One-to-One Tutorials: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study of Japan and UK Undergraduates' Tolerance of Silence," 493, 489.

¹⁴⁵ King and Atsuko, "Talk, Silence and Anxiety during One-to-One Tutorials: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study of Japan and UK Undergraduates' Tolerance of Silence." 489. This anxiety was illustrated well by the account of Japanese student

What this study shows is that in certain situations where silence replaces expected speech (e.g., the talk of the tutor) people become anxious regardless of their cultural background; the researchers termed this ‘situational silence anxiety.’¹⁴⁶ This research highlights the complexity of silence understood in various ways, for example, experienced as punitive and controlling. However, anecdotal evidence might suggest that in a situation where we would normally expect someone to speak, such as in an intended speech, silence in this context would naturally create unease and uncertainty. This point thus renders the significance of this research to be minimal. While the study does show how a forced ‘situation’ of silence was responded to by Japanese and UK students, it does not reveal very much about the nature and complex cultural contexts in which silence may appear.

IV. Silence within core subjects

There are some educators who have sought to incorporate silence and contemplation within their specific subject area. Jayne Stansfield and Kathryn Vaughan (mathematics lecturers in Bath) did a small study on silence within mathematics lessons, and saw positive learning demonstrated.¹⁴⁷ Likewise, a study by Nathan Mathew Peterson showed positive influences of silence within mathematics. He showed how including lengthy silences in the middle of conversations and collaborations on mathematics led to greater student understanding.¹⁴⁸

J14F, who managed to tolerate a silence of just over 50 s, stiff backed and with a forced smile throughout. She rated her level of discomfort with a maximum score of 6. Describing her feelings during the encounter, she explained, “I felt anxious. Should I speak or should I wait? King and Atsuko, “Talk, Silence and Anxiety during One-to-One Tutorials: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study of Japan and UK Undergraduates’ Tolerance of Silence,” 494.

¹⁴⁶ King and Atsuko, “Talk, Silence and Anxiety during One-to-One Tutorials: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study of Japan and UK Undergraduates’ Tolerance of Silence,” 494.

¹⁴⁷ Jayne Stansfield, and Kathryn Vaughan, “Listening to the sound of silence,” *Mathematics Teaching* no 234 (2013): 44-46.

¹⁴⁸ Matthew Nathan Petersen, “Mathematical Silences.” (Ph.D. diss., Portland State University, 2020). <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/mathematical-silences/docview/2426557753/se-2?accountid=8194>.

The contemplation based learning model developed is feasible to be applied in the biology classroom with the most valid and very practical category. Thus, the contemplation-based learning model is a solution for overcoming the gap of serving science with self-knowledge and is an alternative learning model to integrate science and religion at Biology Education Department...only very few studies have specifically developed the practice of contemplation by making subject matter as the object of contemplation...¹⁴⁹

Rina Delfita et al.,’s study involved observing 35 students as they integrated contemplative practices within the biology classroom.¹⁵⁰ This study was within an Islamic university in Indonesia. What these researchers were trying to show was that contemplative practices do not need to be outside of the teaching of core subjects. Delfita et al., included a range of contemplative activities, such as instructing students to read materials slowly and mindfully, and embedding some Islamic teachings (such as the power and grandeur of Allah in creating all the animals etc.)¹⁵¹ What they concluded was that these practices allowed students to regulate their emotions and showed overall positive experiences.¹⁵² Their conclusion of the study was that their approach was a valid and feasible learning exercise within a classroom integrating biology with mindfulness and Islamic teaching.

However, there were some problems with this study and the analysis presented in this article. Firstly, the epistemological dichotomy identified (which they claim to have integrated) between what was termed as knowledge “serving science” or “knowledge” and “self” was not resolved nor demonstrated. Secondly, the contemplative exercises within the biology classroom did not allow any room for student questioning or critical thinking of the subject

¹⁴⁹ Rina Delfita et al., “Contemplation-Based Learning: An Effective Learning Model for Serving Science and Self-Knowledge Integration,” 1,3.

¹⁵⁰ Rina Delfita et al., “Contemplation-Based Learning: An Effective Learning Model for Serving Science and Self-Knowledge Integration,” *Al-Ta Lim Journal* 27, no. 1 (2020): 1-15, doi:10.15548/jt. v27i1.586.

¹⁵¹ Rina Delfita et al., “Contemplation-Based Learning: An Effective Learning Model for Serving Science and Self-Knowledge Integration.”

¹⁵² Rina Delfita et al., “Contemplation-Based Learning: An Effective Learning Model for Serving Science and Self-Knowledge Integration.”

matter (e.g., the existence of Allah); rather there was an assumption that students were all in agreement with the basic tenets of the religious faith presented.¹⁵³ While the researchers attempted to show how it is pragmatically possible to have a ‘contemplative’ approach within a subject area such as biology, they concluded below their failure to show *how* this intervention has resulted in ‘better student learning’ outcomes. This is a significant limitation to this study.

This model will stop the bifurcation “serving science” and “self-knowledge” and is a model to integrate science and religion at Islamic Education. However, effects of implementation of contemplation-based learning model on the student learning outcomes, spiritual and socio-emotional has not been studied.¹⁵⁴

V. Critique of the empirical approach: focus on Helen Lees’ work

Helen E. Lees’ work, *Silence in Education*, explores an empirical and phenomenological approach to silence, drawing on quantitative and qualitative studies from various disciplines including her own study. She acknowledges that the research on silence within education is scarce and limited, stating, “...the research that does exist about forms of strong silence in schools has not entered into the consciousness of school practitioners...”¹⁵⁵

Lees’ qualitative study included schools in England that have students who practice silence in the various ways, such as mindful meditation, establishing quiet spaces, pauses and silent moments in the classroom.¹⁵⁶ She interviewed headmasters and teachers. Her findings were that silence related to positive learning and relationship outcomes within the school community

¹⁵³ This approach is contrary to what we understand, at least in the West, as the broader aim of education: to encourage curiosity and critical thinking.

¹⁵⁴ Rina Delfita et al., “Contemplation-Based Learning: An Effective Learning Model for Serving Science and Self-Knowledge Integration,” 11.

¹⁵⁵ Helen E. Lees, *Silence In Schools* (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books/IOE Press, 2012).

¹⁵⁶ Lees, *Silence In Schools*, 15.

and culture.¹⁵⁷ Lees concluded that schools needed an underlying philosophical approach to silence. However, as I will discuss, there are some limitations to her research.

Lees' qualitative research is based on the interviews of six educators, made up of headmasters and teachers, and no students. Lees concludes that silence leads to a sense of greater democracy within the school culture. However, Lees does not interview any students, but rather focuses predominately on teachers and headmasters, which limits her inquiry. This is especially significant as earlier researchers have suggested that there are differences in how silence is understood by teachers and students. As recalled earlier, Jaworski and Sachdev found that *students believed that they were more silent when learning than the teachers*. Ollin' and other researchers mentioned earlier (e.g., Medaille and Usinger) suggest that teachers were mostly uncomfortable with silence.

Writing this book has brought me to an amazing conclusion: at the heart of silence in schools and at the heart of a change in education is pausing. Everything else this book discusses emerges from this possibility of a small beginning.¹⁵⁸

I define silence as necessarily undefinable; a state of mind that is created by experiences of many kinds. It involves a sense of well-being that does not need to be discussed, once achieved. Such silence is a gift.¹⁵⁹

Lees' definitions in the references above and below (and consequently throughout the book) on silence leave many central concepts and terms undefined and not adequately explored. Lees often makes reference and allusion to religious and philosophical concepts in attempting to explore the notion of silence, and one gains a sense of a religiousness and mystery in her understanding of silence without explaining what these may mean or point to. References to silence, for example above, as "undefinable" and "ineffable" have religious overtones.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Lees, *Silence In Schools*, 15.

¹⁵⁸ Lees, *Silence In Schools*, 98.

¹⁵⁹ Lees, *Silence In Schools*, 8.

¹⁶⁰ Lees, *Silence In Schools*, 72–73.

Additionally, labelling silence as “undefinable ... a gift ... involves as sense of well-being that does not need to be discussed” are ambiguous terms which are not explored.¹⁶¹ How can silence be understood as a “tangible world” and at the same time “not point to any sign and has no sign” without developing what seems to be a counter-argument?¹⁶² While the religious overtones in her understanding of silence are not problematic per se, it is her lack of adequate exploration of their religious meanings which is problematic.

The phenomenon of silence is also connected to mystical experiences of the sublime and other – worldly (see e.g., Picard, 2002; Kenny, 2001; Theresa of Availa, 2004). Extreme, ineffable, ‘absolute’ silence is not a concern for schools. Children can, instead, get to know silence better through regular discussion of its nature and small-scale experiences in a school setting...although extreme silences are unlikely, students and teachers are naturally poised to experience something of wonder and awe.¹⁶³

Lees’ description of silence and mystical experiences as “extreme” and “other-worldly” are referred to above without having been adequately examined.¹⁶⁴ Lees goes on further to state that silence is “some kind of journey,” which rather indicates a lack of clarity on what is understood by religious writers as a significant contemplative process. She writes, “Silence is an organic practice. As we will see, wherever and however it happens, it is part of a journey of some kind”.¹⁶⁵

Lees refers to Caranfa’s notion of silence, which she states is “from the known to the unknown” and includes Max Picard’s writings. Picard considers silence to be “a world and therefore tangible” and silence as “holy uselessness”: Lees refers to Picard’s work many times; without discussing what these terms might mean.¹⁶⁶ It is important to highlight that Picard and Caranfa

¹⁶¹ Lees, *Silence In Schools*, 8.

¹⁶² Lees, *Silence In Schools*, 80.

¹⁶³ Lees, *Silence In Schools*, 72–73.

¹⁶⁴ Lees, *Silence In Schools*, 72–73.

¹⁶⁵ Lees, *Silence in Schools*, xix, introduction.

¹⁶⁶ Lees, *Silence in Schools*.11,14, 39,75,80,105, 110, 112, 114.

are essentially religious writers who derive their understanding of silence from a clear sense of what in religious terminology is called God, mystery or transcendent. Picard's work, for example, includes language which is often metaphorical and poetic, and many have interpreted his work as more like prayer or contemplation. While Lees makes brief allusions to this, in order to adequately understand Picard and Caranfa's understandings of silence, a discussion of their religious context is needed. Additionally, many of these metaphorical terms point to the literature of negative and apophatic theology, not acknowledged by Lees.¹⁶⁷ Lees' language indicates a lack in understanding of some central religious and philosophical concepts.

One of the outcomes of Lees' study was a perceived need for a philosophical underpinning of silence within the school community, however, Lees fails to develop this idea or discuss what this could look like within a school context. While Lees does include some discussion of Hart's work on contemplation (as a consequence of silence) and also alludes to some notions of silence within the Eastern traditions overall, her discussion of theological and philosophical terminology is not adequately explored or contextualised.¹⁶⁸

What Lees, and to some extent Katherine Schultz and other researchers, fail to acknowledge, is that the discussions and practice of silence have had a rich philosophical and religious history for over 2,000 years. Like all knowledge domains, concepts within these disciplines, such as silence, include refinement in thinking and language which has been developed over centuries, as evident in philosophical and mystical literature, and need to be adequately understood within this context.

¹⁶⁷ The literature of negative and apophatic theology is discussed in the thesis. For example, see pages 135–136 and 154–156.

¹⁶⁸ Lees, *Silence in Schools*, 108–109.

Picard and Caranfa's notion of silence are deeply embedded within the Christian tradition and therefore notions of silence as the "unknown" and terms like "holy useless" alluded to, can only be understood adequately *within these religious frameworks*. Lees' failures to explore these conceptual frameworks adequately inevitably leads to vague language and inconsistencies in her argument.

What results, therefore, is an understanding of silence which lacks depth and the appropriate language and conceptual frameworks to adequately describe its complexity, nuances, and mystery. In short, Lees' tool (which is predominately empirical) cannot in any real depth explore such a topic of profound complexity such as silence. Silence is a phenomenon which is both objective and subjective, and science does not have the language or conceptual frameworks to understand it; all it can do, at best, is *describe its effects empirically*. Hence this approach, while it can provide some useful information regarding behaviour, cannot then extend to also describe adequately the 'nature' of silence. While Lees (like the researchers mentioned earlier) can show the effects of silence on behaviour (through an empirical approach), demonstrating positive outcomes in learning and overall wellbeing, understanding the 'nature' of silence requires tools of a different kind. As this thesis will demonstrate, it demands drawing on literature (e.g., theology and philosophy) that has sophisticated concepts which can articulate the nuances and complexity of silence in much greater depth and clarity. This is important, as best practice should ideally be based on adequate theoretical underpinnings. While not conclusive, they still can avoid simplistic explanations, especially important when dealing with a complex and nuanced topic such as silence.

How can we understand silence?

On the contrary, silence appears as a rich communicative resource whose understanding requires the sophistication of a fine-grained, inter-disciplinary analysis. For instance, although ethnographic research has provided a richly layered perspective about the role of silence in communication referring to values (e.g., Scollon, 1985), no systematic measurement of beliefs and attitudes has been undertaken to date.¹⁶⁹

So, we might ask, what is the best approach in investigating the topic of silence and contemplation? The conclusive findings of Adam Jaworski and Itesh Sachdev may help to shed some light on this question. These researchers describe silence as a ‘rich communicative source’ which can only be adequately understood in its complexity through a ‘sophisticated and inter-disciplinary analysis’.¹⁷⁰ As I will show in the thesis, Caranfa’s approach to silence and contemplation does just that. *His inter-disciplinary exploration of silence means he can explore its complexity without reverting to reductionism.* Caranfa’s work, therefore, as I will show throughout sections A and B of the thesis, can be viewed as valuable, relevant, and distinctive in helping form part of a contemplative education.

Furthermore, the understanding and interpretation of silence largely depends on cultural and theoretical perspectives. As previously alluded to, sociological perspectives can inform our understanding of silence within the context of repression, for example, the silencing of minority groups. Neuroscientist Dr Svirsky, at New York University, discovered waves of silence embedded within our speech.¹⁷¹ While science might explain silence as ‘waves in our speech or spaces of lower energy,’ questions can arise regarding its origins and purpose for humans, its existential or spiritual purpose.¹⁷² Wittgenstein alludes to silence as the ‘unknown’ or

¹⁶⁹ Jaworski and Sachdev, “Beliefs About Silence in The Classroom,” 273–292.

¹⁷⁰ Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis, “Teacher use of Silence in Elementary Education.”

¹⁷¹ George Prochnik, *In Pursuit Of Silence* (New York: Doubleday, 2010).

¹⁷² Prochnik, *In Pursuit Of Silence*.

‘mystery,’ not able to be expressed in language, as he famously stated, “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must pass over in silence.”¹⁷³ Our understandings of silence and what it can teach us, especially for teaching and learning, are important issues for this thesis. As I will argue in this work, Caranfa (among many others), views silence as the basis or a part of reflection, stillness, listening, pauses, and presence. These are qualities which are conducive to a holistic approach of teaching and learning.

As noted, Caranfa’s work (in order to discuss the nature and complexity of silence for the classroom) provides a *synthesis* between the disciplines of philosophy and theology. His distinctive contributions are evident in the way he is able to draw on and weave together these domains, resulting in an understanding of silence which is multifaceted, complex, and relevant to the modern day. Caranfa places silence into a contemporary understanding of discourse: a distinct, and as will be argued, important type of discourse. Its relevance is evident in Caranfa’s connection of silence to the rational, feeling, and spiritual parts of the human person, and its application to the classroom that aim towards a holistic approach. Caranfa points out that thinking alone is limited in education, and what is missing is the affective, which can be evoked through art and silence. Caranfa proposes a model of education which combines the rational faculties with the silences evoked through the aesthetics and art, in order to promote the contemplative and feeling aspect within a classroom. It is this approach which makes his ideas relevant and distinctive, he writes:

...A theory of education that is based on silence and that captures or fosters the students’ creative potential: students see learning primarily as a silent activity and embedded their feelings and thoughts in it...open their hearts and minds of students enabling them to catch a glimpse of their hidden or unknown self...¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Humanities Press, 1961), 149.

¹⁷⁴ Angelo Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” *Educational Theory* 54, no. 2 (2004): 230, doi: 10.1111/j.0013-2004.2004.0angelo_abstract.x.

Conclusion

The literature on silence and contemplation has shown that this approach has positive benefits within the classroom. Researchers in these areas have varied their focus from silence to meditation, mindfulness, aesthetics, and contemplation.

This literature review has demonstrated how silence can be viewed in various ways within the classroom. These include mostly positive outcomes which lead to deep thinking, reduced stress, greater concentration, and overall learning. Silence has also been noted for its ambiguity in its punitive and controlling presence. Silence is shown to be influenced by situations, personality, and culture.¹⁷⁵ Some researchers have focused on the need for silence to be seen as a legitimate form of participation within the classroom. These scholars show that the silent student need not be neglected or viewed as necessarily ‘disengaged’ from the learning. The importance of aesthetic education for holistic learning has also been observed by many researchers and touched on here. However, as I point out, this differs from Caranfa’s approach to aesthetic education, which is framed within silence and contemplation that connects to the divine and ultimately the Christian God. However, this chapter has not included literature on silence and gender.

While there is evidence of silence in some educational settings, for example, Montessori education, mindfulness, and meditation (and prayer in religious school) overall, this remains on the periphery within mainstream literature and practice.¹⁷⁶ As I have shown in some of the

¹⁷⁵ However, this literature review did not include research on silence and gender. There is some research that suggests that in secondary education, boys are likely to be vocal, while girls are still more likely to be more silent and still. For example, see: Gordon Tuula, Janet Holland, Elina Lahelma, and Tarja Tolonen, “Gazing with Intent: Ethnographic Practice in Classrooms.” *Qualitative Research* 5, no1 (2005), 113–31.

¹⁷⁶ Overall, we can see that most educators associate discourse with talking and lack the understanding of silence as a form of legitimate discourse. Vassilopoulos and Konstantinidis suggest that the dominance of a ‘talking discourse’ in the West (alluded to by Ollin, Li and others) may account for the lack of systematic scientific research on the experience and use of silence in

empirical literature (e.g., Lees' work) the theoretical underpinnings and understanding of silence and contemplation are limited. This is problematic, as without adequate theoretical underpinnings on the topic of silence we run the risk of hastily applying it in pragmatic contexts without fully appreciating the complexity and mystery of silence. In doing so, we may not be open to silence's power to transform individuals and therefore may compromise on best practice. This gap in the literature is where the philosophical and theological work of Caranfa becomes important. He provides an approach to the topic of silence and contemplation, exploring its nuances and complexity without resorting to reductionism.

In the next chapter, I will discuss why listening and silence is significant to Caranfa. I will explore his influences, such as Socrates and Max Picard, who explore the link between listening and silence. Listening is often an underrated skill, but in Chapter 3, I will propose that listening to oneself, and the silence within, and beyond (which extends to the divine and/or God) is imperative for self-knowledge, deep learning, and creativity. Listening is also important in caring for the other (which is the ethical component of attention developed in Chapter 8). The importance of 'deep listening' will be part of the *qualitative* skills that I will propose are essential for the contemplative classroom.

different communicative contexts, such as in education. See, Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis, "Teacher use of Silence in Elementary Education."

SECTION B: Caranfa's interpretation of a contemplative classroom

Chapter 3: Listening to silence

Chapter 2 discussed the literature (primarily empirical) on silence and contemplation in the classroom which has indicated positive learning outcomes by reducing stress and regulating emotions. The chapter highlighted some of the limitations of the empirical approach in understanding silence and how Caranfa's work fills in this gap.

This chapter commences the task of unpacking Caranfa's interpretation of a contemplative classroom by focusing on the importance of silence and listening. I explore Caranfa's arguments for the significance of silence for education and in particular its connection to the importance of listening.

Listening to silence is an imperative aspect of contemplative pedagogy. As any educator would know, without listening, there can be no adequate learning. For a contemplative classroom, we want to develop and refine this skill. For to listen deeply to the words said and what is unsaid, the spaces (the silence) can enable an awareness of the nuances and complexity of words. That is, the *silences between words can contribute to the meaning of what is uttered*. This is important in helping to potentially facilitate deeper understandings and learning within the classroom.

In light of these claims, I will be drawing on Caranfa and Picard's elucidations on silence and listening. We discuss how Caranfa proposes that the discipline of silence aids listening. Listening, he suggests, helps develop the individual's aesthetic, intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. I will examine these aspects as part of Caranfa's conceptual

understanding of how listening to silence is critical in developing a holistic approach to contemplative education.¹

We will then turn to a central influence in Caranfa's work, Max Picard. Some of the main concepts Caranfa employs can be explicated through the writings of Picard. Picard's work will be elaborated to develop a more coherent understanding of silence and its connection to listening and what it could mean to the classroom context. Picard provides support for much of what Caranfa claims on silence in education. Picard is critical in his profound exposition of silence and its positive influence on the lives of individuals and society. I will investigate why Picard thinks that the modern person has failed to listen.

Furthermore, Picard's understandings of silence in relation to language, speech, individual transformation, connection to the divine and education are discussed. Both Picard and Caranfa also suggest that the arts are critical in listening to silence. In addition, I will briefly mention how Martin Heidegger's elucidations on the arts and critique of the sciences provide support for much of what Picard and Caranfa claim on this matter.

Some of the conceptual and practical limitations of both Picard and Caranfa's work will be reviewed in this chapter. Picard's metaphorical and poetic writings, for example, can at times pose problems in fully understanding his claims. Additionally, I will do a brief precursor of the literature on the importance of listening and highlight Caranfa's distinct contributions. The aims of Caranfa's and Picard's approach will be linked to some of the discussions within the Philosophy of Education literature.

¹ For a definition of holistic education, and Caranfa's understanding of this term, see for example, pages 15, and 91–92.

It is important to note that Caranfa's understanding of contemplation is what he meant by religious and spiritual experience in most cases, and he used these terms interchangeably. His concept of spirituality was similar to religious experience; for it was often about both the Platonic forms, the divine and Christian God. I will use the terms contemplation, religious and spiritual experience interchangeably in this thesis.

3.1 Caranfa – discipline of silence aids listening

My account of good listening – while suggesting that it should be skilful, and thus, involve some attention to technique and progressive mastery – claims that it is a virtue ... This virtue is embodied in ... detachment. Such an understanding of listening, however, is not only ambiguous but gives no central role to silence. My understanding is that the silent internalization of, not detachment from, our discourse with the other makes possible our mutual openness to each other. No detachment can open one to the other, unless and until we learn to remain silent. *It is by silence that we learn to listen to what we say to each other. Silence nourishes or cultivates listening, not the other way around*, just as wonder cultivates dialectic or philosophical inquiry, not the opposite.²

It is difficult to understand the role of silence without touching on the nature of listening and its connection to silence. Listening is a foundational component intertwined with the dialectic, speech, and silence. As noted by Caranfa, theorists have discussed the importance of listening in terms of developing certain skills and understanding. Moreover, what Caranfa highlights is the importance of *silence within listening*. He goes on further to argue that when we remain silent, a level of detachment from the other is possible which facilitates a deeper listening and therefore understanding. Caranfa claims above that *silence nourishes listening, not the other way around*. However, is Caranfa right in making this distinction, can we claim to be listening at all without being silent? Isn't silence a necessary part of listening, or is this a question of semantics?

² Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 214. (Italics added for emphasis.)

Caranfa goes on further to address some of these questions. He defines listening as dialogue and discourse. There is a listening to the quiet dialogue within oneself, for example, as we listen to our interior thoughts and feelings. Listening can gauge and engage with the ideas of others in order to increase understandings. He states, “Listening is a *dialogue*, and it is *instructive*...listening is a form of dialogue, a discourse, a relation between the self and the world.”³ Caranfa claims that not only does silence facilitate listening, but silence is also *intertwined* within thought and speech. It is this intersection or interval between words, which is the space that silence encompasses that is the focus of Bernard Dauenhauer’s analysis of silence.

Dauenhauer’s analysis of the structure of silence is useful here to justify the need for listening to the silence between words.⁴ This is important in order to be aware of the actual performative action of speaking. Dauenhauer describes these spaces as *fore- and after silence* and argues that there is an important silence that occurs before words and after words (to join the sentence) and listening attentively to these can help develop our deeper understanding and appreciation of what is been said. That is, the *silences between words can contribute to the meaning of what is uttered*. This has implications in highlighting the significance in listening to the words of a teacher, words in a text and silent reading for deep learning.

³ Angelo Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no 4 (2013), 578.

⁴ Bernard P. Dauenhauer, *Silence, The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 5.

I. Listening to silence leads to an integration of moral, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions.

First, an aesthetic of silence [through art and writing] teaches us to listen in a way that makes possible the integration of the moral, the intellectual and the spiritual dimensions of our life.⁵

Caranfa asserts that listening to silence leads to an integration of the *moral, intellectual, and spiritual* components that we can link to a holistic approach to teaching and learning. The moral implications of listening to silence, however (as I will discuss further in Chapter 8) are not fully explored in his work.

Nevertheless, Caranfa's writings include some interesting citations of other philosophers on the importance of morality in relation to listening and silence. Caranfa, for example, notes the importance of empathy derived from deep listening in silence in his reference to Leonard J. Waks, who describes the effect of listening as an openness to the other. He characterised listening as "empathic listening ... [as] grasping what others are saying, the reality of a situation, as they themselves understand and feel it."⁶ In *Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter*, Caranfa touches on the writings of Paul Ricœur in, *Oneself as Another*, that discuss silence as prompting a deep encounter with the *Other*.⁷ This is also a theme in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas, who had a significant impact on Ricœur.

⁵ Angelo Caranfa, "Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing, and Self-Encounter," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 40, no. 1 (2006): 98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9752.2006.00499.x>

⁶ Leonard Waks, "Two Types of Interpersonal Listening," *Teachers College Record*, 112 no.11 (2010), 2746–2747 in Angelo Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no 4 (2013); 585. See also Edith Stein and Max Scheler's work for the phenomenological analysis of the concept of empathy: Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013); Michael F. Andrews, "Edith Stein and Max Scheler: Ethics, Empathy, and the Constitution of The Acting Person", *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 1 (2012): 33–47, doi:10.5840/qd2012314. The moral dimension of Weil's attentive listening is only alluded to and could be further developed by Caranfa. Furthermore, as we shall see in Chapter 5, Caranfa discussed the works of Simone Weil on the importance of 'attentive listening,' mostly focused on learning and prayer. A theme I will examine in Chapter 8.

⁷ This is a central idea in the work of Levinas, who is an significant influence on Ricœur. See for example: Morny Joy, "Explorations in Otherness: Paul Ricœur and Luce Irigaray," *Études Ricoeuriennes* 4, no. 1 (2013): 71–91.

Levinas states that our relationship to the Other has not only a moral, but a spiritual component. He proposes that in “seeing the face of the other” we are likewise drawn towards an encounter with the divine.⁸ Levinas describes this in the following way:

I cannot describe the relation to God without speaking of my concern for the other. When I speak to a Christian, I always quote Matthew 25: the relation to God is presented there as a relation to another person. It is not a metaphor; in the other, there is a real presence of God. In my relation to the other, I hear the word of God. It is not a metaphor. It is not only extremely important; it is literally true. I’m not saying that the other is God, but that in his or her face I hear the word of God.⁹

Martin Buber also echoes a similar theme to Levinas. In his famous work, *I and Thou*, Buber distinguishes two types of relating that he observed in modern culture described as the “It” and “Thou.”¹⁰ The “It” is a way of relating characterised when we objectify and use people as a means to get something from them, viewing them as “things.”¹¹ The “I-Thou,” however, involves a dialogue of deep listening and presence with the *other*.¹² When we are able to be fully present with the other, and listen deeply, we then see people as human beings with unique qualities and human dignity, not as objects or things we can exploit for our own purposes. Through this deeper way of relating through ‘attentive presence,’ Buber states we recognise something of the transcendent in the other and experience it ourselves through such encounters.¹³

⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*. Jill Robbins (Ed.). (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987).

⁹ Levinas, *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, Jill Robbins, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 171. The Bible includes many examples that connect human love to the divine. The common understanding of the writers was that to experience and understand something about the nature of God, we must ‘love of other.’ We see this exemplified, for example, in the Commandment of Love and the Beatitudes. Also, the works within other religious traditions point to this theme—Jewish scholar Jonathan Sacks (among many others), for example, explores this concept. See, Jonathan Sacks. *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2003).

¹⁰ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Gregor Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 14–16.

¹¹ Buber, *I and Thou*, 14–16. This aspect found in Kant’s moral philosophy. For example, see: Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law: Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (London: Routledge, 2005).

¹² Buber, *I and Thou*, 14–16.

¹³ Buber, *I and Thou*; See also, Rosemary Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 137. This ability to be fully attentive and present to the other is a

While the moral dimensions of attentive listening to silence are not well developed by Caranfa, what is termed the ‘intellectual aspects’ of listening are discussed in greater depth. The intellectual dimensions related to silence point to some of the main themes throughout Caranfa’s writing. These are reviewed in the following chapters with the exploration of Socrates and Augustine’s works on silence in relation to the dialectic.¹⁴ In the following chapters, we see that listening to silence is important, for it can facilitate the dialectic method. When we reach the limitations of the dialectic reason and knowledge, we are confronted by listening to the presence of silence, the unknown and mystery. This is shown in the ‘restless heart’ of Augustine, for him the dialectic search leads him towards embracing silence and God. Listening to silence, for Augustine, transformed knowledge (the dialectic and reason) into what Caranfa describes as a “contemplative experience with the divine.” Caranfa writes:

Thus, listening is a *dialogue*; it is *instructive*. It is within this frame that I place the reflections of Socrates, Augustine...on the reciprocity between speech and silence in education. In fact, it will be shown that for Socrates, Augustine ... such a ‘reconversion of silence and speech into one another’ is a matter of vision as listening and it serves to define the human self on its way to perfection.¹⁵

The spiritual dimensions in Caranfa’s model, likewise, touch on another central theme, that is listening to silence not only enables creativity to develop but is also a gateway to God and transcendence. As I will show further on, Caranfa understood that aesthetic experience is what facilitates creativity and an encounter with the sacred. This theme will be further explored in Chapter 5.

theme in Weil’s work examined in Chapter 8. It is also a theme developed in some feminist literature. For example, see: Morny, Joy, “Explorations in Otherness: Paul Ricœur and Luce Irigaray,” *Études Ricoeuriennes* 4, no. 1 (2013): 71–91; Luce Irigaray, *Luce Irigaray: Key Writings* (London: Continuum, 2004).

¹⁴ This includes the notion that silence leads to an awareness of the limitations of reason and knowledge, potentially facilitating a sense of humility, and an encounter with ‘the mystery.’ This is the focus of Chapter 4. Caranfa’s exposition of Socrates and Augustine explores the link between the dialectic and silence that led to the mystery.

¹⁵ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 578.

Caranfa proposes that silence is the unifying phenomenon at the heart of learning that can foster creativity, he describes it as “imaginative intelligence.”¹⁶ Caranfa proposes that education could foster creativity by placing silence and listening at the core of its curriculum. The absence of silence in the classroom, Caranfa suggests, leads to a lack of creativity and spirituality.¹⁷ Listening to silence has the potential to bring a unity and harmony.¹⁸

The claim I make here is that instruction in the humanities is as much about listening as it is about speaking; ... the aesthetic method, I rely on art and writing. They emerge or develop out of solitude; they are the expressions of the harmonious unity of conceptual intelligence and of imaginative intelligence.¹⁹

Moreover, Caranfa asserts that when reason reaches its limits, the self is transformed through art and the aesthetic experience. Drawing on Friedrich Nietzsche, he proposes that this process includes metaphorically speaking “a recreation of oneself” in that we are no longer the artists, but rather “[man] has himself become a work of art.”²⁰ Caranfa captures Nietzsche’s artistic urgency ‘to create.’ He also draws on Karl Jaspers, who maintains that philosophy does not reveal transcendence; rather, this is discovered through art, “Art ... make[s] Transcendence perceptible ...”²¹ Jaspers suggests that we discover this reality only when we *transcend beyond thinking* and the world of objects to discover a deeper reality which is God: a common theme

¹⁶ Caranfa, “Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter,” 86. While it is not clear what Caranfa means by this term, we can infer from his other writings that it points to a holistic approach to intelligence that includes creativity. The concept of creativity is not explicitly defined by Caranfa, although based on his writings, we can connect his views broadly speaking to many existentialists who understood the role of art and creativity as transformative.

¹⁷ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 228–230.

¹⁸ Drawing on Picard, Caranfa describes this metaphorically as “into the world of wholeness.” Picard, *World of Silence* (Wichita: Eighth Day, 1952), 19; Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 228. This term is closely associated to wholeness and connectedness to all things when silence is present. Picard reiterates this term in the following way.

“... [silence] interferes with the regular flow of the purposeful. It strengthens the untouchable; it lessens the damage inflicted by exploitation. It makes things whole again, by taking them back from the worlds of the dissipation into the world of wholeness. It gives things something of its own holy uselessness, for that is what silence is: holy uselessness”. See Picard, *The World of Silence*, trans. Stanley Godman (Chicago: Gateway Books, 1952), 1.

¹⁹ Angelo Caranfa, “Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter,” 86.

²⁰ Angelo Caranfa, “The Aesthetic Harmony of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35, no. 1 (2001):10, doi:10.2307/3333767.

²¹ Angelo Caranfa, “Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 37, no. 2 (2003): 99, doi:10.2307/3527458.100.

in Caranfa's work.²² Jaspers states that our understanding of God is not through teaching or dogma, but emerges from the "silence of our own being" which is the immanent dimension of the divine.²³ As we journey towards this silence within, Jaspers argues, we are capable of really listening to God.²⁴

Caranfa draws on the works of these existential writers mentioned above to highlight the importance of listening to the silence as it can generate an ability to create and transform the self. This describes the *potentiality of silence as it connects to the arts and aesthetic experience*. Caranfa links these insights from the existential writers to practical implications for the classroom. According to Caranfa, listening to silence can facilitate creativity and ultimately personal transformation. He states:

... theory of education that is based on silence and that captures or fosters the students' creative potential: students see learning primarily as a silent activity and embed their feelings and thoughts in it. Through reading and writing, students learn to speak the right words at the right time; in addition, reading and writing open the hearts and minds of students, enabling them to catch a glimpse of their hidden or unknown self. Words alone are incapable of revealing this self, but silence can.²⁵

Caranfa maintains that when reason has reached its limits, the self is transformed through art and the aesthetic experience: this is a central theme throughout his work.²⁶ It is not entirely clear how Caranfa justifies this claim. Surely, we can still appreciate art and have an aesthetic experience by appealing to reason, and not wait until we reach the limits of reason. We might give a rational analysis of an artwork for example, that might be fulfilling and 'transformative.' While it may include an affective involvement, it does not necessarily preclude the rational. However, what Caranfa might be alluding to here, and not always make explicit, is a critique

²² Caranfa, "Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe,"103.

²³ Caranfa, "Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe,"103

²⁴ Caranfa, "Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe,"103.

²⁵ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 230.

²⁶ Caranfa, "The Aesthetic Harmony of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,"1.

of the logic and reasoning within the modern sciences; which, as many phenomenologists have pointed out, cannot adequately understand subjective experiences.

II. Implications for the classroom

As considered above, listening to silence is imperative for Caranfa's contemplative classroom. Silence provides a platform for integrating the various ways of knowing in learning; the rational, affective, and imaginative. Listening to silence, as Caranfa suggests, can enable the development of various dimensions in learning, including moral, intellectual, and spiritual. Developing these dimensions is what is commonly referred to within current educational literature as pointing towards holistic learning and forms the basis of Caranfa's approach.²⁷

Caranfa's ideas on listening and silence are applied to the classroom. He proposes that reading and writing demands listening to the "silent self".²⁸ This, in turn, liberates the student to move away from the words and influences of the teacher and learn to listen to their own 'silent self.' Here the job of the educator is to encourage a way of reading and writing in silence that can develop self-knowledge. The silence draws out questions and hidden parts of the self. Students engage the silence through imagination and internal reflections.²⁹ Caranfa claims that students, metaphorically speaking, "catch a glimpse of their hidden or unknown self."³⁰ Silence was able to integrate the mind and heart (affective) and lead the individual towards self-knowledge and creativity.³¹ These reflections exemplify Caranfa's understanding of *holistic education*. Caranfa describes this process in the following ways:

²⁷ Holistic learning was defined in Chapter 1.

²⁸ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 229.

²⁹ Caranfa doesn't explain what his notion of imagination is or how it differs from reason. One can infer however that it is part of his understanding of creativity broadly speaking. This is discussed further on.

³⁰ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 230.

³¹ There is vast literature that points to Caranfa's observations about the importance and role of the affective in self-knowledge and education. For example, see: Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006).

By embedding or introducing silence in our classroom discourse, questions of self-knowledge cease to be abstract and impersonal, and they instead become concrete and personal. According to this model, *teaching is primarily a listening activity* by which we as teachers open ourselves and our students to moral, intellectual, and spiritual growth. *The focus of the classroom in this model is listening*, which alone renders us attentive to the *silent voices* of our spoken words ... The application of this model reintroduces into the classroom *spontaneity* or *creativity* along with the genuine sense of the search for *self-knowledge*. The teacher and the student learn to hear each other's words of silence as a prerequisite for creative learning.³²

As illustrated above, Caranfa attempts to provide a holistic theoretical framework that places deep listening to silence at the centre of teaching and learning. His understanding of listening is not just listening to the instructions or talk of the teacher, but rather a deeper listening to the words said and what is unsaid – the silence. This attentiveness to words and silence, he argues, encourages self-knowledge and creativity. The pausing and silence allow ‘the space’ to listen attentively not only to oneself, but also the words of the other.

Furthermore, Caranfa proposes that his model is in contrast with current educational practice. Education today, he claims, is characterised by what he describes as utilitarian and ‘mechanical routines’ that generate what Picard terms as “monstrous facts.”³³ Although not clearly explained, these metaphorical descriptions are more suggestive of Caranfa and Picard’s recurring themes in their writings (discussed further on). This includes a criticism of content-driven focus on teaching and learning which, they claim, excludes silence, deep listening and an awareness of transcendence or God. This is exemplified in Caranfa’s following claim, “... because teaching is not based on silence but has indeed become a mechanical routine. The holy spark or spirit has been killed.”³⁴

³² Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 229. (Emphasis added though italics).

³³ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 228.

³⁴ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 228.

Picard's insights into the complex and nuanced nature of silence will be examined next. These provide some further insights not only into Caranfa's themes, but also help us to form a more complete picture of how listening to silence might appear for society, individuals and a classroom setting. These elucidations can also enlighten our understanding of how listening to silence connects to the divine.

3.2. *Max Picard – How has the modern person failed to listen?*

Man today is incapable of listening; and because he is incapable of listening, he can no longer [speak], for listening and [speaking] belong together: they are a unity.³⁵

We can see that many of Caranfa's main concepts can be drawn from the writings of Picard. Picard unpacks some of the complexity and nuances in how we might understand silence. For Picard, the implications of not listening to silence are detrimental for humankind for the following reasons :1) We fail to connect to our deeper selves, which leaves us incapable of listening and speaking authentically; 2) We fail to connect deeply to others; 3) Language is bereft of meaning and fails to transform us; 4) We are estranged from the transcendence and God.

The insight of Max Picard, as depicted in his work *The World of Silence* in 1948, reflects many of the suggestions empirical researchers have suggested, including that we are prone to every increasing distraction and mindlessness.³⁶ Picard claims that the *modern person has an inability to listen* deeply due to what he describes as the “noise” of society.³⁷ This noise, he

³⁵ Max Picard, *The World of Silence* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), 157 in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 219.

³⁶ See Chapters 1 and 2.

³⁷ See Ellen, J. Langer, *Mindfulness* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub, 1989); Emily A. P. Haigh et al., “Examination of The Factor Structure and Concurrent Validity of The Langer Mindfulness/Mindlessness Scale,” *Assessment* 18, no. 1 (2010): 11-26, doi:10.1177/1073191110386342.

claims, is the result of a technological modern culture that does not value silence.³⁸ Picard's notion of *noise* contrasts with silence.

NOTHING HAS changed the nature of man so much as the loss of silence. The invention of printing, technics, compulsory education—nothing has altered man as this lack of relationship to silence, this fact that silence is no longer taken for granted, as something as natural as the sky above or the air we breathe.³⁹

Picard states that the forgetting of silence (a by-product of technology and industrialisation) poses significant implications to society at large. To view silence as “unproductive” and “valueless” is detrimental to mankind.⁴⁰ The forgetting of silence, Picard asserts, leads to a loss of ‘genuine’ listening. Picard (like Heidegger and Kierkegaard) claims that the modern person is lost and disconnected from him/herself, others, and the community at large.⁴¹ He describes the modern person as “forlorn,” and isolated from his/her fellow humans.⁴²

Picard writes that the removal of silence leads to depersonalisation. He states that everything is subjected to experimentation and explanation, and people are reduced to ‘abstractions’ left “diminished and dissolved”.⁴³ The understanding of the ‘self,’ as a result, would dissolve into a ‘series of explanations’ that exist only in mental abstractions.⁴⁴ These metaphorical claims lack clarity. They could point to the notion that theoretical abstractions, especially in relation to scientific explanations, are essentially limited and reductionistic in *fully* explaining human experience. This is the position taken by phenomenologists. Caranfa notes, for example, below

³⁸ Martin Heidegger was very critical of the effects of modern technology on society, see Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (Harper and Row, 1977).

³⁹ Picard, *The World of Silence* (Wichita: Eighth Day, 1952), 221.

⁴⁰ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 18–19.

⁴¹ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 65. For example, see: Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*.

⁴² Picard, *The World of Silence*, 65.

⁴³ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 208 in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 222.

⁴⁴ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 208 in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 222.

that Picard's critique of the modern sciences is in their tendency to lead to an impersonal relationship between the object and the self. As Caranfa writes:

Picard's criticism of the sciences is not about the process of knowing; rather, it is about the idea that the methods of science tend to make the relationship between the self and the object impersonal and autonomous. Modern scientific methods not only tend to separate the self and the object, but also to give explanations a life of their own. 'It was [not] like that in the beginning of modern science, in the days of Galileo, Kepler, Swammerdam' (WS, 76). Picard ultimately extends this criticism of the methods of modern science to the teaching of all fields of knowledge.⁴⁵

Picard argues that when language is no longer related to silence it loses its renewal, refreshment, and depth.⁴⁶ Caranfa claims that Picard wanted to move away from the utilitarian use of language that results from noise and utility. Picard states that, in this modern technological society, language is not "...natural or spontaneous...alive and communicative..." but rather mechanical, empty and full of noise.⁴⁷ We do not use language anymore to "create ourselves and language is removed from its spiritual origin, no longer symbolic of something 'greater than itself.'"⁴⁸

Picard proposes that silence helps move language towards its infinity.⁴⁹ He claims that language has not only lost its spiritual qualities in the modern world, but also its ability to make humans 'think'.⁵⁰ Picard asserts, like Heidegger, that "Man no longer thinks, he has his thinking

⁴⁵ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 225.

⁴⁶ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 41 in Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 222.

⁴⁷ Picard, *The World of Silence* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), 65 in Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 222.

⁴⁸ The ability of language to point to something outside oneself (such as the transcendence) is explored by many great writers and existentialist. For example, Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics* (New York: Penguin, 1999); William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1870); Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

⁴⁹ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 37.

⁵⁰ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 222.

done for him.” This reiterates Heidegger’s well-known claim in *What is Thinking?* that “Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking.”⁵¹

Language corresponds by its very structure to the truth that is made manifest in it. Therefore, everything has an impulse to be expressed in language, because it finds fulfilment in language and is raised to a higher level through the truth. There is an incline from silence to language, to the truth of the word; and the gravitational force of this incline pushes truth on still further from language down into the active life of the world ...⁵²

Picard states that poetry has a natural relationship with silence. “True poetry” is in possession of an object and goes it search for the words, not vice versa.⁵³ Poetry is a place where words are left open to find an audience, “an ear to transport itself to the other”, or a deep listening.⁵⁴ He proposes that poetry today has too many words with nothing meaningful to convey. As stated, poetry not only comes from silence, but it can also produce silence.⁵⁵ Picard asserts that great poetry (as in the works of Hölderlin, Goethe and Shakespeare) metaphorically speaking “is a mosaic inlaid into silence.”⁵⁶

For Picard, language and speech derive from silence, which requires deep listening. When two people converse, and silence is present, a breadth and depth is brought to the conversation. When words move between two people, there is almost like a third person present; this is silence. Words from this context take on a new fullness and listening has a depth of quality and ontological purpose.⁵⁷ It also may serve to highlight that we are not able to be sufficiently ‘present’ and attentive to each other.

⁵¹ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 222 in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 222; Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* 240. It is not clear what Picard understood as ‘thinking.’ Still, as we shall see later, Heidegger understood this to be ‘meditative thinking’ which is thinking that is more open-ended and reflective, with a focus on subjective experiences.

⁵² Picard, *The World of Silence*, 33–34 in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 221.

⁵³ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 147.

⁵⁴ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 145.

⁵⁵ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 225.

⁵⁶ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 145.

⁵⁷ Picard, *The World of Silence* (Wichita: Eighth Day, 1952), 18–19.

The importance of a deep presence towards the other maintained by Picard also resonate with Levinas and Buber's themes mentioned previously. These scholars describe the encounter between the "I" and "Other" as potentially having moral and spiritual significance.⁵⁸ For in relating to the "Other" through a kind of passivity, openness and deep presence, we encounter something of the divine. This is reflected in Levinas' ideas on language. Levinas makes distinctions within language which he describes as the saying (on dire) and said (dit).⁵⁹ The saying conjures all the nuances and tones of speech (e.g., the silence) whereas 'said' is in reference to what is already spoken that misses all the nuances of the way something is said.⁶⁰ Tomohiro Inukai claims that for Levinas, the 'Saying' is pointing to the transcendence of the other, he states that "...although no 'Saying' is detached from the 'Said', the 'Saying' has an intrigue of sense, signifiness (significance) of approaching the other."⁶¹

Levinas describes this relation to the Other as essentially one of mystery and unknowing.⁶² For the Other cannot be categorised or possessed but is rather completely different to myself.⁶³ It is in their uniqueness and separateness from me that I love them. This is contrary to the notion of 'likeness' in values for love and friendship espoused by Aristotle. Levinas speaks to a radical love of neighbour that emerges within the Gospels. Here Jesus talks about loving those who are beyond our group, for example, the Samaritan, and showing compassion for the stranger.

⁵⁸ Tomohiro Inukai, "The Status of Saying: Witness against Rhetoric in Levinas's Philosophy," *Religions* 9, no. 12 (2018): 7. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9120410>. This was also pointed out by John Ozoliņš in his written feedback for this chapter.

⁵⁹ Inukai, "The Status of Saying: Witness against Rhetoric in Levinas's Philosophy." This was also pointed out by John Ozoliņš in his written feedback for this chapter.

⁶⁰ Inukai, "The Status of Saying: Witness against Rhetoric in Levinas's Philosophy."

⁶¹ Inukai, "The Status of Saying: Witness against Rhetoric in Levinas's Philosophy," 7. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987); Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁶² Levinas, *Time and the Other*; Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*.

⁶³ Levinas, *Time and the Other*, Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*.

The Commandment of Love taught by Jesus speaks strongly to Levinas' claims that in loving our neighbour who is *Other* (different) than myself, I likewise show the love of God.⁶⁴

As discussed, a sense of deep presence towards the 'Other' can be an act of love that includes listening to their words and the silence between words. This points to a moral and spiritual way of being in the modern world. However, according to Picard, the focus on science and technology in modern culture is leading us in an opposite direction. This, he contends, is towards dehumanisation. Picard claims that the methods of science within the modern society leave the individual person 'depersonalized.'⁶⁵ Picard states that the focus of modern society on profit and utility renders silence as 'useless.'⁶⁶ For silence cannot be used or exploited for profit, it is unproductive and therefore understood as 'useless and valueless,' he states:

Silence is the only phenomenon today that is "useless". It does not fit into the world of profit and utility; it simply *is*... It cannot be exploited for profit; you cannot get anything out of it. It is "unproductive." Therefore, it is regarded as valueless.⁶⁷

Picard goes on to say that the lack of deep listening to silence within modern culture means we are incapable of achieving self-integration. According to Picard, the aim of listening to silence is to achieve integration within the self. This practice allows the various objects that surround us to become absorbed within the psyche. He states: "the objects find their true order automatically."⁶⁸ He further asserts that when we listen to silence in objects and within us, we

⁶⁴ Many Christian scholars would see the obvious links of Levinas' ideas to Jesus' commandment to love in the Gospels. For example, Jesus states: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hangs the whole Law, and the Prophets," See, Mt 22: 37-40.

⁶⁵ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 76.

⁶⁶ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 18–19. However, it is unclear how silence interferes with profit and utility. We may refer to the literature in Chapters 1, 2 and 6, which examined the influences of neoliberalism in current education and highlighted that, generally, silence is not perceived as 'valuable' or 'useful' within modern educational contexts. Researchers demonstrated that, overall, silence is not recognised as a legitimate presence for learning within the classroom.

⁶⁷ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 18–19.

⁶⁸ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 70.

are led to an absence of contradictions and a movement towards a harmony within the self. Silence is understood through the senses, and is an intuitive feeling that objects are related to each other, forming a “balanced unity.”⁶⁹ In the *practice of listening to silence, therefore, the self achieves its unity and balance*. Silence allows the self to be “re-created.”⁷⁰ What Picard means here is that it enables the self to become ‘unified’ and ‘healed’, no longer at war with the self, free from the limitations of the past, and able to move positively towards the future.⁷¹ For Picard, therefore the practice of listening to silence is transformative and has an ontological purpose. Picard suggests that, while silence may not be viewed as tangible and useful for profit in economic terms, in its transformative power of leading us “into the world of wholeness” it provides instead a “holy uselessness.” He writes:⁷²

[Silence]...interferes with the regular flow of the purposeful. It strengthens the untouchable; it lessens the damage inflicted by exploitation. It makes things whole again, by taking them back from the worlds of the dissipation into the world of wholeness. It gives things something of its own holy uselessness, for that is what silence is: holy uselessness.⁷³

As Picard relies heavily on metaphors, it is not entirely clear exactly how this process of personal integration occurs. We can deduce, however, that like Caranfa, Picard understood that through the practice of being silent and listening to silence, eventually one allows the silence to permeate the mind and heart that potentially leads to self-integration and what we might

⁶⁹ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 70 in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 218. This can be likened to Whitehead’s idea of the organic whole, which points to particulars coming together into a whole. For more see, Angelo Caranfa, “Literature, Art, And Sacred Silence in Whitehead’s Poetics of Philosophy,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (2015): 474–501, doi :10.5325/jspecphil.29.4.0474; Alfred A. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960).

⁷⁰ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 219.

⁷¹ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 219, 224.

⁷² What might shed further light on these terms is Caranfa explains Picard’s phrase in the following way: “the whole of knowledge” in the following ways, “We must be careful not to understand Picard’s concept of ‘the whole of knowledge’ to mean that both teachers and students should know the whole of any subject matter. As Picard uses the term, ‘whole’ means that we should not lose sight of the connections that a particular subject has with other subjects and with silence, which reconciles all sorts of knowledge into a harmonious unity: “For example, knowledge in the world of Herodotus is very various and variegated, but all the same there is a peace over all the mass of knowledge – the peace which comes from the calm gaze of the gods.” Picard, *The World of Silence*, 75; Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 224.

⁷³ Picard, *The World of Silence*, trans. Stanley Godman (Chicago: Gateway Books, 1952),1.

describe as wellbeing. Picard's insights may well reflect what empirical research has suggested about the positive impacts of silence, explored in Chapter 2, in leading to an increase in overall wellbeing.⁷⁴ With the Mindfulness literature, for example, listening to silence can potentially facilitate an 'awareness' of thoughts and emotions and through this awareness an acceptance and integration of emotions and cognition within the psyche can occur. This could echo Picard's observations about the effects of silence within the individual psyche. Picard describes this process of the integration of external objects to silence in the following ways:

The silent substance in the child assimilates the foreign material, fuses it with the other contents of the mind, broadens the whole nature of the child, and extends its mental frontiers. Proper education and proper teaching are based on the substance of silence.⁷⁵

As demonstrated above, Picard makes some strong claims about modern culture. The influences of technology have led to a loss of silence and ever-increasing noise. Picard argues that this is reflected in our language. There is a loss of creativity and personal meaning, even so far as capacity to 'think.' One can see that Picard is referring to a utilitarian use of language which we find within modern discourse daily. With the increased capacity of social media to produce platforms like Twitter and emojis, our language becomes reduced in its capacity to say *what it could* potentially convey. Picard may be correct in pointing to a culture in the West (which through its language) broadly speaking, does not value religion and spirituality, and therefore has lost silence.⁷⁶ He does point to what many have observed in the West as

⁷⁴ For example, see: What Mindfulness? et al., "Mindfulness In Schools – For The Flourishing Of Young Minds"; Kimberley Holmes, "Neuroscience, Mindfulness and Holistic Wellness Reflections on Interconnectivity in Teaching and Learning," *Interchange* 50, no. 3 (2019): 445–460, doi:10.1007/s10780-019-09360-6; Kimberley Holmes, "Mindfulness as a Practice of Professional Life," *Journal of Educational Thought* 50, no. 1 (2017): 21–42; Patricia A. Jennings, *Mindfulness for teachers: Simple skills for peace and productivity in the classroom*. (New York, NY: Norton Series on the Social Neuroscience of Education, 2015); John Currie, "Silence in The Classroom: From Reacting to Rapport" *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 29, no. 1 (2019): 89, doi:10.1353/tmf.2019.0005; Mary M. Reda, *Between Speaking and Silence a Study of Quiet Students* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009).

⁷⁵ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 224.

⁷⁶ Picard, *The World of Silence*.

secularisation. Schubert Ogden, for example, describes secularisation as “abject meaninglessness, a state of moral and volitional entropy.”⁷⁷

Picard is likewise describing a culture (and contemporary language) which overall reflects more the influences of neoliberalism than religion or the humanities (a factor he does not explicitly discuss). The pervasive and negative impacts of neoliberalism (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 6) on society at large, with increased workloads and individual pressures and stresses, are reflected in Picard’s criticisms illustrated in modern language that is functional, mechanical and has lost its spiritual essence, its silence. The arts and poetry, however, as Picard points out, have the potential to redeem our humanity and put us back to silence and our ‘lost self.’ This is a theme developed throughout the thesis and also advocated by other thinkers such as Martin Heidegger.

I. Link to Martin Heidegger’s critique of technology and science

What Heidegger understood is that technology (and science) lead to a ‘type of thinking’ which is not conducive to our essence, or for contemplating personal meaning.⁷⁸ Like Picard, Heidegger states that modern society is characterised by a type of thinking driven by results and utility, what he termed *calculative thinking*.⁷⁹ Heidegger understood calculative thinking as including analysis and logic that is more suited to scientific investigation and research rather than exploring the subjective self. Meditative thinking, on the other hand, is a type of thinking which is more open-ended, spontaneous, and conducive to an understanding of a person’s

⁷⁷ Schubert M. Ogden, “The Reality of God” in *The Reality of God and Other Essays* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1992), 9.

⁷⁸ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*

⁷⁹ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*

‘essence’ or subjective experiences.⁸⁰ Heidegger describes calculative thinking as leading to a pervading “frantic quality, a restlessness” that results in an “inattentiveness and existential homelessness;” he states, “In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, that is his essence.”⁸¹ It is a type of thinking which is ‘fragmented,’ going from one thing to the other, described as “a growing thoughtlessness,” causing man to be “in flight from thinking.”⁸² A thinking which never stops to “recollect” or think about the “essence of things,” which points to what he describes as *mediative thinking*.⁸³ Heidegger’s critique of calculative thinking and science in general echoes Picard and Caranfa’s views, which as illustrated below, are unequivocal. His provocative critique on the hegemony of the sciences is explicit and unambiguous, Heidegger states:

Whence do the sciences – which necessarily are always in the dark about the origins of their own nature-derive the authority to pronounce such verdicts? Whence do the sciences derive the right to decide what man’s place is, and to offer themselves as the standard that justifies such decisions.⁸⁴

Thus art is: the creative preserving of truth in the work. *Art then is the becoming and happening of truth*⁸⁵

The voice of thought must be poetic because poetry is the saying of truth, the saying of the unconcealment.⁸⁶

For it is the arts (and in particular poetry) and not science and technology, that can allow us to “contemplate the meaning of the universe,” or what Heidegger termed the *Enthergen*. *Enthergen* means ‘truth’ and a dwelling within our essence or inner core or being.⁸⁷ It is

⁸⁰ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*

⁸¹ David R Cerbone, *Heidegger* (London: Continuum, 2008) 164–165. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 332.

⁸² Heidegger, Martin, *Discourse on Thinking*. trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966b), 45; Raymond, A. Younis, “On Thinking (and Measurement)” (conference paper, Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia Conference, 43, on ‘Measuring Up in Education’, Melbourne, Australia, December 2013), 1.

⁸³ Younis, “On Thinking (and Measurement),” 3.

⁸⁴ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* 43.

⁸⁵ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, 69.

⁸⁶ Heidegger, “In the Origins of the work of Art” 72, in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, introduction x, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

⁸⁷ Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” in Martin Heidegger, *Basic writings: from Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964)* ed David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 318. Heidegger proposes that

important to note that ‘truth’ for Heidegger was not found in attempting to develop an ‘objective theory’ or explaining the universe, but rather an elucidation of *what it means to be a human being*. This task outlines his ontology of being. For this purpose, science (and scientific thinking or calculative thinking) has no use, only the arts, he argued, can help us to adequately understand the “essence of our being.” He states “...poetically man dwells...Poetry is what really lets us dwell...” that is, man dwells or rests existentially in the words of poetry.”⁸⁸ Heidegger’s writing on the arts has had a huge influence on many existential philosophers. For both Picard and Caranfa, Heidegger’s work provides further support for their integration of the arts and aesthetic experience with silence, which they claim have positive implications for the classroom.⁸⁹ The importance of the arts, and their distinction from the sciences, is also reiterated by Alfred Whitehead and cited by Caranfa. Whitehead states following:

For art vivifies, nourishes the soul (SMW,291) it adds to the permanent richness of the soul’s self-creation; it justifies itself by “enjoyment, and also by its discipline of the inmost being” (SMW, 291); it is ‘the life of the spirit’ (SMW, 289); it promotes the life of feeling, differing from science, which promotes the life of the intellect.⁹⁰

II. Picard –Silence and the divine

Silence is a basic phenomenon. That is to say, it is a primary, objective reality, which cannot be traced back to anything else. It cannot be replaced by anything else; it cannot be exchanged with anything else. Silence is original and self-evident like the other basic phenomena; like love [beauty, truth, goodness] and loyalty and death itself. But it existed before all these and is in all of them. Silence is the firstborn of the basic phenomena. It envelops the other basic phenomena – love [beauty, truth, goodness], loyalty, and death; and there is more silence than speech in them, more of the invisible

when we see reality as solely focused on ‘production’ (as in technology) and do not consider the significance of the arts, we lose our humanity. See Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” in Heidegger Martin, *Basic writings: from Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964)*. ed David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 339.

⁸⁸ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, 213.

⁸⁹ For example, see Jean-Paul, Sartre. *Existentialism and humanism* London: Eyre Methuen, 1973; Özen Ufuk.

“Contemporary Humanism: Sartre’s Existentialist Humanism and Heideggerian Humanism,” *Mediterranean journal of social sciences* 4, no. 6 (2013).

⁹⁰ Alfred N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 289 in Angelo Caranfa, “Literature, Art, And Sacred Silence in Whitehead’s Poetics of Philosophy,” 494.

than the visible. There is also more silence in one person than can be used in a single human life. That is why every human utterance is surrounded by a mystery ...⁹¹

As illustrated above, Caranfa includes this definition of silence by Picard which understands silence as an "... objective phenomenon ... It envelops ... surrounded by a mystery ... objective reality."⁹² These concepts of the divine can be closely associated to theological and religious literature frequently alluded to in terms of 'mystery' or the 'ineffable,' and best described by theologian Karl Rahner as an 'all pervading' presence which remains silent.⁹³ A phenomenon not easily described or expressed in language. Hence the ineffable remains within the realm of the 'unspeakable' reality, which is self-evident and all encompassing, it has an immanent and transcendent quality.⁹⁴ These analogies used when recounting the divine are similarly featured within apophatic or negative theology (*via negativa*) where it is generally accepted that God is 'unknowable' and 'beyond words.' Like Caranfa (as discussed further in Chapter 5) Picard also combines Neoplatonic ideas to Christian concepts of the divine through allusions to terms such as "Perfect Beauty...perfect unity."⁹⁵ Caranfa states that Picard draws on the Neoplatonic tradition which expresses the spirit of Augustine and Dionysius. He continues to assert that Picard's work is to be comprehended within the context of philosophers who have adopted the Augustinian–Dionysian tradition (such as Blaise Pascal, Kierkegaard, Marcel and Levinas).⁹⁶ This tradition, he argued, understood that all things longed for God (as

⁹¹ Max Picard, *The World of Silence* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), 21.

⁹² Picard, *The World of Silence*, 21. Likewise Dauenhauer states that despite its complexity, silence can be defined as a "unitary phenomenon." See Dauenhauer, *Silence, The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), Introduction.

⁹³ A vast amount of theological literature explores Rahner's works, particularly about the notion of 'mystery' within the Christian tradition – a central concept discussed by many theologians. For example, see Karl Rahner, "Faith", *Philosophy and Theology* 18, no. 2 (2006): 393-399, doi:10.5840/philtheol200618220 and John Thornhill, *Christian Mystery in The Secular Age* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1991).

⁹⁴ The claim that God is 'unknowable' and 'beyond words' extends to the notion that the divine cannot be understood because it is radically "transcendent" or 'other,' see Ilse Nina Bulhof and Laurens ten Kate, *Flight of The Gods* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000) 5. This link is central to Caranfa's work, as evident through his discussion on Weil, Picard, Socrates and Matisse. For further discussion on negative and apophatic theology, see pages: 133 and 152–154.

⁹⁵ Max Picard, *The World of Silence* (Wichita: Eighth Day, 1952), 21.

⁹⁶ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 220.

agape) and ‘eternal Truth,’ and that Dionysius describes God as Divine Eros (Agape).⁹⁷ Caranfa argues that Augustine and Dionysius claimed that God cannot be understood in words or language, and silence was towards union with God.⁹⁸ God is often described here as the ‘perfect love’ that transforms the original silence into speech.⁹⁹

The importance of listening to silence is critical for Picard, as it provides a way of ‘making space for God.’ Picard argues it is essential not only to listen to ourselves, but also to make space for the “silence of God.”¹⁰⁰ Words, Picard argues, do not point to themselves in a literal sense, but rather to a life “beyond words and man.”¹⁰¹ Caranfa claims that for Picard, words come from silence and in discourse return to silence, which contains within itself the “whole of our existence” which is not clearly explained and could imply the universe or God.¹⁰² This is in line with how God is often referred to within Christian theology. As mentioned, God is described as ‘all-encompassing,’ pointing to the transcendent understanding of the divine. Picard goes on to state that it is here that time stands still, as time and silence are intertwined. It is in the “silence of eternity,” the moment of self-transcendence that the self is transformed and restored by silence.¹⁰³ This points to the creativity of silence to transform and ‘re-create the self,’ metaphorically speaking, and is enabled by the act of deep listening, Picard writes:

Where silence is still an active force, man is constantly re-created by the word that comes out of the silence, and constantly disappearing in the silence before God. His existence is a continuous creation in the word through God and a disappearing in the silence before God.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 220.

⁹⁸ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 220.

⁹⁹ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 220.

¹⁰⁰ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 229.

¹⁰¹ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 129 in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 222.

¹⁰² Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 220.

¹⁰³ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 117.

¹⁰⁴ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 179.

Picard connects prayer with silence, and he claims this rests on religious faith. Prayer and faith, Picard claims, emerge from a deep encounter with silence. In prayer, the word comes again out of silence and disappears into silence and joins with the silence of God.¹⁰⁵ For Picard, however, silence is depicted in various ways, which are at times ambiguous. Picard refers to the silence as God, for example, and to the silence of man, which are paradoxically also taken up by God. He writes:

In prayer the word comes again out *of itself* into silence...It is taken up by God, taken away from man...Prayer can be never-ending, but the word of prayer always disappears into silence. Prayer is a pouring of the word into silence...Elsewhere, outside prayer, the silence of man is fulfilled and receives its meaning in speech. But in prayer it receives its meaning and fulfilment in the meeting with silence of God.¹⁰⁶

III. Picard on education

Picard draws his theology of silence into the pedagogy of the classroom. Picard, like Caranfa, proposes that only when education is based on *listening* to silence can deep learning take place. This approach to education, he argues, connects us with the eternal Word, that frees us from the “mechanical routine” (a term not explained).¹⁰⁷ One can infer, from Picard’s overall writing, that what he is referring to here is the educational setting which is characterised by a content approach which includes prescriptive and rigid routines within the classrooms. These classrooms are not open to the spirit of creativity, which he suggests relies on spontaneity when you incorporate silence.¹⁰⁸ Silence, Picard claims, receives its meaning in speech. However, the silence of man ultimately moves beyond speech, he argues, leading to the “silence of God”.¹⁰⁹ Picard concludes that if education is to move beyond the world of utility, profit, and

¹⁰⁵ This can be likened to Bernard Dauenhauer’s descriptions of ‘deep silence.’ See Bernard P. Dauenhauer, *Silence, The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, 19. This also points to the mystical tradition within religious traditions that encompass silence and stillness within their practice

¹⁰⁶ Picard, *The World of Silence* (Chicago: Henry Gateway, 1952), 231–232.

¹⁰⁷ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 226.

¹⁰⁸ Picard, *The World of Silence*.

¹⁰⁹ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 226.

noise, it must lead us to the silence of God, in which he claims authentic transformation and learning can exist.¹¹⁰ Listening to silence can lead us towards transformation and ultimately God, which can enrich teaching and learning and student development.

Picard, like Caranfa, is critical of current educational practice, which is described as mechanical and depersonalised, emphasising a utilitarian approach. What they claim is that education should rather be directed towards self-knowledge, the soul, and God.¹¹¹ While Picard like Caranfa, does not provide reasons as to *why* to this approach is more favourable, we can surmise from their work which is religious (e.g., Picard's writing about silence and God) that the relationship with God is important for happiness and personal transformation. This theme is also echoed in Caranfa's writings, for example, his exploration of the existential thinkers discussed earlier. Picard alludes to the importance of happiness which results from silence in what follows.¹¹²

To base teaching and learning on silence and deep listening, Picard argues, is to move beyond the focus on utility and profitability and create conditions for happiness.¹¹³ Here silence not only allows the self to be re-created but is also a necessary condition for happiness. He states: "There is an immeasurability in happiness that only feels at home in the breadth of silence. Happiness and silence belong together just as do profit and noise [and utility]."¹¹⁴ Silence, he argues, leads to happiness in the soul.¹¹⁵ He goes on to claim that listening and being attentive

¹¹⁰ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 226.

¹¹¹ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning."

¹¹² For example, in *The World of Silence*, by Picard, we see a discussion that is predominately about God and silence. Likewise, Caranfa's work exemplifies the importance of the relationship to the divine and God.

¹¹³ As Caranfa points out, the effects of the modern world according to Picard results in "The self is thus 'depersonalized' or 'mechanized' and behaves like determined particles in motion," Picard, *The World of Silence*, 76 in Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 219.

¹¹⁴ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 71 in Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 224.

¹¹⁵ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," 224.

to silence moves the mind away from words and ideas which are “vague and indefinite.”¹¹⁶ It is unclear exactly what Picard means here, however, we can infer from previous writings that he is highly likely referring to the Platonic forms.

Picard goes on to write that language is characterised by technicality often used to explain phenomena and provide ready-made answers.¹¹⁷ He is alluding here to the content-focused approach to education which is evident in many educational settings today. He states that modern language has no connection to students’ interiority or soul, which he claims should be the focus of education. Within school curriculums, notions of knowledge, the good, the beautiful and lovable (that echo Platonic ideals) are reduced to a focus on profit and utility, all of which exclude silence.¹¹⁸ True learning, he states, cannot occur without silence.

Furthermore, Picard fails to say *why* there is no ‘silence’ in profit and utility or explore *why* we should have students focus on the good and beautiful. What might not be very clearly stated and what Picard is alluding to, we can surmise, is the current movement away from holistic education towards a focus on content-driven education today.¹¹⁹ As examined in Chapters 1 and 8, this is the by-product of a neoliberal approach to education in the West that is not explicitly addressed by Picard nor Caranfa.

¹¹⁶ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 224.

¹¹⁷ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 61; Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 223.

¹¹⁸ Caranfa explore the notion of Platonic contemplation as a basis for thinking within the classroom, for more see Chapter 2.

¹¹⁹ As demonstrated in Chapter 2, researchers found that silence in the classroom had positive educational outcomes. Furthermore, some scholars explored the benefits of not only including silence but also incorporating an inquiry approach to teaching and learning that moved away from content-driven pedagogy. Many claimed that this approach facilitated students to engage in deeper reflection and learning. These findings support Picard’s claims. See, Ann Medaille and Janet Usinger, “Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom,” *College Teaching* 67, no. 2 (2019):132; Katherine Schultz, *Rethinking Classroom Participation* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009); Kay Carpenter Rosheim, “The Quiet Continuum: Listening and Learning from Quiet Students in the Classroom.” (PhD, diss., University of Minnesota, 2018) Publishing. <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/quiet-continuum-listening-learning-students/docview/2055705454/se-2?accountid=8194>.

In support of Picard and Caranfa's views, Azar Nafisi likewise examines the mechanistic and utilitarian approach to education which upholds very little room for questioning. She states that current education includes "a simplification of reality and generalisation of concepts – looking too complacent, ready-made answers."¹²⁰ A Persian immigrant to the US, what Nafisi was able to observe is that the current approach to education is a by-product of capitalism that is neglecting the humanities, in particular the arts. The implication, she argues, is dehumanising. Nafisi, like Picard and Caranfa, claims that the arts and humanities enable access and exploration of the subjective inner life, where one can potentially develop values and morality.¹²¹ Nafisi proposes that we need to be rescued from the negative effects of consumerism through the arts so that our freedom, internal life, and humanity are restored. She writes the following:

The inner self is what makes it possible for private individuals to become responsible citizens...linking their own good to that of society...for this they need to know, pause, to think, to question...how can we protect ourselves from a culture of manipulation, where tastes and flavors are re-created chemically in laboratories...commercials influence what we eat, wear and read...we need the pristine beauty of truth as revealed to us in fiction, poetry, music and the Arts: we need to retrieve the third eyes of imagination.¹²²

¹²⁰ Azar Nafisi, *The Republic of Imagination* (London: William Heinemann, 2014), 11.

See educational researcher Alan Reid critique of the Australian education system in Chapters 6. Allan Reid, *Changing Australian Education: How Policy Is Taking Us Backwards and What Can Be Done About It* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

¹²¹ Nafisi, *The Republic of Imagination*, 11.

¹²² Nafisi, *The Republic of Imagination*, 17.

IV. *Limitations of Picard's Writings*

Nonetheless, Picard's metaphorical and poetic language, has been rightly criticised by scholars such as Dauenhauer and Gabriel Marcel for not providing a systematic description of silence.¹²³ As shown above, Picard's language is at times problematic, leaving terms undefined and not adequately explained. His reference to "silence as substance," for example, is not clearly described. Furthermore, Picard's connection of silence to the divine is not consistent and at times ambiguous. The allusions to silence as "...basic phenomenon...it is a primary, objective reality...But it existed before all these..." and the "substance of silence which lies beneath all things" would seem to suggest that silence is understood to mean God, the creator of all things.¹²⁴ On the other hand, silence is also depicted as distinct from God; for example, he writes, "The silence of God is different from the silence of man."¹²⁵ While the polyvalent understanding of silence is not problematic in itself, Picard fails to highlight these distinctions. Picard draws heavily on metaphors which are mostly not signposted, making his writings at times difficult to decipher.

As Marcel points out, Picard's contributions still offer rich insights into the subject of silence that can be only understood, he states, when you "read his work."¹²⁶ Picard highlights the power of poetic language to be informative and transformative.¹²⁷ What Picard offers, Marcel argues,

¹²³ See Gabriel Marcel, in Picard, *The World of Silence*, 9-14; Dauenhauer, *Silence, The Phenomenon and Its Ontological Significance*, 137.

¹²⁴ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 21.

¹²⁵ Picard, *The World of Silence*, 229.

¹²⁶ Gabriel Marcel in Picard, *The World of Silence*, 9-14.

¹²⁷ Many scholars have noted this observation. For example, biblical scholar Samuel Tongue proposes that the limitations of the critical method mean that we may need to consider approaching biblical reading texts as poetry for them to speak to us at a deeper level. See Samuel Tongue, *Between Biblical Criticism*, 262. Also, see Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004).

points to a way of knowing that is not empirically, or logically demonstrated, yet remains valuable in providing insight into the topic of silence.¹²⁸ Marcel writes:

From the point of view of a holistic critic, of course—that is to say, from the point of view of that empirical and evolutionary tradition in philosophy....Picard’s metaphysics of silence lose any possible meaning; they become merely absurd. For that empiricist’s philosophy, the word as such is merely one variety of the sign. But let us remember ... Wilhem von Humboldt had already affirmed in the most explicit fashion that language could not be reduced to a mere system of signs...in his opinion, language had to be regarded as a boon immediately conferred on the human creature as such. If we are to accept Humboldt’s attitude, it becomes immediately possible to understand— or rather conceive—how it may be permissible to understand—or rather conceive—how it may be permissible to think of the word, as such, coming forth from the fullness of silence; and this fullness of silence confers on the word, as it were, its legitimate function ...¹²⁹

3.3 Literature on the importance of listening.

The connection between listening, thinking, and understanding have been discussed by many philosophers, theologians in psychotherapy and counselling. There is vast literature on this topic that will be examined further in Chapter 8. However, I will point to a few examples here in order to further justify the importance of listening.¹³⁰ Martin Heidegger and Jean-Luc Nancy explore the importance of listening as having a vital epistemic role which helps us in our thinking and understanding of the world.¹³¹ As recalled, Heidegger linked listening with understanding, claiming that “one cannot understand unless one is listening”.¹³² Listening

¹²⁸ Gabriel Marcel in Picard, *The World of Silence*, 9–14.

¹²⁹ Marcel in Picard, *The World of Silence*, 10.

¹³⁰ For example, see Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Jean Luc Nancy and Mandell Charlotte, *Listening*. (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2007); Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Perennial Library, 1976) xiv; Rosalind Pearmain, *The Heart of Listening Attentional Qualities in Psychotherapy* (SPC Series. London: Continuum, 2001), Richard D Chessick, *The Technique and Practice of Listening in Intensive Psychotherapy* (Northvale, N.J.:Jason Aronson,1989); Brian Kane, “Jean-Luc Nancy and the Listening Subject,” *Contemporary Music Review* 31, no. 5-6 (2012): 439-47; Shapiro Yakov, et al., “Listening beneath the Words: Parallel Processes in Music and Psychotherapy,” *American Journal of Play* 9, no. 2 (2017): 228.

¹³¹ Nancy Jean Luc and Mandell Charlotte, *Listening* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2007); Peter Szendy and Nancy Jean-Luc, *Listen A History of Our Ears* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

¹³² Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, xv, in Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 259.

attentively therefore has important epistemological and moral importance that can be integrated within a classroom.

Like all teachers, Simone Weil also understood the importance of attentive listening for learning. She proposed that attention was a vital component for learning in schools in a general sense. Attention towards even unfavourable subjects, she argues, instils attitudes and skills which she terms the “gymnastics of attention” which enables the student’s overall learning.¹³³ However, as Caranfa points out, Weil’s new insights go further, to propose that attention applied consciously could also prepare students for the higher forms of attention, which is an engagement with the Platonic notions of beauty and also a preparation for Christian prayer.¹³⁴ Weil claims, in *Gravity and Grace*, that the highest form of attention, which is informed by Christian faith, is prayer. She states, “Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love.”¹³⁵

Listening may be defined, broadly speaking, as attention to what someone is saying, and is at times referred to as active listening. It can also include an attentiveness to what someone is not explicitly saying that is expressed in body language and emotions. When we are really listening deeply, we can understand the other and empathise, and perhaps be better placed to give them what they need. If a mother listens attentively to her child’s distress, for example, she may gradually be able to understand what is causing the concern and address it. Her ability to listen and empathise with her child will be important in providing what the child needs. Within the

¹³³ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (London G. P. Putman’s Sons, 1951), 57; Simone Weil, *Grace, and Gravity*, (London; Routledge and Kegan, 1952), 108–109.

¹³⁴ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty love and silence,” 580.

¹³⁵ Simone Weil, *Grace, and Gravity*, 117.

literature of psychology and counselling, it is widely accepted that the use of listening skills is important in developing effective interpersonal skills and empathy.¹³⁶

In his later works, Carl Rogers moved away from the focus on a Cognitive Behavioural approach to counselling in favour of a more client-centred focus, with emphasis on ‘qualitative’ interaction with clients. This included a focus on ‘presence’ of the therapist that required deep listening.¹³⁷ Rogers emphasised the need for attentive listening within the therapeutic context as providing a vital role in positive outcomes and healing. He discusses the importance of the “silent presence of the therapist” in facilitating healing.¹³⁸

This listening amounts to ‘a fundamental dimension of thinking’ (Irigaray 2002: 162), a dimension that receives without being passive. It involves a bodily dimension of perception that connects us with the other and with what the other is able to say. Listening helps to keep ‘alive the astonishment, the questioning, the movement of thinking and saying’.¹³⁹

Contemporary French feminist and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray connects listening to thinking, which she argues allows us to be attentive and engaged in the important questions. Listening here is also an important tool in connecting us to others. Irigaray argues that we relate to others deeply not just with our listening and thinking, but also through our bodily senses.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ For example, see: Jennifer W. Mack, “On listening”. *Cancer*, 126, 9, (2020), 1828–1831.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.32729>; Richard D. Chessick, *The Technique and Practice of Listening in Intensive Psychotherapy* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1989). Marla Morris’ explores psychoanalytic descriptions of aesthetics and the importance of listening, see Marla Morris, “Aesthetic Curriculum Concepts.” in *Counterpoints* (New York; 2016): 11-54.

¹³⁷ In *A Way of Being*, Carl Rogers explores the relationship between the client and therapist within an awareness of transcendence. For example, Rogers states; “when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am slightly in an altered state of conscientiousness, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing, then simply my presence is releasing and helpful to the other.” See Carl Rogers’s *A Way of Being* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 129. We can see links here to the contemplative dimensions of silence explored within the mystical literature that Caranfa draws on, such as in Weil and Picard’s works.

¹³⁸ Rogers, *A Way of Being*.

¹³⁹ Luce Irigaray et al. *The Way of Love* (London: Continuum, 2002), 162, 164 in Michelle Boulous Walker, *Slow Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 119.

¹⁴⁰ Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love* (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2004)

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body has been discussed by many scholars.¹⁴¹ That is, he proposed that the world becomes intelligible to us through our bodily orientation and activities. This is described by Stefan Kristensen as a form of "embodiment of hearing and listening".¹⁴² Caranfa makes brief reference to Merleau-Ponty (which could have been explored further). Caranfa claims that for Merleau-Ponty, silence facilitates listening, as silence is intertwined and embodied within thought and speech and finds expression within our body.¹⁴³ Merleau-Ponty's observations of silence (within our speech) and bodily expressions are important for the classroom. These insights can be transferred to the classroom context, providing useful insight into the complex nature of communication, particularly as it is expressed within body language. The importance of listening to the individual's silent pauses and expressions within the body can help enhance students' relational skills, which can enable the development of empathy.

As demonstrated even briefly above, listening is crucial in understanding ourselves and others. Its epistemic role, however, for Caranfa is understood in relation to the practice of silence. As alluded to, his emphasis is on silence and not the skills of listening. He argues that we gain a greater meaning of words if we listen to them in silence. Caranfa goes further in stating that listening not only develops empathy, but facilitates a development of the soul towards greatness, stating "reconversion of silence and speech into one another is a matter of vision as listening and it serves to define the human self on its way to perfection."¹⁴⁴ Caranfa has an

¹⁴¹ For example, see Stefan Kristensen, "Figures of Silence: The Intrigues of Desire in Merleau-Ponty and Lyotard," *Research in Phenomenology* 45, no. 1 (2015): 87-107, doi:10.1163/15691640-12341303.

¹⁴² May also says "Merleau-Ponty's conception of being is, in fact, sonorous or vibrational, then listening should give us special purchase on – or privileged access to being," 356, see Amy Cimini, "Vibrating Colors and Silent Bodies. Music, Sound and Silence in Maurice-Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Dualism," *Contemporary Music Review* 31, no. 5-6 (2012): 355–356. doi:10.1080/07494467.2012.759411.

¹⁴³ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 578.

¹⁴⁴ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 578–579.

understanding of listening as a virtue stating, “Listening as virtue, then, is a prerequisite and grounding for the improvement of the soul.”¹⁴⁵

3.4 Caranfa and Picard’s aims and the Philosophy of Education literature

Picard and Caranfa’s criticisms of a mechanistic, content driven, and utilitarian approach to education (influenced in more recent years by neoliberalism), while not always clearly explained, echo much of what the literature within the philosophy of education similarly points to. Broadly speaking, this includes movement away from purely content and utilitarian approaches to education and more holistic views of teaching and learning.¹⁴⁶ The philosophy of education is a vast domain, and I will point to a few examples in what follows.

John Dewey, like Picard and Caranfa, critiqued the mechanistic view of education and advocated for “education for life.”¹⁴⁷ Dewey proposed that education should teach and prepare students for socialisation within a society.¹⁴⁸ His methods of teaching moved away from a content-driven approach towards a method of inquiry.¹⁴⁹ He proposed that learning through

¹⁴⁵ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 214.

¹⁴⁶ As stated in Chapter 1, holistic education is a term mainly used when discussing the broader aims of education. It implies that more than practical or academic skills and knowledge are needed to develop the ‘whole person.’ This approach includes the development of other dimensions, such as affective, imaginative, and sometimes spiritual aspects of the self, which lead to a sense of wellbeing. While most within education would seem to aspire to this goal—*how* we achieve it and *what* constitutes holistic education and wellbeing is not always clearly defined. Caranfa’s definition of holistic education, as I will develop in this thesis explores not only the rational but also the aesthetic and spiritual. Drawing on Plato, Weil, and Whitehead, Caranfa proposes that the ‘aesthetic spiritual’ in education that results from silence is how we achieve holistic education. We can develop an integration of the self through the silence in the arts (such as sacred music) and silent reading and writing. This view points to the understanding of holistic education in the broad sense. See Angelo Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning”; Caranfa, Angelo. *Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence*; Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil.”

¹⁴⁷ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education an Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (S.I.: Floating Press, 2009).

¹⁴⁸ Dewey, *Democracy and Education an Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*.

¹⁴⁹ There are many contemporary researchers who have drawn on Dewey’s inquiry approach and moved away from the content driven approach to teaching and learning. For example, see Lipman, Matthew. *Thinking for Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Philip Cam, *Thinking Together: Philosophical Inquiry for the Classroom*. (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1995); Jennifer Branch and Dianne Oberg, *Focus on Inquiry* (Edmonton: Alberta Learning, 2004). <https://www.teachingbooks.net/content/>. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the literature review in Chapter 2, some have incorporated the technique of silence and inquiry pedagogy, arguing that this approach leads to further engagement and better student outcomes. For example, Ann Medaille and Janet Usinger, “Engaging Quiet Students in the College Classroom,” *College Teaching* 67, no. 2 (2019):132; Katherine Schultz, *Rethinking Classroom Participation* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009); Kay Carpenter Rosheim, “The Quiet Continuum: Listening and Learning from Quiet Students in the

inquiry should be both within groups and tailored for the individual. Learning ought to attend to the special needs and interests of the student.¹⁵⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau had an impact on Dewey's work. Rousseau believed that education should be more in tune with the instincts and interests of the students. Like Dewey, Rousseau thought that the arts should be taught. The arts were a vehicle through which students can develop their emotions, imagination, and creativity (themes also discussed by Caranfa).

We can see throughout Caranfa's work an attempt to develop a holistic approach to learning, as he too drew on Rousseau's writings. In *Lessons Of Solitude: The Awakening Of Aesthetic Sensibility*, he explores the writings of Rousseau's *Emile* in drawing out the importance of the arts in developing emotions, empathy and also the importance of solitude.¹⁵¹ Similar to the ideas of C.S. Lewis, Caranfa argues that Rousseau understood that in order to be in our 'natural state' we need to *cultivate* emotions and desires rather than neglect them.¹⁵² Rousseau claims this begins with an instruction *to amour de so*, to love thyself, which he argues is a natural desire leading towards self-preservation.¹⁵³ For Rousseau, Caranfa argues, the imagination is known through the senses and serves to develop an intimacy with 'the other.' It can achieve this intimacy through the ability to share the other's feelings and sufferings, leading to a sense of compassion. He states, "So is born pity, the first social sentiment that affects the human heart according to the order of nature."¹⁵⁴ Here Rousseau encourages students to study the

Classroom," (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2018) <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/quiet-continuum-listening-learning-students/docview/2055705454/se-2?accountid=8194>.

¹⁵⁰ Dewey, *Democracy and Education an Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*.

¹⁵¹ Angelo Caranfa, "Lessons of Solitude: The Awakening of Aesthetic Sensibility," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 41, no. 1 (2007): 113-127. Doi:10.1111/j.1467-9752.2007.00539. x.

¹⁵² Caranfa, "Lessons of Solitude: The Awakening of Aesthetic Sensibility."

¹⁵³ Caranfa, "Lessons of Solitude: The Awakening of Aesthetic Sensibility."

¹⁵⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Emile of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. and ed. W. Boyd (New York, Teachers College Press, 1966), 103, 107 in "Lessons of Solitude: The Awakening of Aesthetic Sensibility," 121.

liberal arts in order that they can gain knowledge and morality stating, “Emile will read the hearts of men” and therefore attain knowledge of morality.¹⁵⁵

In addition to developing morality, what Rousseau proposes through his main character Emile is the importance of solitude. Solitude is important for self-development, for Emile retreats into solitude until he regains “self-sufficiency...or virtue”, so that he can then return to society with the aim of contributing to it.¹⁵⁶ Rousseau argued that solitude “imprints on the imagination of the student and directs him towards the pursuit of industrial or professional arts ...learns to use his senses, his inventive mind, his foresight.”¹⁵⁷ Rousseau placed solitude within the context of the natural world, for example, lands, water, which all contribute to a person’s wellbeing.¹⁵⁸ Caranfa draws on this theme of solitude and applies it to his contemplative classroom. Here we see that solitude enables creativity and wellbeing and exemplifies a key component of Caranfa’s notion of holistic learning within a contemplative classroom, as discussed further in the following chapters.

Contemporary scholars, like Caranfa, have critiqued the content and utilitarian focus within education. Many researchers have proposed that philosophy should be taught in schools in order to teach holistically. Furthermore, Paulo Freire, Thomas Stehlik, Gert Biesta, Nel Noddings, Noam Chomsky and John Tāivaldis Ozoliņš, for example (among many others), draw on ancient philosophy in proposing that education should not be focused solely on skills for the workplace, but rather concentrate on broader aims, such as the good life, wisdom,

¹⁵⁵ Caranfa, “Lessons of Solitude: The Awakening of Aesthetic Sensibility,” 121.

¹⁵⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Emile of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 93–95 in Caranfa, “Lessons of Solitude: The Awakening of Aesthetic Sensibility,” 120.

¹⁵⁷Rousseau, *The Emile of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 87. Caranfa, “Lessons of Solitude: The Awakening of Aesthetic Sensibility,” 120.

¹⁵⁸ Caranfa, “Lessons of Solitude: The Awakening of Aesthetic Sensibility,”121.

happiness, and critical thinking.¹⁵⁹ These concepts point to the importance of education moving beyond purely a utilitarian and economic focus. This includes a teaching and learning that seeks to develop wisdom. An approach that leads students towards an understanding of virtue, the good, and what it means to live a *flourishing life*, and reach *eudaimonia*. This is exemplified below in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, as Aristotle reflects on wisdom and the living the good life.

Now it is thought to be the mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect e.g., about what sorts of thing conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general.¹⁶⁰

Aristotle's reflections and the works of those within the philosophy of education can inform a positive theoretical framework for education today that can potentially counteract the utilitarian and economic influences. These concepts for education, broadly speaking, also resonate with the aims of both Picard and Caranfa.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined Caranfa's arguments for the significance of silence for education and in particular its connection to the importance of listening. As any educator would know, without listening, there can be no adequate learning. For a contemplative classroom, influenced by the distractions of technology, it is critical to develop and refine this skill. For to listen deeply to the words said and what is unsaid, the spaces (the silence) can enable an

¹⁵⁹Paulo Freire, *Teachers as cultural workers: letters to those who dare teach*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*. (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998); Thomas Stehlik, *Educational Philosophy for 21st Century Teachers*, 1st Ed. 2018. ed. (Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Gert J.J. Biesta. "Should Teaching Be Re(dis)covered? Introduction to a Symposium," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38, no. 5 (2019): 549-53; Nel Noddings, *Happiness and Education*. (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Noam Chomsky and Macedo P Donaldo, *Chomsky on Miseducation*. Critical Perspectives Series (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000); Jānis (John) Tāļivaldis Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education* (United States: Routledge, 2020).

¹⁶⁰Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. James Alexander Kerr Thomson (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), VI, 1140a–1140b.

awareness of the nuances and complexity of words. This is important in facilitating *deep understanding and learning* which not only points to the broader aims of education but is also conducive to a contemplative framework of education. A contemplative classroom needs to aim at moving beyond superficial understandings with learning.

I have shown how the holistic aims for education advocated by philosophers of education echoed much of what Caranfa is proposing. The works of Picard, Nafisi, Levinas, and Buber also provide further support for Caranfa's approach. In different ways, they advocate for the transformative power of silence to facilitate deep listening enabling healing, access and engagement within our interiority and a deep connection with the other.

I have also highlighted the influence of Heidegger in Picard's writings, particularly his critique of science and technology. Heidegger advocates for the arts and humanities for restoring what he claims is the lost core of our being. These themes reverberate throughout Caranfa's and Picard's writings and provide further support for their claims. Furthermore, the importance of listening for thinking, understanding and empathy is evident within the literature.

Listening is often an underrated skill, but I have proposed that listening to oneself, and the silence within, and beyond (which extends to the divine and/or God) is imperative for self-knowledge, deep learning, and creativity. Listening is also important in caring for the other (which is the ethical component of attention developed in Chapter 8). The importance of 'deep listening,' as mentioned in Chapter 1, is part of the *qualitative* skills that I propose are important for the contemplative classroom.

Having explored and supported Caranfa's arguments on the importance of silence and listening, and the significance of the arts and humanities, the next chapter will extend the inquiry of silence to focus not just on listening, but also *deep thinking*. Caranfa explores this

theme through the works of Socrates/Plato and Augustine, who were able to explore silence within the dialectic. I will also discuss philosophy's connection to reason and the dialectic. The intention of silence in this chapter is to engage in deep internal dialogue, its consequences resulting in reflection, self-knowledge, and humility. According to Caranfa, philosophical inquiry through the works of Socrates and Augustine led to contemplation, self-knowledge, wonder and humility. These dispositions become important components of the contemplative classroom.

Chapter 4: Silence and deep dialogue – Socrates on silence and self-knowledge

Listening is often an underrated skill, but in Chapter 3, I proposed that listening to oneself and the silence within and beyond (which extends to the divine and/or God) is imperative for self-knowledge, deep learning, and creativity. Listening is also essential in caring for the other (the ethical component of attention developed in Chapter 8). The importance of ‘deep listening’ is part of the *qualitative* skills that I will propose are important for the contemplative classroom.

As previously considered in earlier chapters, Caranfa’s work is based on the claim that *silence is the very foundation of learning*. He argues that we need to allow silence within our pedagogical practices for our discourse to facilitate self-knowledge, deeper learning, stillness, listening and humility. Caranfa argues that the aim of education should be to reconnect *dialectics with silence*. Silence allows self-knowledge through the integration of the *emotional, spiritual, and rational* aspects of the self. This integration permits learning to become meaningful and engaging rather than abstract and remote. The silence emerges because of questioning and discussion (employing the Socratic method); this reflection with silence being acknowledged as a *distinct type of discourse*. The use of silence and dialectic inquiry become a synthesis in exploring subjective meanings, ideas, thoughts, and feelings of students. The *arts and aesthetic* experience are a central component in his work. Caranfa proposes that the aesthetic experience, through its connection to silence, leads to the divine, God and personal transformation.

In this chapter I will show how Caranfa draws on Socrates and Augustine’s use of silence and contemplation and the ways he includes these within his educational pedagogy. Through these figures, the discussion will explore philosophy’s connection to reason and the dialectic. I will examine the works of Socrates and Augustine in relation to the link between the dialectic and silence. Likewise, the connection between silence and speech will be discussed.

Additionally, Caranfa connects Socrates' silence to the 'holy', contemplation, solitude, and self-knowledge. Caranfa claims that for Socrates, the dialectic leads to *introspective silent dialogue* and *deep reflection*. Deep thinking is important because contemplative education needs to be concerned not merely with superficial understanding, but deep learning. Furthermore, drawing on the Socratic notion of ignorance (induced from an awareness of the limitations of reason and knowledge), according to Caranfa, leads one to become silent. In drawing on Socrates' work, Caranfa shows how silence can connect us with what we cannot know, thus can induce a sense of awe, and potentially lead us towards a sense of humility.

Caranfa finds in Augustine's work, like Socrates, a *linear process* where reasoning, the dialectic discourse and language find an ending, or rather their fate in silence and transcendence – a major theme in this chapter. For Augustine, this is expressed in a language embedded within the Christian faith and expressed in the religious ideas and terminology of his time. Caranfa explores Augustine's dialectic and silence mostly from the *De Magistro* (389) and his notion of contemplation from the *Confessions*. Caranfa highlights that for Augustine, while the dialectic is useful in our search for truth and understanding, ultimately 'true' understanding and insights are aided by God.

Caranfa shows us how silence can direct the dialectic towards contemplation, solitude, self-knowledge, humility and an encounter with the greater mystery and God. The implications of Caranfa's ideas drawn from Socrates and Augustine (i.e., on silence, the dialectic, solitude, contemplation), are dispositions and themes worth developing, and conducive to the aims of deep and holistic learning, echoed within Caranfa's contemplative educational framework.

Caranfa connects the limitation of reason (and exclusion of feelings) and its link/progression to silence, mystery, and the transcendence (a theme evident throughout his work). This

discussion enters the realm of apophatic theology, which will be discussed. In addition, this chapter will be revisiting some of tensions between philosophy (in the form of the dialectic) and theology (in relation to silence) that have existed throughout Western history.

Furthermore, in filling a gap in Caranfa's understanding of silence, thinking, and contemplation, I briefly include Aristotle's concept of contemplation. This is significant in highlighting the connection between thinking, silence, contemplation, wisdom, virtue, and the flourishing life. In addition, the works of Pierre Hadot are important in highlighting the contemplative dimensions within the philosophical tradition of the Stoics. Hadot argues that these philosophers sought 'spiritual exercise' as part of the process of transformation and living a flourishing life. Martha Nussbaum's work also echoes similar themes and will be briefly noted. This chapter therefore will draw on both the philosophical and Christian tradition in examining silence, thinking and contemplation. These elucidations extend Caranfa's model and shed further light on these themes that are useful in our understanding of contemplative teaching and learning.

This chapter will mostly draw on Caranfa's works, *Silence as the Foundation of Learning*, *Learning to See: Art, Beauty, The Joy of Creation in Education*, and *Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty Love and Silence*.¹

¹ Angelo Caranfa, "Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 50, no. 2 (2016): 84-103; Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," 585; Angelo Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine, and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no 4 (2013): 577-604.

4.1 *Retrieving Socrates on silence in the Phaedrus. A connection of silence to the 'holy'.
Silence leads to solitude and contemplation*

‘Listen to me, then, in silence,’ says Socrates to his friend Phaedrus, for surely this place is holy [the Ilissus in the county].²

Caranfa highlights above the importance of Phaedrus’ words in epitomising Socrates’ view on silence and the dialectic, linked to the holy, contemplation and solitude. In the Phaedrus, we are presented with the journey in the ascent of the soul towards beauty. This is demonstrated in the reference above where Socrates is looking for some “quiet spot in the country” far from “the men who dwell in the city [who] are my teachers” (Phaedrus, 229 and 230) and thus away from the life of the city.³ Socrates turns away from the men in the city and withdraws to the country seeking nature and the quiet to be his guide.⁴ This work comes to an end with Socrates beseeching the god of nature, asking his “beloved Pan to give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and the inward be at one ... Anything more? The prayer, I think, is enough for me.”⁵

Caranfa points out that it is the quiet of the country in solitude that allows one to contemplate and recall the ‘holy.’ This means that the soul must learn or develop the ability or the language of silence and quiet so it can heed or become thoroughly focused towards “the recollection of the true beauty ... of the holy things which once [it] saw.”⁶

² Plato, “Symposium (201–212) and Phaedrus (243–257)” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jowett (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), 238 quoted in Angelo Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love, And Silence,” *Educational Theory* 60, no. 5 (2010): 585, doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.2010.00377. x.

³ Plato, “Phaedrus,” 229 and 230, quoted in Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love, And Silence,” 568, 585.

⁴ Plato, “Phaedrus,” quoted in Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love, And Silence,” 568, 585.

⁵ Plato, “Phaedrus,” 279, quoted in Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love, And Silence,” 568, 585.

⁶ Plato, “Phaedrus,” 249–250, quoted in Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love, and Silence,” 569, 568.

Caranfa claims that the country, where Socrates experiences solitude, is an example of where vision transmutes philosophical knowledge into contemplation; he states; "...in recollection, Socrates abandons dialectic as method to search for what love (*eros*) is, and turns his attention instead on knowing the love of the beautiful from recalling or remembering – as though he had experienced it in a previous life ..."⁷ According to Caranfa, when philosophical knowledge and the dialectic encounter silence and the holy, a contemplative experience emerges. This process of contemplation is described by Caranfa as "a recollection and remembrance of truth and beauty" which only a few can reach. Caranfa suggests these 'truths' can only be known in solitude, contemplation and silence. He points out that Socrates draws on his inner *daimonion* which calls "him to the upward journey of the self into the realm of the 'divine Beauty itself.'"⁸ Caranfa continues to describe Socratic solitude and contemplation as prayer, and we see a mix of Platonic and Neoplatonic themes, as illustrated for example in the following,

In 'prayer,' Socrates enters the interiority of thinking; or, thinking becomes 'prayer' – that is, wholly internalised of experience or knowledge, as in contemplation.

...*detachment* from the same people in the city a withdrawing into his own inner self or soul, which is God's or Beauty's image: wholly spiritual and accessible only by contemplation or inward thinking. Thinking is a solitary activity: 'Only solitude can become an authentic way of life in the figure of the philosopher [Socrates]' (Arendt, 1958, p 76).⁹

As we can see illuminated above, Caranfa develops the importance of solitude for Socrates, which is of significance for his contemplative classroom. Solitude can simply mean a state of being alone. Thomas Merton, defines solitude as that which "...is an abyss opening up in the centre of your own soul ... Solitude is one's pilgrimage's true companion; it is a walk with

⁷ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 582.

⁸ Caranfa, "Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education."

⁹ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 583, 581. Reference in quote made to Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago IL, The University of Chicago Press 1958), 76.

oneself as companion, leading it to discover itself in its inner depths.”¹⁰ Solitude for Caranfa is similar to that of Merton’s understanding, but is also intertwined with silence, the presence of the divine, Platonic notions of beauty and the Christian God.¹¹

Caranfa understood silence within solitude as leading to creativity, self-knowledge, contemplation, and spirituality, which he incorporates within his contemplative framework. According to Caranfa, to be in contemplation is to remain aware of the inner workings of your soul, where you are led to self-knowledge. These processes lend themselves towards deep and holistic learning. As Caranfa states,

... the educational themes of attention as listening, of solitude as withdrawing into one’s inner self, so as to reflect on one’s own feelings, thoughts, and actions, of silence as source of speech and of all creativity, and of freedom to explore one’s own way of learning, apply to the three authors introduced. Thus, the following section explores Plato’s Socrates and the dialectic of silent thought.¹²

Caranfa develops his notion of contemplation and solitude through his discussion of various philosophers, artists, and mystics such as Rousseau, Nietzsche, Proust, Weil, Claudel, and Van Gogh.¹³ Their embodiment of silence though solitude was often achieved by removing themselves from society. This was, broadly speaking, the understanding of the solitude in the works and life of the early Church Fathers and Mothers in relation to solitude and the founding of hermitages. Withdrawal from the world was a part of the seeking of solitude from the cares of the world and towards a connection to God. We see this, for example, in the life of the

¹⁰ Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (Norfolk, CT: A New Directions Book, 1949), 59. See also: Thomas Merton, “The Solitary Life,” *Cistercian Studies* (Spencer, Mass.) 4, no. 3 (1969): 213.

¹¹ Caranfa, “Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education.”

¹² Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 578–579.

¹³ Angelo Caranfa, “The Aesthetic Harmony Of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35, no. 1 (2001): 5. This theme is also found in Caranfa’s other works, such as: “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education”; “Contemplative Instruction and the Gifts of Beauty, Love, and Silence”; “Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 37, no. 2 (2003): 99, doi:10.2307/3527458.100R.

Egyptian St. Anthony the Great.¹⁴ However, it poses the complex question – do we necessarily need to be alone ‘physically’ to experience solitude and silence? While Caranfa appears to imply from the examples shown that a separation from the community (or aloneness) is necessary for solitude, this is not clearly resolved with the literature. Hannah Arendt, as Caranfa refers to above, does argue in support of the need for physical aloneness to ‘do’ philosophy, however, she also writes that aloneness and thinking need not be achieved completely alone, and one needs the company of the other. She writes in *The Human Condition*, the following,

The philosopher, even if he decides with Plato to leave the ‘cave’ of human affairs, does not have to hide from himself; on the contrary, under the sky of ideas he not only finds the true essences of everything that is, but also himself ... To be in solitude means to be with one’s self, and thinking, therefore, though it may be the solitary of all activities, is never altogether without a partner and without company.¹⁵

The above claim would also be consistent with what we know about Socrates, which is that while he may have become a recluse within the quiet of the country, the experience of solitude did not totally dominate his activity. We also know from Plato’s texts that Socrates was very engaged in open discussions with people in Athens. Additionally, in the *Allegory of the Cave*, while Plato writes of the need to contemplate the forms, there is also a call by Socrates to then go out and teach what has been learnt from contemplation.¹⁶ As mentioned, Caranfa’s notion of solitude appears to be solely focused on ‘physical aloneness’ (like the desert Mothers and Fathers), which poses some problems for his model of contemplation in relation to its practical relevance. This will be further examined in Chapter 7.

¹⁴ Christine Valters Paintner, *Desert Fathers and Mothers: Early Christian Wisdom Sayings, Annotated & Explained* (Woodstock, Vt.: Skylight Paths 2013).

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago IL, The University of Chicago Press 1958), 76.

¹⁶ Plato, “The Republic,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jewett (New York: Random House, 1937). Incidentally, these are remnants of the ongoing tensions within Christian theology that explore whether contemplation is more important than Christian action.

4.2 Socrates— silence and the dialectic process. Socratic ignorance, and humility

It seems to me that the soul when it thinks is simply carrying on a discussion in which it asks itself questions and answers them itself, affirms and denies.¹⁷

Caranfa claims that for Socrates the dialectic leads to *introspective silent dialogue and deep reflection* and highlights the connection of silence and speech in his work. The intention of silence for Socrates is to gain self-knowledge and fulfil an existential purpose. The Socratic approach, he argues, has an emphasis on the search for meaning and to “fulfil a restless heart longing for truth, goodness and beauty”.¹⁸ This search for self-knowledge, Caranfa asserts, is a movement away from the false to the ‘true self’ that is part of the contemplative process favourable for an educational context.¹⁹

Caranfa writes much about Socrates. He puts forward the standard view that Socrates used the dialectic method (*elenchus*) which included the process of examining and cross-examining in order to arrive at truth, that would then lead to a life of virtue and wisdom, “I sought to persuade everyman that he must look to himself and seek virtue and wisdom.”²⁰ He believed this to be the foundation of education. Caranfa also emphasises that Socrates’ dialectic approach has a useful purpose in providing a tool for examining what we know or should seek as humans.²¹ In exploring the questions of who was wise in society, Socrates came to the conclusion that all wisdom came from virtue and many in his society who claimed to be wise lacked virtue.²²

¹⁷Plato, *Theaetetus*, 189-190a, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 577.

¹⁸ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 579–583. Also, a major theme in Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love, And Silence.”

¹⁹ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love, And Silence,” 585.

²⁰ Plato, ‘Apology,’ in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937), 418, quoted in Caranfa “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 577.

²¹ Caranfa, “The Aesthetic Harmony of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche.”

²² Plato, “Apology,” 1: 413, quoted in Caranfa “The Aesthetic Harmony of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,” 5. Caranfa does not explicitly define the meaning of virtue. Caranfa’s understanding of virtue is similar to Julia Annas’ views. She proposed that virtue understood by the philosophers of antiquity was a disposition that included the presence of morally right action for the right reasons consistently and in a reliable manner. See, for example: Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3.

Socrates argued that an understanding of morals and virtue were essential to the attainment of wisdom, which he considered to be the highest form of knowledge.²³

For Socrates, wisdom was achieved in not only being virtuous, but also understanding limitations of knowledge, and as Caranfa explores, its relationship to silence. For Caranfa, Socrates emulates a man of rationality who uses it to its limits. The dialectic was his method throughout his teachings. What he finds, however, is that the dialectic has limitations in relation to knowledge, and these limitations may lead one to become silent and reflective.²⁴ Caranfa argues that, while most scholars focus exclusively on the Socratic dialectic method for learning, he stresses the importance of silence in his approach.²⁵ The silence which is in context to a listening to the Word of God, Logos, and *daimonion*, which he argues are an inextricable part of human discourse.²⁶ The act of listening is connected to ‘a silence’ understood within a wider context, that is the transcendence or God.

What Caranfa highlights is that Socrates taught that wisdom and self-knowledge were to be found paradoxically in one’s ignorance, stating, “Socrates was convincing others that he had come to know himself in his ignorance.” Caranfa continues to claim that is why Socrates speaks of the “pretensions to wisdom.”²⁷ Wisdom, Caranfa claims, is an awareness of one’s ignorance and lacking a “pretention to knowledge.”²⁸ The themes of ‘not knowing’ and limitations of

²³ Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jewett (New York: Random House, 1937).

²⁴ Caranfa, “The Aesthetic Harmony Of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,” 5. This theme is also found in Caranfa’s other works such as: “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education”; “Contemplative Instruction and the Gifts of Beauty, Love, and Silence”; “Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 37, no. 2 (2003): 99–113, doi :10.2307/3527458.100.

²⁵ For example: Gregory Vlastos, *Socratic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chap. 1. Israel Scheffler, *Reason and Teaching* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973); Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Charles James Barr Macmillan and James W. Garrison, *A Logical Theory of Teaching* (Boston: Kluwer, 1988).

²⁶ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 213.

²⁷ Plato, ‘Apology,’ in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937), 405, quoted in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 214; and Caranfa, “The Aesthetic Harmony of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,” 6.

²⁸ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 214.

knowledge that Caranfa discusses are central to Socratic learning.²⁹ Socratic intellectual humility is derived from an awareness of his limitations of knowledge. The Socratic teaching of virtues was more about humility than cross-examination (a strong claim which I will examine further on) and encouraged a letting go of the “pretensions to know.”³⁰ Caranfa points out that Socrates was in essence a pilgrim who sought truth and meaning without the claim of attaining ‘infallible knowledge.’ He writes,

Like the interlocutors in the Socratic dialogues, we seem to speak not as pilgrims seeking the meaning of ourselves through our discourse or discipline, but as pretenders who think that our discourse or discipline is infallible. Therefore, we have nothing to learn from encounters with others.³¹

At the core of the Socratic approach is the limitation of our speech and knowledge that provides the soil for true learning.³² *The dialectic method points to where discourse cannot be explained or defined and has nothing to left to say.*³³ Hence the attitude required in the Socratic approach is one of an ‘empty mind’ and the ability to let go of the ‘pretentiousness to know’ and certainty of dogmatic truths.³⁴ This approach, Caranfa declares, provides the context for ‘true learning.’ Caranfa contends that Socrates helps give birth to knowledge rather than mere opinion.³⁵ As Caranfa explains,

You forget, my friend [Theaetetus], that I neither know, nor profess to know, anything of these matters; you are the person who is in labour, I am the barren midwife; and this is why I soothe you, and offer you one good thing after another, that you may taste them. And I hope that I may at last help to bring your own opinion into the light of day:

²⁹ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 214.

³⁰ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 214–215.

³¹ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 211. Caranfa argues that discourse goes no further than connecting us to our own ‘inner quiet self’ where new ideas emerge. For example, this forces Theaetetus to be in the silent core of his own being where he will find self-knowledge. Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 211.

³² Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 214.

³³ For example, see: Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 582, 587; and the main argument in his other works such as Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning.”

³⁴ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 216, 228.

³⁵ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 211.

when this has been accomplished, then we will determine whether what you have brought forth is only a windegg or a real and genuine birth.³⁶

The limitation of the dialectic, and the awareness of ‘not knowing,’ induces a sense of wonder and recognition of mystery. Which, Caranfa argues, is at the heart of philosophy and surrounds the Socratic approach, stating, “For wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder.”³⁷ The notion of mystery, induced by an awareness of the limitations of knowledge, reveals an ‘objective phenomenon’ referred to as the Primordial Word, Logos or Voice, which Caranfa claims cannot be understood or defined by language. Caranfa states that what Socrates wanted to demonstrate at his trial is that those who had him on charges were guilty of corrupting the youth in teaching “false knowledge and not believing in God,” who is an embodiment of wisdom.³⁸ Further, as Caranfa explains, “Others do not listen to God’s voice, and thus they have scarcely spoken the truth at all.”³⁹ Therefore, the practice of philosophy led to wisdom only in the context of a belief in God.⁴⁰ For Caranfa, therefore, Socratic wisdom was understood as acknowledging one’s ignorance and a belief in God.⁴¹ Caranfa states,

To the extent that God alone is wise, Socrates’ wisdom is indeed worth nothing. Thus, Socrates’ dilemma that, the one hand, he had no wisdom, and, on the other hand, that the practice of philosophy results in wisdom or human happiness, was resolved within the idea of a transcendental God. This led Socrates to believe in the immortality of the soul.⁴²

It is important to note that Caranfa’s definition or depictions of the transcendent change from the Socratic ideals of beauty and wisdom to Christian notions of the divine, for example in the

³⁶ Plato, ‘Theaetetus,’ in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 2, trans. Jowett, 159, quoted in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 216.

³⁷ Plato, ‘Theaetetus,’ 178, quoted in Angelo Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 215–216.

³⁸ Plato, ‘Theaetetus,’ in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 2, trans. Jowett, 178 in Angelo Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 215–216.

³⁹ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 214.

⁴⁰ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” 214.

⁴¹ Although the term wisdom is not explicitly defined in Caranfa’s work, it often alludes to the Platonic and Neoplatonic influences. This included reference to Socratic ignorance and the Platonic notion of the Forms.

⁴² Caranfa, “The aesthetic harmony of how life should be lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,” 5.

use of the term God above. As we can see, Caranfa adopts a Christian interpretation of Socrates. We can also see Platonic and religious/mystical Neoplatonic influences interwoven. Although it is not entirely clear where Caranfa draws his Neoplatonic influences, we can infer it is from both Plotinus and Pseudo-Dionysius, due to his references to these in his other works.⁴³

As we see in Platonic texts (which Caranfa explores in some depth and which will be discussed in the next chapter) it is in giving birth to the love of the eternal forms of beauty, truth, wisdom and virtue that we arrive at self-knowledge and wisdom.⁴⁴ Hence this process leads one to the Platonic forms – a union with the divine beauty leaving one metaphorically speaking in a state of what Caranfa describes as ‘unknowing’ and ‘wondrous ignorance.’⁴⁵

For Caranfa, therefore, Socrates is a teacher of discourse, as he is of silence. Socrates is engaging in discourse within the context of silence and awareness of the transcendence, “the mystery is already silently at play in all discourse.”⁴⁶ For Socrates, the dialectic attempts to know and understand God, who is ultimately unknowable. The transcendent or mystery inducing a sense of awe and wonder. Caranfa refers to Jacques Maritain, who claims that “a

⁴³ For example, see: Angelo Caranfa, “Light and Silence in Matisse's Art: Listening to the Spirit,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 48, no. 1 (2014), 80, 84. There are other examples of Caranfa's Neoplatonic references such as Plotinus, for example, see: Angelo Caranfa, “Literature, Art, and Sacred Silence in Whitehead's Poetics of Philosophy,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (2015): 474-501. On page 483 Caranfa writes, “In Shelley, as in Plotinus, Nature is one with “the Mind,” and the Mind is one with “the secret source” of Nature. And Shelley, like Plotinus, seeks the *ideal* or *speculative* or *mystical* justification of nature: They both turn to nature for the resolution of the opposing elements in nature; for them, nature is their teacher.” Angelo Caranfa, “Silence and Spiritual Experience in Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius and Claudel,” *Literature and Theology* 18, no. 6 (2004): 187, 191–194.

⁴⁴ Caranfa, “The Aesthetic Harmony of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,” 5. We know that Socrates never wrote anything down and his ideas are known from the writings of his student, Plato. While some scholars can identify the ‘voice of Socrates’ within Plato's work, these debates are not highlighted in Caranfa's work, nor will be explored in this thesis.

⁴⁵ Caranfa, “The Aesthetic Harmony of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,” 216.

Caranfa goes on to say that this life of union with the ‘Unspeakable, Mystery, Silence’ for where “Diotima leads Socrates, is the life of listening, of silence” (Plato, *Symposium*, 335). The terms “Unspeakable, Mystery, Silence” in Caranfa's work allude to a Neoplatonic notion of the divine. One could argue, however, that this is a fairly contentious interpretation given that the dialogue in the *Symposium* is about love. Diotima basically tells Socrates he is ignorant about love. See Plato, *Symposium*, 32, quoted in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 216.

⁴⁶ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 281.

philosophy unaware of mystery would not be a philosophy.”⁴⁷ Hence Caranfa claims the aim of philosophy is to understand the mystery from which it derives its language of knowledge, truth, and wisdom.⁴⁸ Self-knowledge is the coming into this ‘world of mystery’ by embracing *wonder, contemplation, listening and silence*. This perpetuates a type of learning and questioning that has movements between the “known to the unknown ... from question to mystery, and from linguistic activity to silence.”⁴⁹ Caranfa argues that Socrates is a ‘mystic’ who engages in the dialectic process which from the beginning to end has a strong sense of the transcendent. He states,

Socrates the mystic, then, the dialectic begins and ends in the ability to see, hear, and know God who is beyond all words and all knowing. What Socrates says of him remains unsayable; and what he knows of him remains unknowable.⁵⁰

In conclusion, we can see that the limitations of reason and knowledge explored through the works of Socrates leads one to become silent and listen to the Word of God, divine beauty, and wisdom. It is a deep listening to the silence working within our interiority that leads to self-knowledge, solitude, contemplation, and transformation. This approach, Caranfa proposes, is best learnt by Socrates who teaches us that in the end the dialectic process leads to an encounter with mystery and silence. This awareness potentially fosters a sense of humility in our search for knowledge. As recalled, these insights have positive and favourable implications to teaching and learning in the classroom.

⁴⁷ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 218.

⁴⁸ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning.”

⁴⁹ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 218.

⁵⁰ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 281.

4.3 Critique of Caranfa on Socrates

The statements we see above may appear, on the surface, to be contradictory. For example, if what Socrates knows of himself is unknowable, he cannot know it. On the other hand, one may argue that it is possible that Socrates may know that he does not know. Furthermore, the claim that self-knowledge leads to the ‘world of mystery’ by embracing wonder, contemplation, listening, and silence may appear to be vague; nevertheless, we can place these concepts within the area of apophatic theology (which appears throughout Caranfa’s work). The claims made above can be likened to characteristics within apophatic or negative theology (*via negativa*) which often describe God or the divine as ‘unknowable’ and ‘beyond words.’⁵¹ Likewise, self-knowledge within the context of negative theology, as Caranfa often alludes to, frequently points to the mystery and unknowable – which is God. Another example of the link to negative theology is, Caranfa proposes, that Socrates in effect teaches more about *uncertainty than certainty*.⁵² The awareness that we do ‘not know,’ he argues, leads one to become silent, referring to Hans-George Gadamer, that “the example of Socrates teaches that the important thing is the knowledge that one does not know and, therefore, by implication, the language that one does not speak.”⁵³ These seemingly contradictory claims point to the literature of negative

⁵¹ See: Catherine Keller, *Apophatic Bodies. Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquia* (US: Fordham University Press, 2009); Nahum Brown, and Simmons J. Aaron, *Contemporary Debates in Negative Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Palgrave Frontiers in Philosophy of Religion (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Ilse Nina Bulhof and Laurens ten Kate, *Flight of The Gods* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 5. As alluded to earlier – the notion of God as ‘mystery’ is also closely associated with God as ‘silence.’ See: Oliver Davies and Denys Turner, *Silence and The Word* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Max Picard, *World of Silence* (Wichita: Eighth Day, 1952).

⁵² Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 211–213, 216.

⁵³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 325–341, quoted in Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 213. There are some similarities between Caranfa and Gadamer’s views on Socrates and silence. These scholars link the concept of silence to the limitations of knowledge and the unknown. For example, Gadamer informs us that “the example of Socrates teaches that the important thing is the knowledge that one does not know, and, therefore, by implication, the language that one does not speak”. He goes on to say that “the Socratic dialectic, which leads . . . to this knowledge, sets up the propositions of the question. All questioning and desire to know presuppose a knowledge that one does not know; so much so, indeed, that it is a particular lack of knowledge that leads to a particular question.” Thus, the limited nature of Socratic dialectic, the benefits of which are continually called into question by propositions or arguments, leads Gadamer to note, “and by this we mean to say that there is no methodical way to the thought [benefits] that is [are] the solution” (329). Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 325–341.

theology which embraces mystery and the ‘unknown’ broadly speaking, as that which points to the transcendent and God.⁵⁴

While Caranfa’s concepts of the Socratic dialogue are, broadly speaking, agreed on by most scholars, the links to silence and mystery are not.⁵⁵ Some scholars have identified and explored Socratic silence in various ways, such as John Heath, Clanton Caleb, Alan Pichanick, Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith (among others).⁵⁶ Brickhouse and Smith, for example, discuss the silence of Socrates’ *daimonion*.⁵⁷ However, Socratic silence linked to the mystery and ‘unknown’ are not explored by these (or most scholars). As Caranfa has noted, his understanding of Socratic silence echoes that of Hans-George Gadamer, where Socrates becoming silent is what leads to an attentiveness of the greater mystery. This mystery Caranfa extends towards the “Voice or Word of God.”⁵⁸ Additionally, what makes Caranfa’s work distinctive within the literature is his connections to Socratic silence linked to the *daimonion*. Similarly, its associations to notions of Christian ‘mystery’ and the ‘unknown’ – which are themes well established within negative theology.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ See for example: Davies and Turner, *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*; Brown, and Aaron. *Contemporary Debates in Negative Theology and Philosophy*.

⁵⁵ For example: Dubravka Knezic, Theo Wubbels, Ed, Elbers, and Maaikje Hajer take this view and discuss ways of implementing the Socratic method within the classroom, see Dubravka Knezic, et al., “The Socratic Dialogue and Teacher Education,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26, no. 4 (2010): 1104–1111.

⁵⁶ John Heath, “Socratic Silence: The Shame of the Athenians,” In *The Talking Greeks: Speech, Animals, and Other in Homer, Aeschylus and Plato*, 259-314 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Alan Pichanick, “Socratic Silence in the Cleitophon,” *Plato: The Internet Journal of the International Plato Society* 17 (2018): 65-70; J. Caleb Clanton, “From Indeterminacy to Rebirth: Making Sense of Socratic Silence in Plato’s Sophist,” *Pluralist (Champaign, Ill.)* 2, no. 3 (2007): 37–56; Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, *Socrates on Trial* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 235–257; W. Desmond, *The Silence of Socrates: Dialectic and the Platonic Good, Milltown Studies*, 58 (2007), 73–99.

⁵⁷ Brickhouse and Smith focus on the positive aspects of Socratic method and do not discuss its limitations as Caranfa and Gadamer have done. See: Brickhouse and Smith, *Plato’s Socrates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), chap. 1.

⁵⁸ Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, *Socrates on Trial* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 235–257; Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 213.

⁵⁹ As Caranfa points out, Ignacio Götz is a scholar who identifies aspects of mysticism within the Socratic Method, Götz states, “There is an element of mysticism involved in [Socrates’ method] ... a kind of ecstatic contemplation, perhaps secularised, which was ... to be the source of his superior knowledge.” W. Götz, *On the Socratic Method, Philosophy of Education* (Urbana IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1999), 84–92. Caranfa claims that “Götz goes on to say that he finds Socrates’ source of contemplation in the Orphic and Corybantic rituals, and he also finds ‘the affective and even religious [spiritual] elements ... in the Phaedrus and the Symposium, [but] not in the Republic’ (p. 88). It should be pointed out, however, that these rituals also included silence as an element or practice (Kenny, 2011, p. 199) and, contrary to Götz’s claim, the affective and even

Clearly, the limitations of reason and therefore knowledge, however, are not unique to Caranfa and have been explored by philosophers and theologians for millennia. In Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, for example, we see an examination of the scope of what reason can reveal and also its limitations.⁶⁰ Likewise, David Hume's critique of inductive reason is well known and raises challenges of assumptions of inductive reasoning used within the sciences.⁶¹ Additionally we know many of the phenomenologists (i.e. Husserl and Heidegger) examine the nature of reasoning (particularly logic used in science as evident within scientism) as a reductionist way of understanding the world in its totality, and especially human experiences.⁶² Furthermore, many theologians have similarly explored the limitations of reason in our understanding of the world and 'ultimate truth'. Some of these include Bonaventure, Jacques Maritain, and Simone Weil (among others), who will be discussed in Chapter 8.⁶³ As Pierre Hadot asks,

What will be the limit of our discourse, if it is not an impotent silence, and the admission of our discourse of our absolute lack of knowledge concerning those things about which we may never gain knowledge, since they are inaccessible?⁶⁴

It is important to note that there are many scholars who have argued that the limitations of reasoning and the dialectic that lead to silence and mystery do not necessarily demonstrate or

religious or spiritual elements are also found in the Republic, specifically in the *Allegory of the Cave* (bk. VII, 517a-518e). In the Republic, reasoning is joined with affectivity enclosing the emotions of the good, of love, of beauty, and of truth within a philosophical-contemplative framework." Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of learning," 213.

⁶⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Humanity, 1950).

⁶¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Lewis Amherst Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁶² For example, see: Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970); Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).

⁶³ This theme is also evident in some feminist literature. For example, Le Doeuff argues that only when philosophy itself can acknowledge its limitations and processes can feminism find its recognition. Le Doeuff proposes that an epistemological recognition of the limitations of reason within philosophy and its reliance on non-rational dimensions (such as metaphors and images) is an essential step towards properly recognising feminist ideas and philosophy as a discipline. See: Michèle Le Doeuff, *The Philosophical Imaginary* (London: Continuum, 2002); Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1984) echoes similar themes.

⁶⁴ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, trans. Arnold I Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 284.

point to God's existence.⁶⁵ Hadot, for example, argues we can scarcely talk about what is most important.⁶⁶ Hadot states that ultimately there are limitations in what one can say (other than what is 'technical' in the broad sense) on issues existential in nature. Those things which are most important, for example, that touch our deepest experiences such as love, loss, and the mystical, cannot be directly communicated, we can only glimpse these experiences indirectly such as in poetry.⁶⁷ Hadot concludes by drawing on Wittgenstein's position evident in the *Tractatus* stating, "There is indeed the inexpressible. This shows itself; it is the mystical."⁶⁸

While the awareness of our limitations in reasoning and knowledge does not necessarily prove the existence of the divine, it does however point to the possibility of its existence, which is the view adopted by Caranfa. His ability to connect how silence can move the dialectic towards contemplation, self-knowledge, humility, and the divine are concepts worth exploring within a contemplative approach to learning. Socrates and the exploration of the dialectic and limitations of reasoning and encounter with the mystery provide a positive approach in engaging students. Caranfa claims that silence within the dialectic, as Socrates demonstrates, can potentially lead to solitude, deep reflection, and humility – all conducive to aims of contemplative education.

However, there are some limitations in Caranfa's approach. Firstly, what Caranfa could have developed further is the *how*. That is, we don't exactly know how we can teach this approach.

⁶⁵ Bryan Magee, *Ultimate Questions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

⁶⁶ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 285.

⁶⁷ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 285.

⁶⁸ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 285. Hadot, like Caranfa, explores the importance of the dialectic within philosophy and the significance of philosophy in meeting spiritual and existential concerns. Furthermore, Hadot emphasises the importance of understanding philosophical texts' context and textual criticism. This later approach by Hadot could be further developed in Caranfa's work. Hadot also discusses the limitations of reason and, therefore, knowledge which he claims leads to silence. A theme only mentioned briefly towards the end of his work and not explored in depth, in contrast to Caranfa, is developed throughout his writings and is one of the main themes of his thesis.

What does the Socratic dialectic look like in the classroom? How do we move students from engaging in the dialectic affectively to a realisation of its limitations and the awareness of silence? Additionally, Caranfa's Christianisation of Socrates may exclude many within the student body today who are atheists or agnostic. Moreover, Caranfa seems to suggest that solitude is understood as purely aloneness, which poses some problems of relevance to the classroom context. He does not show how solitude within a modern context can work in a practical sense. Despite these limitations (which I will discuss in Chapter 6) Caranfa extends his analysis of the dialectic and silence beyond Socrates to include the works of Augustine. However, as I will show in what follows, there are other thinkers within the philosophical tradition who also examine contemplation. This inclusion can extend Caranfa's model and shed further light on this process that is useful in our understanding of contemplative teaching and learning.

4.4 Other accounts of contemplation within the philosophical tradition.

I. Aristotle on contemplation

Though much of Caranfa's understanding of contemplation draws on, and is influenced by, Socrates/Plato, it is important to consider, even briefly, the writings of Aristotle on contemplation. Aristotle made a distinction between the practical *phronesis*, and intellectual, *Sophia*, wisdom/contemplation. The latter dimension is associated to a passive/receptive way of understanding discussed by Aristotle (a *poesis* which Martin Heidegger develops in his writing).⁶⁹ Knowledge of facts is useful to living well and is required for Aristotle's practical wisdom. Additionally, both knowledge of facts, as well as knowing *how to use* these facts, are

⁶⁹ For example, see: Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

what makes them practical. Aristotle thought, however, that intellectual wisdom, *Sophia*, or contemplation was superior to practical wisdom. Contemplation as the ability to “... deliberate well about what is good...” and “to wonder” are important in thinking about our life and deciphering how to act and apply ‘practical wisdom’ in our everyday life. Contemplation was particularly important in seeking the good life and happiness, or *eudaimonia*. As Aristotle argues,

Now it is thought to be the mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect e.g., about what sorts of thing conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general.⁷⁰

Indeed, happiness extends as far as contemplation does, and to those to whom it more belongs to contemplate, it more belongs also to be happy, not accidentally, but rather in accordance with the contemplation, for this is valuable in itself ...⁷¹

For Aristotle, contemplation allows us to reflect on what it means to be virtuous, happy, and thus live a good life. A good life is one based on seeking to develop virtue that leads to *eudaimonia* and *flourishing* or living well. One who contemplates, according to Aristotle, has sought to understand ‘truth’ in its totality and the principles that underlie reality. In so far as Aristotle contemplates the eternal truths (while these differ from Plato), Ozoliņš describes Aristotle’s contemplation as “mysticism in the pursuit of the...understanding of eternal truths ...”⁷²

While it is beyond the scope here to discuss how Aristotle’s contemplation might be considered mysticism, my task here is to merely point out Aristotle’s main contentions on contemplation.

⁷⁰Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. James Alexander Kerr Thomson (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), VI, 1140a–1140b.

⁷¹Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, quoted in Bryan C. Reece, “Aristotle on Divine and Human Contemplation,” *Ergo* 7, no. 4 (2020): <https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.12405314.0007.004>.

⁷²Jānis (John) Tāļivaldis Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education* (United States: Routledge, 2020), 23.

Drawing from the wisdom of ancient philosophers such as Aristotle, is essential to filling the gap within Caranfa's understanding of contemplation and extending the conceptual framework of a contemplative pedagogy proposed in this thesis. Aristotle's contemplation is key as he connects contemplation to wisdom and a flourishing life.

Another point of connection I will mention briefly here is the arguments of Martha Nussbaum in her work *Therapy of Desire*.⁷³ Nussbaum examines the Hellenistic philosophers and proposes that their work offers us a therapy for our modern-day suffering and alignments. Nussbaum asserts that these philosophers understood philosophy as "medicine and a rigorous science" intended at supporting and at generating the flourishing of the human person.⁷⁴

II. Pierre Hadot on meditation/contemplation of the Stoic philosophers

Pierre Hadot's work highlights the contemplative dimensions in Stoic philosophy and relates contemplation/meditation with thinking, virtue, and flourishing. His work is significant, not only in its connection to Caranfa's central themes, but also to the subject matter of the thesis. Hadot argues that the philosophers of antiquity were not concerned solely with propositional truths or a dissemination of information, but rather viewed philosophy as 'transformative,' and as the title of his work suggests, he understood *Philosophy as a Way of Life*.⁷⁵ This theme will be further discussed in Chapter 7 and reiterates Caranfa's views on Socratic thought. As Hadot writes,

Hence the teaching and training of philosophy were intended not simply to develop the intelligence of the disciple, but to transform all aspects of his being ...

⁷³ Martha Craven Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁷⁴ Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*.

⁷⁵ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, trans. Arnold I Davidson. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995); See also: Pierre Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: the Mediations of Marcus Aurelius* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Spiritual exercises were *exercises* because they were practical, required effort and training, and were lived; they were *spiritual* because they involved the entire spirit, one's whole way of being ... The art of living demanded by philosophy was a lived exercise exhibited in every aspect of one's existence.⁷⁶

What is interesting is that Hadot describes the task of philosophy as “spiritual exercises.”⁷⁷

Furthermore, Hadot discusses the contemplative dimensions in Stoicism and Epicureanism as an “orientation of attention.”⁷⁸ He asserts that these philosophers not only described the process of transformation but also stressed that to attain happiness one had to *cultivate important practices in daily life*. These included: 1) meditation on the imminence of death; 2) focus on the present moment; and 3) examination of consciences.⁷⁹ Hadot also reminds us that philosophy was not only understood for the purposes of individual transformation, but also towards the service of the community. Individuals were encouraged to act justly and virtuously towards others within the community in accordance with the ‘cosmic conscientiousness’.⁸⁰

Hadot cites Marcus Aurelius who states the following:

Everywhere and at all times, it is up to you to rejoice piously at what is occurring *at the present moment*, to conduct yourself with justice towards the people who are present here and now, and to apply rules of discernment [*emphilotekhmein*] to present representations [*phanatsia*] so that nothing slips in that is not objective (Marcus Aurelius).⁸¹

Hadot stresses the fact that although the written works are monologues, implicitly they are always dialogues.⁸² Dialogue within the oral tradition, Hadot stresses, sets the context and genesis of the written philosophical text.⁸³ The oral tradition was especially significant for

⁷⁶ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 21.

⁷⁷ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*.

⁷⁸ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 268.

⁷⁹ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 225–235, 268. See also: Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*.

⁸⁰ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 274.

⁸¹ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 132. See also: Hadot, *The Inner Citadel: The Mediations of Marcus Aurelius*.

⁸² Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 105.

⁸³ Hadot claims this explains some of the inconsistencies which scholars have identified, as the works were not written according to a pure abstract theory, but rather the teachings were adjusted to suit the students/audience, which was the focal point. Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 105.

philosophy as it allowed dialogue and conversations considered as important components in achieving inner transformation. What Hadot emphasises is that ancient philosophers advocated the importance of living a dynamic approach to teaching through the ‘living word’, accentuating “the ontological value of the spoken word.”⁸⁴ Hadot describes the purpose of the oral tradition and its connection to education in the following way:

True education is always oral because only the spoken word makes dialogue possible, that is, it makes it possible for the disciple to discover the truth himself amongst the interplay of questions and answers and also for the master to adapt his teaching to the needs of the discipline.⁸⁵

Caranfa echoes many similar themes to both Hadot and Nussbaum’s interpretation of the ancient philosophers, which is essentially that their purpose was to facilitate transformation and the flourishing life. However, he differs from these thinkers in his connection of silence and contemplation to the transcendence and God. As will be further examined in the next chapter, Caranfa was clearly a Christian Platonist.

In the next section, we will look at how Caranfa draws on Augustine’s use of the dialectic and silence, which can also be useful in informing the contemplative classroom. It is interesting to note that Hadot suggests that Cicero had an important impact on Augustine’s thinking.⁸⁶ He proposes that the Stoics were substantially influential on early Christian prayer/meditative practices.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 19.

⁸⁵ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 62.

⁸⁶ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*.

⁸⁷ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*.

4.5 Retrieving Augustine and his use of the dialectic in *Concerning the Teacher* (*De Magistro* 389 AD).

... on Augustine, whose phenomenological explorations of the dialectical interplay of interiority/exteriority offer fruitful suggestions concerning any learner engaged with others or things, notwithstanding his reflection on interiority and the inner word to be explicitly Christological and explaining things in terms of faith in Revelation.⁸⁸

Augustine's work is discussed by Caranfa and reaches the same conclusions as Socrates. Augustine, who is a master of the dialectic, discovers its limitations in the silent Christian God. This connection between silence and speech is explored in *Concerning the Teacher* (*De Magistro* 389) and uses Socratic inquiry, as exemplified in conversations with his son Adeodatus. In Augustine's work we see a merging of Neoplatonic themes with Christian theology that is developed by Caranfa. Hence what Caranfa also captures from Augustine's work is how potentially the process of inquiry and dialectic can play out in the classroom. As we shall see, this is exemplified in the conversations with Augustine's son Adeotetus. This section will focus mostly on Caranfa's following work, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education."⁸⁹

In the *Confessions*, Augustine experiences internal tensions and conflicts throughout his spiritual journey.⁹⁰ Caranfa interprets Augustine's search as that which demands essentially a deep response which can transcend language. He argues that Augustine was searching for an experience which places significance on silence and was interested in the interaction between silence and speech.⁹¹ Caranfa points out, paradoxically, that questions which Augustine poses

⁸⁸ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine, And Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education," 587.

⁸⁹ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine, and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education," 577–604.

⁹⁰ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine, and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education."

⁹¹ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education."

leave him with further questions that resulted in a state of “constant turmoil” and restlessness.⁹²

As Caranfa explains,

What Augustine doubts is that words can instruct us – that is, they can awaken in us thoughts or ideas. This is because Augustine words may have a different meaning for the speaker and for the listener. In this case, it is not the words as signifiers that fail to convey the ideas or thoughts, but that the meaning of the signs themselves is in question.⁹³

Augustine poses epistemological questions related to language. These include, where are the meanings of words to be found, is it with the speaker or listener? What about the importance of signs of which words represent? As Caranfa shows above, Augustine concludes that words cannot in themselves teach or impart ideas because words have different meanings for both the speaker and listener.⁹⁴ It is not that words fail to be signifiers, but rather that these signs can vary in meaning, leading to ambiguous teaching and imparting of knowledge.

In the dialogue between Adeodatus and Augustine, there are questions about teaching and learning. For example, Adeodatus asks, “What is it we seek to accomplish when we speak?” Augustine responds, “we speak to teach and learn.”⁹⁵ He goes on further to ask, “But how do we learn?” According to Caranfa, Augustine responds by stating that learning is through “remembering” or “recollection.”⁹⁶ He states that words play a role in learning as they provoke our ‘attention’ to the things in the mind that we have known in the past, quoting Augustine, “I knew these before, and it is not when someone names them, but when they are seen by me that

⁹² Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education.”

⁹³ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 589.

⁹⁴ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 589.

⁹⁵ Augustine, “Concerning the Teacher,” in W.J. Oates, ed., *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, Vol. 1, trans. G. C. Leckie (New York: Random House Publishers, 1948), 361, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 589.

⁹⁶ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education.”

knowledge of them is achieved for me.”⁹⁷ However, as I will show further on, Caranfa’s interpretation is not completely correct here as Augustine’s ideas are more complex and differ from Plato’s notion of anamnesis.

According to Caranfa, Augustine states that the process of recollection in learning needs words to conjure images which are recalled from memory.⁹⁸ Hence the role of a teacher is one who is prompting the student for knowledge which already exists within. Caranfa claims that, like Socrates, the relationship between student and pupil is characterised by a sharing of ideas and examining truths and errors of each other’s thoughts and concepts.⁹⁹ According to Caranfa, Augustine’s ideas of recollection echo the Neoplatonic tradition that understood knowledge as residing innately. The role of a teacher therefore, Caranfa states, is to ‘prompt’ the remembering of the innate ideas. As Caranfa writes,

But how do we learn?’... Here we see learning conceived not as speaking, but as recollection: ‘I think there is a certain kind of teaching by means of reminding ... remembering things’... Yet Augustine teaches that words do play a role in learning: they call *attention* to the things present in the mind.¹⁰⁰

Caranfa continues to explain that ultimately signs according to Augustine are illuminated by God. For God is the real teacher within. If student and teacher listen to God, they can understand the true meaning of words. Here we see a change from the reliance on Plato’s recollection, towards the notion of God’s illumination. Caranfa states the following:

According to Augustine, whether the words of the teacher or those of the student are true or false, the mind discovers by contemplating them within itself as it is ‘illuminated’ by God.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Augustine, “Concerning the Teacher,” 387, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 590.

⁹⁸ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education.”

⁹⁹ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 591.

¹⁰⁰ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 589.

¹⁰¹ Caranfa “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 590.

For Caranfa, as illustrated above, Augustine’s understanding of learning is both derived from Platonic recollection and illuminated by God. While Augustine draws on Plato (through the Platonist) in his writings, as noted by many scholars, he does not have the same understanding of recollection that Plato adopts as Caranfa is alluding to.¹⁰² Augustine does claim that we need to have some fundamental knowledge before we can absorb something new, nevertheless, this is not the same process of ‘recollection’ or ‘remembering’ argued by Plato.¹⁰³ Augustine’s rejection of Plato’s recollection is shown below in the *De Trinitate* (12.15.24):

But if this were a case of remembering things previously known, then surely nobody (or almost nobody) could do this when questioned in this fashion. For not all people were geometers in a prior life – given that there are so few of them in the human race that one can hardly be found!¹⁰⁴

Augustine claims that we come to understanding, not through Platonic recollection, but rather through a process of Divine Illumination.¹⁰⁵ This is reiterated by many scholars, for example, Peter King describes it as “... knowing *is* a matter of an inner episode of awareness (called ‘illumination’).”¹⁰⁶ According to Augustine, God’s light illuminates our ideas. As Samuel Stump points out, for Augustine, it is through the process of illumination by God that one can recognise the truth of their ideas. God is the source of the illumination from which the human intellect can be influenced.¹⁰⁷ Peter King describes this process in the following way:

It is an inner episode constitutive of knowledge, one whereby we become aware of (or ‘see’) the truth. The power that reveals the truth to us, Augustine maintains, is Christ

¹⁰² Jānis T. Ozoliņš, “Aquinas, Education and The Theory of Illumination,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 53, no. 10 (2021): 2–3.

¹⁰³ Ozoliņš, “Aquinas, Education and The Theory of Illumination,” 2–3.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine, *De Trinitate* (12.15.24), quoted in Peter King, “Augustine on the Impossibility of Teaching,” *Metaphilosophy* 29, no. 3 (1998): 179–195.

¹⁰⁵ See also Augustine, *De Trinitate* Book XXI, 15. 24-25, quoted in Ozoliņš, “Aquinas, Education and The Theory of Illumination,” 3.

¹⁰⁶ King, “Augustine on the Impossibility of Teaching,” 179.

¹⁰⁷ Samuel E. Stump, *Socrates to Sartre* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 148.

as the Teacher operating within us (11.38); the very *The Teacher* understanding we have testified to God's presence in the world, since the mind is illuminated with knowledge by the inner Teacher.¹⁰⁸

4.6 Augustine in the *Confessions*—contemplation and silence

This 'frontier between speech and silence' is also explored by Augustine in *De Magistro* (389 AD) or *Concerning the Teacher*. Because of its pedagogical importance, it is well at this point to explore its central theme. Here Augustine uses Socratic inquiry as the proper or best way of teaching and of imparting knowledge, whereas in the *Confessions* Socratic inquiry is transformed into a contemplative prayer, or indeed into a meditation.¹⁰⁹

Caranfa argues that in the *Confessions*, Augustine changes from his emphasis on the philosophical and rational towards the affective and artistic. He claims that Augustine, a master of the dialectic, begins to speak from the heart, stating "Lord, the ears of my heart are in front of you" and the heart "that cries out to God."¹¹⁰ Caranfa claims his philosophical method changes towards a "poetic art and language" (a theme developed throughout Caranfa's work).¹¹¹ Caranfa points out that this is exemplified in Books IX and X; Augustine leaves behind his "profession of rhetoric and the rhetoric of other writers" to take up an alternative way, which is the "Lords style of speech".¹¹² This movement away from the rhetoric of his time is replaced by the experience of God found in contemplation. It is here Caranfa argues that Augustine is able to 'recollect memories' and to 'see' himself as a reflection of God. As Augustine writes,

¹⁰⁸ King, "Augustine on the Impossibility of Teaching" 180. This raises the following questions posed by King: "The scope of divine activity in illumination is also problematic. Does God have to directly act in each instance of knowledge, or merely ordain the world in such a way that humans can be knowers? These matters are discussed in Nash [1969]. King, "Augustine on the Impossibility of Teaching," 180.

¹⁰⁹ Caranfa, "Socrates, "Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 588.

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, R. Warner, trans. (New York, New American Library, 1963), quoted in Caranfa, "Socrates, "Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 591, 587.

¹¹¹ Caranfa, "Socrates, "Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 591.

¹¹² Augustine, *Confessions*, quoted in Caranfa, "Socrates, "Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 591.

Speak so that I can hear. See, Lord, the ears of my heart are in front of you. Open them and *say unto my soul: I am thy salvation* ... Do not hide your face from me ... Let me see your face [author's emphasis].¹¹³

Caranfa claims that for Augustine, deeper learning occurs when the mind engages in contemplation. It is here that the mind is able to distinguish between truth and falsity as it is “illuminated by God.”¹¹⁴ In contemplation, the student is able to (metaphorically speaking) access his/her “inner or pure eye.”¹¹⁵ Hence in the final revelation, Augustine argues, it is not with the teacher who speaks, or the words, but through God who “reveal[s] within the soul in silence” the truth of things.¹¹⁶ As Caranfa writes,

As with Socrates, so with Augustine, when we speak and listen from this silence, a true dialogue can take place where words release more meaning since they have their source in the divine *Logos* or Word. ‘The discipline of silence is a kind of nourishment of the word’, wrote Gregory the Great (1992) in the seventh century; ‘by keeping silence we must learn to speak ... I hear what it is that I speak’.¹¹⁷

Augustine sought silence. In his book the *Confessions*, he embraced silence in solitude by appealing to the heart “that cries out to God.”¹¹⁸ God is described as the “eternal Logos or Word,” terms which have derived wide usage historically within the Christian tradition when making reference to God or the divine.¹¹⁹ Caranfa argues that Augustine, like Socrates,

¹¹³ Augustine, *Confessions*, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, “Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 591.

¹¹⁴ Augustine, *Concerning the Teacher*, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, “Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 590.

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *Concerning the Teacher*, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, “Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 590.

¹¹⁶ Augustine, *Concerning the Teacher*, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, “Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 590.

¹¹⁷ Gregory the Great, “The Discipline of Silence,” *Material for Thought*, 13 (San Francisco CA: Far West Editions 1992), 17, 23; and in Caranfa, “Socrates, “Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 587.

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*.

¹¹⁹ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 587.

The word Logos is a term Christian theologian have used from the Greek language to refer to the Word of God or central teachings and doctrines of the faith. Logos was adopted initially within the tradition by St John. Previously, this term was evident in Jewish and Greek philosophical texts, often referring to universal principles, ultimate reason (as in Aristotle) and references to the transcendent or God. See Jules Lebreton, “The Logos” In the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910) Accessed July 2021, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09328a.htm>.

proposes that when “we listen and speak from silence” authentic dialogue takes place.¹²⁰ This deep listening allows words to connect to their origins, which he claims is God or Logos. Caranfa states, “Augustine not only hears the ‘messages from within’, but also, like Socrates, takes language to its logical end when it gives way to stillness, silence.”¹²¹ In this process of deep listening, words develop deeper layers of meaning that facilitate ‘authentic speech’. Our speaking, therefore, should emerge from our practice of silence.¹²² In maintaining silence, our speech and words are transformed in their interaction and connection to the source – which is the divine. According to Augustine,

If to any man the tumult of the flesh were to grow silent, silent the images of earth and water and air, and the poles of heaven silent also, if the soul herself were to be silent and, by not thinking of self, were to transcend itself; if all dreams and imagined revelations were silent, and every tongue, every sign; if there was utter silence from every-thing which exists only to pass away ... but suppose that, having said this and directed our attention to Him that made them, they too were to become hushed and He Himself alone were to speak, ... but that we might hear Him whom in all these things we love, might hear Him in Himself without them, just as a moment ago we two had, as it were, gone beyond ourselves and in a flash of thought had made contact with that ‘eternal’ wisdom which abides above all things ... [to] absorb and wrap the beholder in inward joys, so that his life might be forever like that moment of understanding which we had had and for which we now sighed – would not this be: *Enter into Thy Master’s joy?*¹²³

¹²⁰ Augustine, *Concerning the Teacher*, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education.”

¹²¹ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine, And Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education,” 587, 589, 590.

¹²² Augustine, *Concerning the Teacher*, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education.” The theme of speaking from silence is evident in various religious practices. For instance, in the Dharma teaching within Buddhism, the method of Right Speech in the Five Precepts explicitly addresses silence and speech. It requires adherents to choose respectful words that cause no harm to others. It is important to note that this teaching is within a context of silence as a practice for adherents and members of the Sangha. Silence is evident within the ancient practice of Vipassana that began during the time of Siddhartha Gautama. This approach is apparent today in a 10-day retreat in silence and meditation. Silence is maintained throughout the retreat and referred to as Noble Silence. The practice of silence on retreat prohibits all participants from all verbal and bodily communication. This practice aims to create stillness and quiet within the mind. For example, see Orsolya Huszár, “The Role of Silence at the Retreats of a Buddhist Community,” *Kome (Budapest)* 4, no. 2 (2016): 59–73; Michal Pagis, “Evoking Equanimity: Silent Interaction Rituals in Vipassana Meditation Retreats,” *Qualitative Sociology* 38, no. 1 (2015): 39–56.

¹²³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 4, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 592–593.

As illustrated above, Augustine talks of silence as a pervading presence. Silence is described as a presence within the interiority of the individual self – to something *beyond the self*, “poles of heaven silent also if the soul herself were to be silent”.¹²⁴ This stillness merges within a greater Silence, God, where “He alone were to speak”.¹²⁵

In discovering God, Augustine finds himself. This self-discovery, however, Caranfa claims is found in memory, stating, “Certainly you do dwell in my memory because I remember you from the time I first learned of you, and I find you there when I call you to mind.”¹²⁶ It is through ‘remembering’ in contemplation and silence that Augustine encounters God and the divine Beauty, which leaves him experiencing peace.¹²⁷ This contemplative experience finds its culmination in the coming together and integration of the self where things ‘become new’ and all is ‘still and silent,’ a space beyond literal speech.¹²⁸ In Books IX and X, Augustine discusses his conversion experience, describing himself as a ‘lost sense of self, “I lost myself in the distractions of the Many” a self which he states was distracted, scattered, broken and dissipated.¹²⁹ This ‘self,’ he claims, was transformed in his spiritual conversion.¹³⁰

The aesthetic experience reappears once again in Caranfa’s writings. As illustrated below, he refers to Augustine’s sense of the divine within Neoplatonic terms with references to beauty as the divine, leading towards transformation. Caranfa draws these concepts into the classroom,

¹²⁴ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 591.

¹²⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 591.

¹²⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 593.

¹²⁷ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 593.

Angelo Caranfa, “Silence and Spiritual Experience in Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius and Claudel,” *Literature and Theology* 18, no 6 (2004): 191.

¹²⁸ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 592. See also: Caranfa, “Silence and Spiritual Experience in Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius and Claudel.”

¹²⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, “Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 591.

¹³⁰ Caranfa, “Socrates, “Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 591.

as learning moves towards a matter of the affective and aesthetic apprehension. This results in an integration of the rational, the senses and spirit and exemplified his concept of holistic learning. Hence learning is about the ability to have a vision of beauty as it were, not only through memory, but within all parts of the mind, what he describes as the “conscience and unconscious.”¹³¹ Caranfa claims that both Augustine and Socrates argued that to discover the divine beauty is actually a discovery of a movement towards integration within oneself that connects us to the divine. This is epitomised in Augustine’s well-known verse on eternal beauty.¹³² For Augustine,

Late it was that I loved you, beauty so ancient and so new, late I loved you! And, look, you were within me and I was outside, and there I sought for you and in my ugliness, I plunged into the beauties that you have made. You were with me, and I was not with you ... You called, you cried, you shattered my blindness ... you touched me, and I burned for your peace. ¹³³

4.7 Critique of Caranfa on Augustine

While Caranfa draws on Augustine’s notion of divine illumination, he also relies heavily on Plato’s recollection in his interpreting Augustine’s work. While Augustine does refer to Plato’s anamnesis, as I have noted, he nevertheless also rejects it. Caranfa explores the *De Magistro*, which as he rightly points out, is of significance due to its pedagogical importance for the classroom. However, he fails to examine it in depth and show *how* it could be useful. In addition, Caranfa draws on only a few of Augustine’s works. Augustine’s *Soliloquia*, for example, is an inner dialogue between Augustine and Reason and how we can link some of it to education. While it provides a useful pedagogical tool in exploring issues of faith and reason

¹³¹ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 594.

¹³² Caranfa, “Socrates, “Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education.”

¹³³ Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 27, quoted in Caranfa, “Socrates, “Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 593.

within a contemplative classroom, it was not included by Caranfa. Rather, Caranfa's elucidations are focused mostly on the experience of contemplation and divine intervention in Augustine's work, which overall he does very well.

A recurring theme in Caranfa's writings is a tendency to focus on the aesthetic and experiential aspects of the contemplative experience (and classroom), rather than the process of the dialectic. The practical process of *how we can engage with reason and the dialectic* in a way that can lead students towards an encounter with the mystery, God, humility, and virtue is not clearly developed in Caranfa's writings (I will examine this in Chapter 7).¹³⁴ This is exemplified in his earlier claim from his article, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," that Socratic teaching of virtues was more about humility than cross-examination.¹³⁵ This claim needs further clarification and was not adequately supported by Caranfa. Furthermore, this claim contradicts Caranfa's main line of thinking throughout his work, which is that the process of cross-examination *leads* towards humility, therefore implying its centrality in the process of gaining virtue and humility. Another illustration recalled earlier is included below from Caranfa's work, *Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter*, where

¹³⁴ For example: Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of learning," 215. Caranfa claims that the Socratic teaching of virtues was more about humility than cross-examination. He states, "According to Socrates, holiness, justice, wisdom, and virtue are more about humility than about examination and cross-examination; they arise from letting go of our pretensions to wisdom rather than from pretending to speak rationally about things." Additionally, we don't get an understanding in Caranfa's work in exactly how this linear process of reasoning occurs in the classroom. Yet we know that Augustine clearly incorporated the use of reasoning and the dialectic in his teaching and writings. While reasoning was supported by God, he still struggled with it and sought to challenge his students into deep thinking. We know that Augustine did not shy away from the dialectic in his method of teaching. These provocations in thinking can result in independent thinking that touch on the broader aims of education. As Mathew Kent Siebert points out, for Augustine, "... the goal of trusting the teacher of a *disciplina* is to make that teacher obsolete by learning to understand the subject matter of that *disciplina* for oneself." See Matthew Kent Siebert, "Augustine's Development on Testimonial Knowledge," *Journal of The History of Philosophy* 56, no. 2 (2018), 202. Augustine also alludes to this engagement and tensions with reason in the following, "... Since these arguments were troubling me, I meant to rid my mind of them by the strongest reasoning I could. This was done with the Lord's mercy and assistance." Augustine, *Against the Academicians [and] The Teacher*, trans. Peter King (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 1995), 167.

¹³⁵ Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of learning," 214–215.

Caranfa claims that the contemplative practice of listening to silence takes priority over discourse and critical thinking.¹³⁶ He states:

Our failure to teach that there is ‘more’ to knowledge than what ‘we can tell’ is perhaps our greatest shortcoming as educators. The problem of education is a direct result of our failure to listen, to teach silence. To be alone and to listen should have priority over discourse and critical thinking.¹³⁷

On the surface this reading can be viewed as problematic. This idea seems to contradict the main aim of education in the broader sense, which is ideally to cultivate thinking skills. Additionally, it is not entirely clear what Caranfa means when he refers to “more” to knowledge than what “we can tell.” However, from his other works we can infer that the ideas above are suggestive of the notion of mystery, a main theme in throughout his writings.¹³⁸ It could also point to many of the ideas explored within apophatic and negative theology, which will be explored in what follows.

Augustine’s silent God – Apophatic theology

However, as evident in the *Confessions*, which Caranfa highlights, silence is linked to God and an attribute of God, as Augustine “speaks to a silent God...who speaks and answers in silence...”.¹³⁹ Augustine’s silent God has a redemptive and transformative quality. It is the

¹³⁶ Caranfa, “Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 40, no 1, (2006): 98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9752.2006.00499.x>.

¹³⁷ Caranfa, “Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter,” 98.

¹³⁸ Caranfa may also be alluding to a very subtle process of deep thinking. If we are to think deeply about important issues, it does call for a deep attentive listening to silence within our internal dialogue and the ideas of others. This notion might be reiterating Heidegger’s claim that a man who thinks can listen deeply. However, like the earlier claim, this needs further development and clarification. This claim might also point to a critique of the ‘nature’ of critical thinking or logic (removed from affective and silence) used within the sciences (as many phenomenologists have suggested) is limited in adequately understanding subjective experiences. Caranfa also states, “This paper maintains that the critical method is in itself insufficient to achieve its purpose. Its failure is in its exclusion of feeling and of silence from the thinking process, see: Caranfa, “Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter,” 85.

¹³⁹ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” 588.

It is important to note the different usage of the term silence. There is the silence which points to the immanent dimensions of the divine experienced subjectively. The other denotes an understanding of a ‘God who is that Silence’, pointing to the transcendent notion of the divine. As noted in previous chapters, this approach is typically evident within apophatic or negative

experience of a 'silent God' which ambiguously leads to greater intimacy with the divine and which Augustine finds himself.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, Caranfa points out that, like Dionysius the Areopagite, Augustine looked for God and found hidden silence.¹⁴¹ Yet, these claims are paradoxical and ambiguous; how can the omnipotent presence be both powerful and silent? In what way then can the immanence of God be revealed in his/her silence? These are important theological questions Caranfa touches on in his discussion on Simone Weil (examined in the next chapter) and I will review some answers to these questions in what follows.¹⁴²

Contemporary theologian and priest Fr David Ranson discusses the ambiguity of God's silence. He argues that where God seems absent, paradoxically also points to God's presence.¹⁴³ Ranson claims that the experience of God's silence or absence can result in desolation, deep internal despair, and questioning. However, if we trust this process it can lead to another level personal intimacy with God. Ranson states, "God who is that Silence, moves from experiencing an absent God to a God who speaks in the silence and who is that Silence."¹⁴⁴ Shusako Endo's novel on *Silence* is included in his work. Endo explores silence through his main character Rodriguez, who struggles with the silence and absence of God amongst great suffering. He eventually comes to the realisation that this silence allowed him to be in touch with an even greater level of intimacy with God, Ranson states:

theology (*via negativa*). It is the understanding of God as 'unknowable' and 'beyond words.' The divine cannot be understood because it is radically different, 'other' and 'transcendent.' Ilse Nina Bulhof and Laurens ten Kate, *Flight of The Gods* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 5. The notion of God as 'mystery', is also closely associated with God as 'silence'. As recalled within the literature of negative theology, we find the divine closely linked to silence. Davies and Turner, *Silence and The Word*.

¹⁴⁰ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education."

¹⁴¹ Caranfa, "Silence and Spiritual Experience in Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius and Claudel," 191.

¹⁴² See for example: Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," *Logos* 18, no. 2 (2015): 150–174.

¹⁴³ David Ranson, "The Question in the Silence of Suffering," *Adult Faith News* (2011), 1–2.

¹⁴⁴ Ranson, "The Question in the Silence of Suffering."

Even now I am the last priest in the land. But our Lord was not silent. Even if he had been silent, my life until this day would have spoken of him.¹⁴⁵

Ranson's depiction of how "God speaks and answers in silence" echoes similar themes in religious writings. God's silence is found in the story of Job and Jesus on the cross, which the writers tell us were eventually transformed. Jesus' experience of the resurrection, for example, and Job's faith in God is restored. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila (among others) describe God's silence as a dark night of the soul.¹⁴⁶ This, they argue, is a natural process on the spiritual journey which ultimately leads to greater intimacy with God. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila (*Interior Castle*) describe this process as a 'purification of the senses.' This includes a transformation of the personal ego, attachments and ideas about God and is evident within religious mystical writings. These themes are developed throughout Caranfa's work and will be discussed in the next chapter.¹⁴⁷ Augustine and Weil, for example, (as discussed in Chapter 6) both cry out to a 'silent God.' This reaching out to the silent God, ironically eventually led to their transformation into a deeper level of faith. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner describe the prominent role of negation and silence within Christian theology.¹⁴⁸ Paul Fiddes explores paradoxical concepts within negative theology that he describes as the "The Hiddenness of God and The Presence of God," arguing like Ranson above, that these can lead towards greater intimacy with the God and Christ.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Ranson, "The Question in the Silence of Suffering."

¹⁴⁶ St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of The Soul* (La Vergne: Neeland Media LLC, 2020). See also: Ruth Burrows, *Interior Castle Explored: St. Teresa's Teaching on the Life of Deep Union with God* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring, 2007).

¹⁴⁷ For example, within the Sufi Islamic tradition the works of Rumi describe this process of detachment from the ego. See: Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Rumi*, trans. Coleman Barks (San Francisco, Calif: Harper San Francisco, 2007).

¹⁴⁸ Davies and Turner, *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*.

¹⁴⁹ Paul S. Fiddes, "The Quest for A Place Which Is 'Not-A-Place': The Hiddenness of God and The Presence of God," in *Silence and The Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Here lies a great theological paradox – the silence of God presents another side of the coin, also revealing *God's presence*. This paradox appears to be an intricate part of the faith journey within the Judeo-Christian notion of God's silence, which can potentially lead the individual towards personal transformation (themes discussed in Weil's writing). Silence, as discussed within this context, reveals the immanent dimension of the transcendent. It also points to the ambiguity and transformative power of silence addressing existential and spiritual issues.

As we can see above, while not fully examined by Caranfa, the notion of Augustine reaching out to a silent God moves into the realm of apophatic theology. The literature of apophatic or negative theology is able to express some of the paradoxes and complexities of religious faith. While I have highlighted some limitations to Caranfa's work, nevertheless, his inclusion of Augustine's *De Magistro* and the *Confession* provides the educator with some deep reflections on the contentious issues of teaching and learning. Augustine asks the important question: so how do we learn? And what function do language and the teacher have in the process of teaching and learning? I think Augustine explores these complex questions with honesty and deep reflection.¹⁵⁰ Augustine acknowledges the difficulty in signs and words as signifiers to all students and the limitations of language to express all thoughts and meanings, noting the difficulty in making universal conclusions on the matter.

Augustine argues that the mysterious act of understanding and learning within the classroom requires something *beyond* signs and words; while reason may help us apprehend these, what furthers our deeper understanding is the light of God. Learning, according to Augustine, is

¹⁵⁰Augustine raises the question that despite the teacher's best efforts, why do some students learn and not others? Augustine acknowledges the difficulty in signs and words as signifiers to all students and the limitations of language to express all thoughts and meanings and notes the difficulty in making universal conclusions on the matter.

therefore ultimately dependent on divine assistance.¹⁵¹ This points to the mystery and complexity of teaching and learning, which is, broadly speaking, ignored within empirical literature. As any educator would know, despite our best efforts to teach and present sound reasons for claims, ultimately student understanding and deep learning are not guaranteed, or at least not always immediately evident. These observations are particularly relevant for a contemporary approach to contemplative education that seeks to raise awareness of the pervasive greater mystery. Peter King captures insightfully these observations about the mystery of learning in the following:

Since knowledge is a matter of an individual grasp of reasons why something should be so, and such reasons have to explain the content of what is known, it follows that knowledge is not *per se* transmitted from a teacher to a student. Rather, a teacher *proposes* reasons to a student, who either sees how they work (and thereby accepts them), takes them by authority, or neither. In the first case there is knowledge; in the second belief; in the third ignorance. But for our purposes the important point is that in the first case, the student's acceptance of the reasons is a process internal to the student – and, in the end, mysterious: the teacher may provide the occasion for learning but cannot do more. And this is enough to argue that the problem of learning is a deep and perplexing philosophical puzzle. For if the teacher doesn't *cause* the student to understand – and it's clear that the teacher cannot literally cause the student to understand, since otherwise everyone in the classroom would get it, or nobody would – then what is it that takes place? What *is* learning, if not a mysterious inner episode of awareness?¹⁵²

Conclusion

As demonstrated, Caranfa explores the link between silence and the dialectic through the works of Socrates and Augustine. Caranfa draws on Socrates to explore the notion of reason and the

¹⁵¹This discussion raises the question, what kind of understanding is Augustine pointing to within a classroom context? Does it apply to all subjects, or is understanding directed explicitly to matters of faith? Also, does God act in each instance of 'knowing' or are we predisposed to receive such deep understandings? Some of these questions are explored by Peter King when he states, "The scope of divine activity in illumination is also problematic. Does God have to act in each instance of knowledge directly, or merely ordain the world so that humans can be knowers? Peter King, "Augustine on the Impossibility of Teaching," *Metaphilosophy* 29, no.3 (1998):180, doi:10.1111/1467-9973.00090.

¹⁵² King, "Augustine on the Impossibility of Teaching," 195.

dialectic and its connection to silence. For Caranfa, Socrates emulates a man of rationality who uses it to its limits. The dialectic was his method throughout his teachings. What he finds, however, is that the dialectic has limitations (in relation to knowledge), and these limitations may lead one to become silent and reflective.¹⁵³ What Caranfa argues is that while most scholars focus exclusively on the Socratic dialectic method for learning, he stresses the importance of silence in his approach. The silence is in the context of listening to the Word of God, Logos, and *diamonion*, which he argues are an *inextricable part of human discourse*.¹⁵⁴ This listening to silence, Caranfa proposes, leads to deeper understanding and humility, a theme conducive to the contemplative classroom. Caranfa links Socratic silence to the realm of the holy, contemplation, solitude and self-knowledge, deep thinking and understanding – as recalled, all are relevant to a contemplative education. Furthermore, Caranfa connects the limitation of reason (and exclusion of feelings) and its link/progression to silence, mystery and the transcendence, a theme evident throughout his work, and touches on apophatic theology. Moreover, Caranfa finds in Augustine’s work, like Socrates, a *linear process* where reasoning, the dialectic discourse and language find an ending, or rather their fate in silence and the transcendence. This deep listening allows words to connect to their origins, which he claims is God or Logos; Caranfa states, “Augustine not only hears the ‘messages from within’, but also, like Socrates, takes language to its logical end when it gives way to stillness, silence.”¹⁵⁵

Caranfa explores Augustine’s dialectic and silence mostly from the *De Magistro* and his notion of contemplation is drawn from the *Confessions*. Caranfa highlights that, for Augustine, while

¹⁵³ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty love and silence,” 585.

This theme is also found in Caranfa's other works, such as: “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education”; “Contemplative Instruction and the Gifts of Beauty, Love, and Silence”; “Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe,” 99.

¹⁵⁴ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 213.

¹⁵⁵ Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine, and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education,” 587.

the dialectic is useful in our search for truth, ultimately ‘true’ understanding and insights are not arrived at alone but aided by God. Caranfa draws on Augustine to highlight the limitations of the dialectic, the importance of silence, which leads us not only towards true understanding but also an encounter with God, who is known in silence.

There were some areas in Caranfa’s writings that could have been further developed. Augustine’s work, for example, is wide-ranging and Caranfa relies too much on only two specific works. Additionally, Caranfa relies heavily on the contemplative and experiential aspects of contemplation drawn from both Socrates and Augustine and fails to examine *how* the dialectic process can be used within a contemplative framework.

In filling the gap in Caranfa’s understanding of silence, thinking, and contemplation, I briefly included the primary themes in Aristotle’s view of contemplation. This is important in identifying the relation between thinking, contemplation, wisdom, virtue, and the flourishing life. In addition, the works of Pierre Hadot were discussed for highlighting silence and the contemplative dimensions with the philosophical tradition of the Stoics. Martha Nussbaum’s work also echoed similar arguments and was briefly noted.

This chapter therefore drew on both the philosophical and Christian tradition in examining silence, thinking, and contemplation. These explications extended Caranfa’s model and provided additional insights and are helpful in our understanding of a contemplative pedagogy. Nevertheless, Caranfa’s exploration and inclusion of Socrates and Augustine is, overall, conducive for a model of contemplative education. While aspects could be further developed by Caranfa, drawing on Socrates provides a useful framework for understanding that the limitations of the dialectic can lead us towards an encounter with the divine, and potentially the development of humility. Socratic ignorance can fuel a sense of awe at the vastness of

knowledge. Likewise, Socrates provides a rationale for the importance of silence for contemplation and solitude, from which we can draw positive implications for teaching and learning.

Further, Augustine's elucidations of the dialectic and the purpose of language in teaching and learning in the *De Magistro* is informative dialogue for the educator. While Caranfa could have developed this further, he does include some of the questions from this text, which may help teachers reflect on some important issues about student learning. Moreover, Augustine's insights are informative as they move away from a simple and reductionist view and point to the mystery and complexity of student learning. Augustine's work, as exemplified in the *Confessions*, can also be a guide for the spiritual journey. Augustine's life overall, as we know, was far from perfect. His affairs and struggle with his sexuality and faith point to the human frailty and complexity of the human journey towards self-knowledge and God. Augustine can be utilised to help us recognise what it means to be human, to search and struggle with our personal faith. Caranfa notes this when he states that Augustine provides us with a way of understanding the human search for meaning in "...testifying to the human existential, experiential drive to confirm the spiritual."¹⁵⁶ For that, I think the use of Augustine has served us well. Augustine's honest descriptions of his faith journey can provide a signpost for educators as they navigate both their own and students' spiritual and religious awakenings and journeys. As Caranfa writes:

Plato's Socrates, with his maieutic art of dialectical inquiry as the way to truth, the good, and the beautiful must be presupposed by any considerations of the relations between teacher and learner: we teach and learn through an identification with and emulation of Socrates. Augustine subsequently assimilated Neoplatonic themes into what he would term 'Christian philosophy' by manifesting many Socratic methodological traits in his emphasis on the restless human heart as longing desire for

¹⁵⁶ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 578–579.

the light of unbounded truth, the good, and beauty. His emphasis upon the dialectics of searching is often portrayed as testifying to the human existential, experiential drive to confirm the spiritual.¹⁵⁷

In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how *contemplation is attentiveness to silence* that is inexorably linked to the aesthetics experience. This will be drawn primarily from Caranfa's writings and his influences, Plato and Simone Weil. I will examine how the aesthetic-spiritual leads to the experience of the divine, God and personal transformation. Caranfa connects silence to the aesthetic experience in his conceptual framework of the classroom. In connecting to the aesthetic, Caranfa proposes this facilitates a doorway to an encounter with the divine, which is important within the classroom context. According to Caranfa, philosophical inquiry through the works of Plato once again leads to contemplation, wonder, humility, and self-knowledge. Caranfa argues that this is possible by a focused 'attention' on silence and the Platonic forms, especially beauty. The theme regarding the limitation of reason (and exclusion of feelings) and its link/progression to silence, mystery, and the transcendence, is also observed in this chapter. As we shall see, Caranfa, like Simone Weil, draws on Plato's contemplation to the divine and incorporates this in his classroom.

¹⁵⁷ Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education," 578-579.

Chapter 5 Contemplation: Silence and attentiveness through the aesthetics experience – Caranfa and Weil

In Chapter 4, I demonstrated that Caranfa (drawing on Socrates and Augustine) shows that silence emerges because of questioning and discussion (employing the Socratic method). Caranfa suggests that the aim of education should be to reconnect the *dialectics with silence*.¹

In this chapter, Caranfa's use of Christian Platonism in developing his conception of the contemplative classroom will be examined. In addition, Simone Weil's ideas on attention and silence will be elaborated to develop a more coherent sense of their place in a contemplative classroom. Caranfa and Weil propose that music, art, and literature can lead to an appreciation of the transcendent.

Caranfa's Christian Platonism

Education takes for granted that sight is there but that it isn't turned the right way or looking where it ought to look, and it tries to redirect it appropriately.²

Drawing on *The Republic*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, Caranfa talks metaphorically about a way of seeing or "looking" at the world, which he derives predominately from Plato. The way of seeing or looking, so to speak, is having attention and awareness of the realities beyond the material world, which for Plato, are the Forms.³ The role of education then is to bring students' "attention" to the world of the spirit, which he defines as the "aesthetic apprehension." Caranfa's aesthetic philosophy, although predominately Platonic, also draws on other

¹ For example, see: Angelo Caranfa, "Silence as the Foundation of Learning," *Educational Theory* 54, no. 2 (2004): 211–230. doi: 10.1111/j.0013-2004.2004.0angelo_abstract.x; Angelo Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," *Educational Theory* 60, no. 5 (2010): 561–585, doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.2010.00377.x; Angelo Caranfa, "The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 44, no. 2 (2010): 63-82, doi :10.1353/jae.0.0085.

² Plato, "Republic," in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1977), 518, quoted in Caranfa, "Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 50, no. 2 (2016): 85–86.

³ Caranfa's notion of contemplative education revolves around metaphorically speaking, the idea of "looking upwards", gazing and experiencing the things of beauty. These concepts communicate through the language of silence and point to the eternal. Caranfa writes, "the eternal, of an existence that takes its meaning from something beyond itself." See Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," 561. Immanuel Kant also echoed similar ideas about the experiences and encounter with beauty. He states, "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Humanity, 1950), 161.

influences such as Weil, Alfred Whitehead, and some existentialists (e.g., Nietzsche and Jaspers).⁴

Caranfa's vision of education is essentially a contemplative one. It seeks to engage in the Platonic notions of the Good, Truth, Justice and Beauty and God, whom we come to know through *silence* and *attention*. Like Weil, Caranfa understands these dimensions as crucial for contemplation and learning. This contemplative experience requires a life of detachment, solitude, looking (metaphorically speaking), attention and prayer. Caranfa argues that this process is best exemplified in Plato's *Allegory of Cave*. In this allegory, we are presented with a process out of the cave of 'illusions.'⁵ Additionally, through the *Symposium*, we are shown a step-by-step process of highlighting for students the beauties in 'this world,' that proceed to an awareness and encounter with the 'ultimate' beauty, the Forms and God. This Platonic vision, Caranfa proposes, leads to *wholeness*. Caranfa's vision, which will be discussed in this chapter, offers educators a holistic approach for teaching and learning.⁶

Weil on silence and attention

The elucidations of Weil's writing contribute to this thesis because of the emphasis on the nature of attention to learning, silence, music, and aesthetics. These offer a positive dimension to the contemplative classroom context. Firstly, the disposition of slow, reflective thinking can potentially enable deep thinking, which is what we want within a contemplative learning. As Heidegger and others have warned us, slow and meditative thinking is in great need today. As

⁴ Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," 561.

⁵ Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," 561.

⁶ As will be developed further on, Caranfa's notion of contemplation incorporates a way of seeing, feeling, and intuiting. He writes, "Contemplation or silence is seeing, is looking (Smp., 212a), in which feeling is constantly being integrated into a thinking process in what is a sudden or an intuitive vision of 'true Beauty'." See Caranfa, "Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education," 92. Hence this depicts Caranfa's understanding of holistic education. My definition of a holistic approach in a contemplative pedagogy is defined throughout the thesis. For example, in Chapters 1 and 9.

considered in previous chapters, a growing amount of literature has emerged advocating for a ‘slow’ approach to living.⁷

Furthermore, Weil’s emphasis on the power of the arts and aesthetics to enable personal transformation is also worthwhile within a contemplative framework. As shown in Chapter 2, the aesthetic experience and art demonstrate evidence of facilitating positive experiences within the classroom. Weil gives us insights into how sacred music can transform our suffering. Weil and Caranfa claim that sacred music enables us to connect to silence and the Forms, Beauty, and God. For Weil, the aesthetic experience is a way to God. Weil creates an understanding of how the aesthetic experience can help us develop humility through decreation and letting go of the ego.

Caranfa argues that Weil’s theoretical vision of contemplative education through silence, attention, solitude, and aesthetics (through sacred music) is predominantly religious and Platonic (*vita contemplativa*). Caranfa draws on Weil’s concept of attention to learning, which extends to the soul as it moves towards the Platonic forms and ultimately the Christian God. However, this link between Christianity and Neoplatonic concepts is not always clear in Caranfa’s or Weil’s work.

Moreover, we can see how the discussion on beauty, the silence of God, and suffering enters the area of negative and apophatic theology. The paradox of God’s beauty and love is intertwined with God’s absence and silence. While this process described by Weil and Caranfa might be challenging for young people today (as discussed further in the next chapter), nevertheless, it provides some signposts for educators in recognising some of the holistic aims

⁷ See Chapters 1, 2 and 9.

of education which include spirituality.⁸ Some of the limitations and problems of Caranfa's and Weil's model of contemplation will also be noted and developed further in the next chapter.

The distractions of modern culture evident in schools, Caranfa and Weil argue, attempt to divert us from our deepest longing and craving (which they claim is God). Modern culture instead directs our desires to materialism and worldly attachments.⁹ Caranfa argues that the call in education is to arouse these deep desires for the transcendent. He writes, "To awaken these cravings is truly the art of instruction and of life."¹⁰ This call towards religious and spiritual experience and developing the virtue of humility, as Weil and Caranfa have understood, is highly ambitious for a modern educational context. Yet, the benefits of silence and contemplative practices have been shown in Chapter 2 to have positive educational benefits on learning and overall wellbeing. Caranfa's conceptual model of contemplation reminds us of the importance of silence and attention in learning and developing the whole person, including mind and spirit.

This chapter will predominately focus on Caranfa's following works: "The Aesthetic and the Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil," "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence", "Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education," and, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence."

5.1 What is contemplation? Caranfa's view on contemplation

The experience of contemplation is key to this chapter and overall thesis. Broadly speaking, contemplation draws on all of one's faculties, the senses, thinking, feeling and imagination, in

⁸ This includes educating not only the rational dimensions of the person but also the effective, intuitive, and spiritual.

⁹ Caranfa, "Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence," 567, 585.

¹⁰ Caranfa, "Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence," 567, 585.

a way that generally leads to self-integration. Contemplation tends to be attributed to a much slower pace in thinking and reflection. Martin Heidegger refers to this in his discussion on ‘meditative thinking,’ as opposed to ‘calculative thinking.’¹¹ Christian scholar Richard Rohr, likewise, talks about the notion of a ‘contemplative mind’ instead of a ‘dualistic mind.’¹² What these concepts have in common is that they point to a way of ‘seeing’ reality that can potentially allow us to access a broader and more holistic understanding of ourselves and the universe. This inevitably leads to transformation.

A contemplative approach in the classroom can address some of the broader aims of education in developing thinking skills. Within a contemplative framework, we want to move beyond superficial understandings towards deep thinking and reflection. This deep reflection is directed not only towards academic pursuits but is a thinking that also engages the interior. This approach allows greater awareness of one’s emotions, intuition, senses, and thoughts. This will be discussed in this chapter and developed further in Chapter 8.

Contemplation, then, can be distinguished in two ways. Firstly, that which is occurring outside the realm of awareness of the sacred or religious, which we might refer to as a secular. Secondly, the contemplation that views the world as sacred, religious, and mystical is how Caranfa and many of his thinkers understood contemplation. *Caranfa argues for the importance of ‘seeing’ the Platonic forms of beauty in developing an aesthetic–spiritual experience in education – this forms the basis of his understanding of contemplation. The metaphor of seeing is intertwined with ‘attentiveness.’ In seeing or being ‘attentive’ to the Platonic forms, our souls and minds are drawn ‘upwards’, so to speak, towards a spiritual*

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, “The Memorial Address” in *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper Perennial, 1966), 56.

¹² Richard Rohr, *Falling Upwards* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011).

experience that leads to transformation. This closely resembles the etymology of the word ‘contemplation,’ which is described as the “act of looking at,” ... *contemplari* “to gaze attentively, observe; consider, contemplate.”¹³

5.2 Caranfa’s Christian Platonism

Retrieving Plato: the ultimate goal of education is to provide a path to the divine world

...for Plato, the creative person is contemplation, is silence: ‘a lover of wisdom or of beauty, or [someone]who will be cultivated in the arts and prone to erotic love’ (Phdr., 248d)....

Contemplation or silence is seeing, is looking (Smp., 212a), in which feeling is constantly being integrated into the thinking process in what is a sudden or an intuitive vision of ‘true Beauty.’¹⁴

Many scholars like Caranfa and Weil have drawn on Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave* to highlight a process that helps us recognise what is ‘real,’ true and illusionary. Some have emphasised the spiritual dimension in the allegory, highlighting the importance of recognising truths beyond the materialistic view of the world.¹⁵ The allegory is understood as the metaphorical journey of the soul that moves toward the eternal.¹⁶ The self (soul or mind) is on a journey towards the good, divine, and supernatural, which finds its place in contemplation.¹⁷ The

¹³“Contemplation | Search Online Etymology Dictionary,” *Etymonline.Com*. Accessed September 18, 2021. <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=Contemplation>. This definition is also closely linked to my description of contemplation. I have defined contemplation as drawing on all of one’s faculties, the senses, thinking, feeling and imagination. This inclusive approach has the potential for self-integration and tends to include a much slower pace of thinking and reflection.

¹⁴ Caranfa, “Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education,” 92.

¹⁵ For example, see: Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Ballantine, 2011); Samuel E. Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000).

¹⁶ For example, see: Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence.”

Caranfa, like Plato, creatively emphasises the ‘light’ and ‘eye’ metaphors in his writings. Similarly, these metaphors also appear in the works of Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle. For example, the analogy of the “light” in Plato’s cave we see exemplified in the works of Teresa of Avila. A Christian mystic uses the imagery of the “light” as a presence within the soul that we often are obstructed by sin from “seeing”. Her image of the soul is similar to a castle with different rooms. She explores the notion of light within the castle in the following way: “You must note that hardly any of the light coming from the King’s royal chamber reaches these first dwelling places. Even though they are not dark and black, as when the soul is in sin, they nevertheless are in some way darkened so that the soul cannot see the light. The darkness is not caused by the flaw in the room...but so many bad things like snakes and vipers...that enter with the soul and don’t allow it to be aware of the light. It’s as if a person were to enter a place where the sun is shining but be hardly able to open his eyes because of the mud in them.” Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of Teresa of Avila*, vol 2, trans. Kavanaugh and Rodriguez (ICS publications, Washington, DC, 1980), 295.

¹⁷ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence.”

approach of many Neoplatonists, like Augustine, Caranfa and Weil, saw this allegory as a process by which one ascends to ‘spiritual heights’ and encounters the divine.

Caranfa’s writings on aesthetics and contemplation owe an outstanding debt to Plato. Drawing from Plato, Caranfa claims that the destination of contemplation is attention and union with divine love and beauty. He argues that the intention of silence in the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, and *Symposium* is a ‘recollection’ of true beauty which embodies the experience of the aesthetic–spiritual or what is also described as divine illumination.¹⁸ This aesthetic–spiritual experience, Caranfa proposes, should be the main aim of contemplation and education. However, as we shall see in this chapter, both Caranfa and Weil extend Plato’s ideas inside a Christian framework.¹⁹

Caranfa describes this process as contemplation within the allegory, as prayer. He claims it is essentially a way of learning that leads step by step and by repeated exercises out of the cave, arriving at the realm of goodness, truth, justice, love, and beauty.²⁰ Caranfa outlines three necessary stages in this process. Firstly, to *acknowledge* the illusions or deceptions in our life. Secondly, the *desire* to learn and turn inwards. Thirdly, becoming aware of the *longing for unity* with the Forms. As Caranfa explains,

The ‘true life ... of the soul’ is to embody beauty within itself – as Socrates teaches us with this prayer to the God Pan at the end of the *Phaedrus*: ‘Grant that I may be

¹⁸ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence.”

¹⁹ In the *Allegory of the Cave*, Plato used the metaphor of the “eye” in describing the process of this “upward journey” (*Republic*, 517). This allegory depicts people tied to the darkness in a cave only seeing shadows and reflections of light. We must free ourselves of the chains that tie us to the ground and that prevent us from fixing our gaze on the “light of being...of the good” (*Republic*, 518). According to Plato, this is achieved by first looking inwards and metaphorically “seeing” through the “eye” of the soul. Secondly, one must recall through attention or seeing, for “recollection is... a process of recovering which has been already forgotten through time and inattention.” Thirdly, it requires that we give attention to “the contemplation of that which is best in existence, truth, beauty, the good, being, love or all that is divine in us” (*Republic*, 532).

Caranfa argues, Plato believed that contemplation could (metaphorically speaking), ‘lift the eye of the soul upward ‘out of the body, which is “buried in outlandish slough”’ (*Republic*, 533). See Plato, *The Republic*, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jewett. (New York: Random House, 1937); Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence.”

²⁰ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence”; Caranfa, “Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education,” 86–92.

beautiful inside. Let all my external possessions be in friendly harmony with what is within.’²¹

Caranfa’s Christian Platonism is evident in the references above and below. We also see evidence of Caranfa drawing on Weil. The reference from Weil (included in Caranfa’s writing below), for example, describes a ‘seeing’ of the images/ideas presented within the Platonic texts as signifying an experience of grace and God’s love. Weil writes,

Texts: Republic, Phaedrus, Symposium, Plato makes use of images. The fundamental idea of these images is that the disposition of the soul which is granted and receives grace is nothing else but love. The love of God is the root and foundation of Plato’s philosophy.²²

Caranfa asserts that Plato provokes us to think about the differences between mere opinion and knowledge; for this reason, he is a worthwhile inclusion within an educational framework.²³ What this allegory proposes to teach us is that the individual is on a pilgrimage. This journey does not require that we leave our earthly existence behind; instead, we must leave behind what is unreal, illusory, and untrue of ourselves.²⁴ We must free ourselves of what prevents us from seeing the light or good.²⁵ Therefore Caranfa posits that Plato’s contemplative instruction is about affecting *a change in perception*.

²¹ Caranfa, “Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education,” 87.

²² Simone Weil, *On Science, Necessity, and the Love of God*, trans. and ed., Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 101. Weil also writes: “Plato’s philosophy is nothing else but an act of love towards God,” See, Weil, *On Science, Necessity, and the Love of God*, 104.

²³ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence.” Caranfa explores Plato in some depth in the following works, Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning”; Angelo Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no 4 (2013); 1-28; Angelo Caranfa, “The Aesthetic Harmony of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,” *Journal Of Aesthetic Education* 35, no. 1 (2001):1–13, doi :10.2307/3333767. Additionally, this allegory can be a useful way of extending our understanding of what we mean by ‘critical thinking’. This is explored in my work *Inquiry*. I outline the allegory to explore the question, how do we know what we know? Plato’s allegory of course has been widely used in exploring epistemological questions. A contemporary example is the film *The Matrix*, which is based on Plato’s *Allegory*. See Rosemary Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 27–33.

²⁴ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence.”

²⁵ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence”; Caranfa, “Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education.”

While Plato's allegory can be a creative way of engaging students within the modern classroom about what is false and true, Caranfa's emphasis on the aesthetic experience may be limiting. His examination of Plato's *Allegory* (and the *Symposium* further on, and as we shall see throughout this chapter) includes a heavy focus on the aesthetic dimensions of appreciation (which one arrives at when a person reaches the 'light'). The aesthetic appreciation/experience demonstrates valuable benefits in the classroom (as mentioned in previous chapters). However, Caranfa needed to include the dialectical approach and develop how educators might approach this within a contemplative classroom, a theme I will develop in Chapter 7.

Moreover, Plato's idea of recollection as an account of learning, posited by Caranfa, has been contested by scholars. As discussed in Chapter 4, Augustine rejected the account of learning as *anamnesis* that Plato examines in the *Meno*.²⁶ For Augustine, understanding and learning were gained not from Plato's 'recollection of memories' but rather an illumination from God.²⁷ Furthermore, Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum*, which also draws on Plato's recollection of the Form, argues in the end, similar to Augustine, that 'knowing' these Forms is ultimately informed, influenced and illuminated by God.²⁸

Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum* is an account of the ascent of the mind to God through different types of knowing. We see that Bonaventure's understanding of Plato's illumination is like Augustine (examined in the previous chapter).²⁹ Bonaventure describes a 'light' inscribed in our mind as similar to divine light, as "we rise from the soul to consider the

²⁶ Augustine, *De Trinitate* (12.15.24), quoted in Peter King, "Augustine on the Impossibility of Teaching," *Metaphilosophy* 29, no. 3 (1998):179–195; Jānis (John) Tāļivaldis Ozoliņš, "Aquinas, Education and The Theory of Illumination," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 53, no. 10 (2021): 2–3.

²⁷ Ozoliņš, "Aquinas, education and the theory of illumination," 2–3.

²⁸ Bonaventure, *The Mind's Road to God*, trans. George Boas (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953).

²⁹ Bonaventure, *The Mind's Road to God*; Sister Maria Theotokos Adams, "Bonaventure Pondering with Augustine: De Civitate Dei 11.2 and the Making of the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*," *Traditio* 75 (2020): 253–288.

reality of the divine Being.”³⁰ Andreas Speer highlights this aspect of Bonaventure’s epistemology, stating that while the soul can know things because it conceptualises the Forms, nevertheless, it “judges it in light of the soul’s orientation to God’s knowledge of the form.”³¹ According to Bonaventure, our memory, intellect, and will, have imprinted within them “unchanging, uncreated light,” which is God. LaNave illustrates these insights in the following way:

...in chapter 3 of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure speaks of their orientation to God. For example, the memory contains within itself simple forms that must be infused from above (*Itin.* 3.2); the intellect can know with certitude only by means of an unchanging, uncreated light (*Itin.* 3.3); and the will can judge one thing as better than another only with an implicit appeal to the notion of the highest good, which is impressed on the soul (*Itin.* 3.4). This is again suggestive of the Trinitarian appropriations, with the will pointing to the highest goodness, the intellect to the highest wisdom, and the memory to the highest being.³²

The Symposium – appreciation of human love to the unchanging, eternal love

Furthermore, Caranfa draws our attention to the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of the *Symposium*. In speaking about the appreciation and beauty of human love, he argues that this text can raise our awareness of the unchanging love of the divine, which is ‘absolute beauty.’

As Plato writes,

The true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upward, for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms ... until he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty.³³

³⁰ Gregory F. LaNave, “Knowing God through and in All Things: A Proposal for Reading Bonaventure’s “*Itinerarium mentis in Deum*,” *Franciscan Studies* no. 67 (2009): 278.

³¹ Andreas Speer, “The Certainty and Scope of Knowledge: Bonaventure’s Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 3 (1993): 35-61. See also: LaNave, “Knowing God through and in All Things: A Proposal for Reading Bonaventure’s “*Itinerarium mentis in Deum*.”

³² LaNave, “Knowing God through and in All Things: A Proposal for Reading Bonaventure’s “*Itinerarium mentis in Deum*,” 278.

³³ Plato, “Symposium,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937), 211, quoted in Angelo Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence,” 561.

In the *Symposium* Diotima teaches Socrates that love is the ‘great spirit’ which connects and binds heaven and earth.³⁴ The notion of love is represented in the unity of all reality. It is spiritual wisdom that Caranfa argues is nothing but the love of beauty.³⁵ To love beautiful things is essentially a desire of the soul for happiness, which Diotima links to the eternal good, the Forms.³⁶ This ascent of the soul to the divine realities begins with the awareness of beauty in earthly things. Once we understand this beauty, we then seek to have a union with it. Diotima states that the lover of beautiful things is on the ‘right path’ if he/she is to follow the process of initiation into “the rights and revelations of the mysteries of love.”³⁷ This initiation begins at youth as young people begin to appreciate beauty and love in a singular form. However, guided by the teacher and over time, students are led to perceive beauty in many different forms and manifestations.³⁸ For example, they will appreciate the “beauty of institutions and laws ... and even the sciences” and eventually the “vast sea of beauty everywhere.”³⁹ As Plato writes,

For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he is guided by his instructor aright, to love one such Form only – out of that he should create fair thoughts, and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one Form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of Form, in general, is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognise that the beauty in every Form is one and the same!⁴⁰

Caranfa suggests that the consequences of contemplation with the *Symposium* allow a union with the divine, the Forms, leading to wisdom and virtue. Caranfa proposes that silence (and attention, as emphasised by Weil) is a part of this contemplative process. Caranfa proposes that

³⁴ Plato, “Symposium,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937), 211 in Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love, and silence”; “Caranfa, Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education”.

³⁵ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence.”

³⁶ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence.”

³⁷ Plato, “Symposium,” quoted in Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence.”

³⁸ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence.”

³⁹ Plato, “Symposium,” 210, quoted in Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 567.

⁴⁰ Plato, “Symposium,” 210, quoted in Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 567.

this development is an example of *the spiritual-aesthetics approach to education* guided by the teacher. Here we see how teaching aesthetics can highlight and contribute to the spiritual awakening of the soul as it reaches the divine beauties. Caranfa argues that this is a step-by-step process, which although it includes generalities, is specific to each soul and guided by reason.⁴¹

However, teaching students to become aware of beauty within the world that will lead them to encounter the divine experience lacks clarity. Apart from the step-by-step process mentioned, Caranfa does not give concrete examples of *how* this progression occurs. There are no examples put forward, nor empirical research included. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence tells us that an appreciation of beauty through music, painting, or sculpture, for example, can influence our spirits or moods. Empirical studies likewise show a link between music (primarily classical) and creativity and reduced stress levels.⁴²

Furthermore, as seen in Chapter 2, teaching the arts and aesthetic experience has demonstrated positive benefits for teaching and learning. Additionally, many religious mystics had similar insights to Caranfa about encountering the divine through aesthetic experience.⁴³ Like Caranfa's step by step process of leading students from an awareness of worldly beauty to an encounter with the divine, Teresa of Avila describes this process as becoming aware of God in

⁴¹ Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," 567. This appreciation of beauty can be linked to the current literature within psychology on the positive effects of the daily practice of gratitude: a theme that Caranfa could further develop. Explaining exactly how an awareness of human love leads to an attentiveness towards divine love is unclear. While this issue does not lend itself to easy examination or empirical evidence, we can see it play out in some of the tensions within the lives of significant figures, such as in Kierkegaard and Augustine's life and writings. Like Augustine (among others), Kierkegaard often wrote about the tensions between human and divine love. For example, see: Søren Kierkegaard, "Either/Or, A Fragment of Life, I," in *The Essential Kierkegaard* (Princeton University Press, 2013); Søren Kierkegaard, trans. Howard V Hong, Edna H Hong, and Ronald Gregor Smith, *Works of Love* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1970)

⁴² For example, see: Andrew Martin, et al., "The Role of Arts Participation in Students' Academic and Nonacademic Outcomes: A Longitudinal Study of School, Home, and Community Factors," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 105, no. 3 (2013): 709–727.

⁴³ For example, see: John Herman Randall, *The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion* (Boston: Starr King, 1958).

the ‘details of life.’⁴⁴ Sufi scholar and mystic Rumi explores concepts of the divine within musical notes.⁴⁵ Similarly, as we shall see later on, Weil also highlights the importance of attention to aesthetics and listening to sacred music to experience God.

5.3 Retrieving Weil – Silence and attention

I. Gymnastics of attention

A certain way of doing a Latin prose, a certain way of tackling a problem in geometry (and not just any way) make up a system of gymnastics of the attention calculated to give it a greater aptitude for prayer. Method for understanding images, symbols, etc. Not to try to interpret them, but to look at them till the light suddenly dawns.⁴⁶

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object; ... Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it.⁴⁷

Like all teachers, Weil understood the importance of developing the skills of attention for learning. She argues that attention towards even unfavourable subjects develops attitudes and skills that would benefit the students’ overall learning.⁴⁸ Students are encouraged to undertake and engage in all learning, even subjects that they do not enjoy, in order to develop what she called the “gymnastics of attention.”⁴⁹

Weil’s definition of attention, as illustrated in *Waiting for God*, is closely linked to the disposition of openness, receptivity, and what Weil describes as an “emptiness of thought,”

⁴⁴ Ruth Burrows, *Interior Castle Explored: St. Teresa’s Teaching on the Life of Deep Union with God* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring, 2007).

⁴⁵ Coleman Barks, *Rumi* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper San Francisco, 2007).

⁴⁶ Simone Weil, *Grace, and Gravity* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1952), 108–109.

⁴⁷ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: G. P. Putman’s Sons, 1951), 111–112, quoted in Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence,” 155. It is important to note that Weil’s notion of ‘waiting’ and attention is within a Christian framework and directed towards a Christian idea of God. In other words, as Caranfa highlights, it is not the same as Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, that in the end, is futile and leads to nihilism. In contrast, Weil’s waiting is hopeful and based on faith and a love of the divine.

⁴⁸ It is important to note that the concept of attention is also closely connected to Weil’s notion of prayer, religious faith, affliction (suffering) and ethics.

⁴⁹ Weil, *Waiting for God*.

which is characterised by a sense of ‘waiting.’ One ‘waits’ for things to be observed and to become real or understood. Weil advocates focusing on waiting in silence, instead of ‘wilfully searching’ for insights and understandings. Students are encouraged to develop a disposition of openness, waiting patiently for insights and understandings.⁵⁰ As Caranfa explains,

Herein lies the substances of Weil’s teaching: the life of learning is an *apprenticeship* in discovering...the development of the *creative faculty of attention*. What learning asks of us is detachment from everything and above all, from self.⁵¹

Caranfa is correct in claiming that Weil advocated a particular way of approaching learning, beyond analytical reasoning and problem solving, to one of detached awareness and slow understanding. According to Caranfa, Weil thought that this waiting was not about willpower or focused on an object. Instead, we ‘wait’ for insights to come rather than making conclusions too quickly.⁵² Weil thought that this skill of ‘waiting’ should elicit a desire for learning and lead students to a sense of joy.⁵³ These descriptions may be likened to the contemplative disposition or acts of pondering and wondering. Incidentally, Weil’s notion of waiting resembles the etymology of the word “contemplation,” described as the “act of looking at,” ... *contemplari* “to gaze attentively, observe; consider, contemplate.”⁵⁴

Caranfa highlights the above insights in his writings.⁵⁵ He includes, for example, Weil’s claim that all errors in thinking come from “the fact that thought has seized upon some idea too

⁵⁰ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 111–112.

⁵¹ Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and the Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil,” 70.

⁵² Weil, *Waiting for God*, 62–65. We can make a link here to Daniel Kahneman’s work on the distinctions he makes between thinking fast and slow (type 1 and type 2 thinking) However, he differs in his understanding of slow thinking to Weil. Unlike Kahneman, Weil understood the aim of slow thinking was not only for studies and development of attention, but also in preparation for God. See: Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Random House, 2011).

⁵³ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 62–65.

⁵⁴ “Contemplation | Search Online Etymology Dictionary,” *Etymonline.Com*. Accessed September 18, 2021. <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=Contemplation>.

⁵⁵ For example, see: Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence”; Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and the Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil”; Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence.”

hastily.”⁵⁶ Hence learning occurs when we are patient and not too hasty for answers.⁵⁷ Weil’s insights have practical significance in informing an approach of deep thinking and reflective skills within teaching and learning.

We can make links to Weil’s contemplative attention to the approach of mindfulness (discussed in Chapters 2 and 9), which encourages the skills of awareness, pausing, and meditation that have been shown to improve concentration and overall wellbeing. However, what makes Weil’s approach distinctive is she *claims that the development of attention for learning is an important skill not only for academic pursuits and wellbeing, but also the soul*. Developing what she termed the “gymnastics of attention” in schooling also prepared students towards an experience of the soul and Christian prayer.⁵⁸ As we shall see in what follows, Caranfa uses this concept of attention for learning and prayer within his framework.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Caranfa states further: “These errors occur because thought has seized upon some idea too hastily and being thus prematurely blocked is not open to the truth.” See: Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence”, 574; Weil, *Waiting for God*, 62.

⁵⁷ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 62–65. We can see some similarities with Weil’s notion of waiting to Mary B. Rowe’s research on pausing discussed in Chapter 2. Rowe’s work clearly shows that pausing in teaching, even for 3 seconds, can lead to better learning outcomes. See: M. B. Rowe, “Wait Time: Slowing Down May Be a Way of Speeding Up!” *Journal of Teacher Education* 37, no. 1 (1986): 43-50, doi:10.1177/002248718603700110. Weil and Caranfa propose that we develop a ‘life of silence’, which for them, is the foundation of solitude. Therefore, learning becomes the training of attention or ‘attentive silence’. The classroom becomes the “house of silence.” Solitude was also deemed necessary for developing other attributes such as attentive listening, prayer, ‘proper’ reading (not discussed by Caranafa) and spiritual detachment. Caranfa states: “The classroom is for Weil a gymnasium, a factory or workshop, a house of silence where we become attuned to the rhythms of our physical, mental, and spiritual life...” Caranfa states: “The classroom is for Weil a gymnasium, a factory or workshop, a house of silence where we become attuned to the rhythms of our physical, mental, and spiritual life...” See: Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 575.

⁵⁸ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (London G. P. Putman’s Sons, 1951), 57; Simone Weil, *Grace, and Gravity* (London; Routledge and Kegan, 1952), 108–109.

⁵⁹ The notions of silence and solitude (discussed further on) have serious problems of relevance to the contemporary classroom context which are generally very noisy places. There are practical and ideological issues which need to be addressed before classrooms can seriously be considered as “houses of silence.” These issues will be examined further in Chapter 6.

II. Attention leading to prayer

The key to a Christian conception of studies is the realisation that prayer consists of attention. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable towards God ...⁶⁰

Weil proposes that attention applied consciously could also prepare students for the higher forms of attention, which is engagement with the Platonic notions of beauty and a preparation for Christian prayer. Weil claims in *Gravity and Grace* that the highest form of attention (that is informed by Christian faith) is prayer; she writes, “Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love”.⁶¹ We can see that the practice of attention can be linked to silence – for to pay attention, to be still – is in essence to conjure “moments of silence.”⁶²

As the title of Weil’s work, *Waiting for God*, suggests, we wait in silence for God and grace, and also for insights and understandings, rather than seeking them.⁶³ Paradoxically, Weil claims that God also waits for us in silence. She states, “God waits like a beggar ... and in silence before someone ... he is waiting there in silence.”⁶⁴ This notion of waiting, discussed by Caranfa and Weil, also echoes Bernard Dauenhauer’s category of ‘deep silence.’ Here the adherent waits for insights and transformation from the divine.⁶⁵ This disposition or skill of attention and waiting can be a creative approach in cultivating not only mindful awareness and

⁶⁰ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 57.

⁶¹ Weil, *Grace, and Gravity* (Routledge, London, 2002), 117.

⁶² Caranfa states: “Ultimately, for Weil learning takes place in waiting, which is essentially a moment of silence.” Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty Love and Silence,” 574.

⁶³ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 62–65.

⁶⁴ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 62–65.

⁶⁵ Bernard P. Dauenhauer, *Silence, The Phenomenon And Its Ontological Significance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980). For more see Chapter 3.

presence, but also prayer within a contemplative classroom. Caranfa describes this in the following way:

Only in waiting – which consists of looking, praying, silence, contemplation – does the human self-achieve wholeness of being; that is, the faculties of knowing, of willing or of acting, and of feeling or of love will find their true purpose or objective in the Christian God as goodness and true beauty.⁶⁶

III. Attention to aesthetics and silence

Art is an attempt to transport into a limited quantity of matter, modelled by man, an image of the infinite beauty of the entire universe. If the attempts succeed, this portion of matter should not hide the universe, but on the contrary, it should reveal its reality to all around.⁶⁷

Weil proposes that we need to be ‘attentive’ to the infinite beauty of the world (particularly through the arts) and in doing so we encounter the divine and God. As illustrated above (and throughout her work), Weil refers to the spiritual ideals of beauty and truth. She states, for example, “attention is turned to what is real and eternal” and “true light hear[s] the true silence.”⁶⁸ Caranfa draws our attention to Weil’s Platonic influences.⁶⁹

Caranfa, like Weil, claims the artist’s contact with the beauty of the world reveals a sacramental view of the universe that shows the presence and “implicit love of God.”⁷⁰ Weil argues that the world has an order which reveals its beauty and transcendence. Furthermore, Weil suggests that our souls seek beauty, which is ultimately the presence of God. She states, “the soul seeks

⁶⁶ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty Love and Silence,” 580.

⁶⁷ Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959), 168.

⁶⁸ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 157, quoted in Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence,” 157.

⁶⁹ Inspired from the Phaedrus, Weil thought it is the attention to the ‘higher order of things the sun, the source of all visible things, gazing at the light no longer confined to the cave’ which is important in achieving contemplation. See: Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 573. For more on Weil’s Platonic influences, see: E. Jane Doering and Eric O. Springsted, eds., *The Christian Platonism of Simone Weil* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press 2004); John Dunaway and Eric O. Springsted, eds., *The Beauty That Saves: Essays on the Aesthetics and Language in Simone Weil* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996).

⁷⁰ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 99.

nothing so much as contact with the beauty of the world...or with God.”⁷¹ This theme is also echoed throughout Caranfa’s work, as exemplified in the following:

The ‘true life ... of the soul’ is to embody beauty within itself – as Socrates teaches us with this prayer to the God Pan at the end of the *Phaedrus*: ‘Grant that I may be beautiful inside. Let all my external possessions be in friendly harmony with what is within.’⁷²

This soul’s desire for the aesthetic/spiritual experience, according to Weil and Caranfa, is a background or context for learning within a contemplative pedagogy. This experience is best exemplified through Weil’s exploration, experience and understanding of sacred music.

IV. Attention to sacred music and suffering

In musical attention as prayer, life passes from ‘what is’ to ‘outside of time,’ from reason to faith, and from speech to silence; music, by capturing our attention, leads us to contemplate or to pray, and thus it helps the soul to achieve contact or union with God.⁷³

When one listens to Bach or a Gregorian melody, all faculties of the soul fall silent and strain to apprehend this perfectly beautiful thing, each in its own way. The intellect among others finds nothing in it to affirm or deny, but it feeds on it. Must not faith be an adherence of this kind?⁷⁴

Weil claims that the act of attention to music functions as a movement for the soul towards God, which inevitably holds moments of silence. Music aids our connection and union with God. Caranfa highlights this theme as he writes, “Silence is the language of God, and therefore music;” Weil insists that this “comes from silence and returns to silence.”⁷⁵ The meaning of the term silence here is connected to the divine or God, from which it is derived and where it returns. As discussed in Chapter 3, this echoes Max Picard’s notion of silence which originates

⁷¹ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 103.

⁷² Caranfa, “Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education,” 87.

⁷³ Weil quoted in Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence,” 151.

⁷⁴ Simone Weil, *Cahiers*, vol. 1. (Paris: Plon, 1972), 139.

⁷⁵ Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence,” 171.

from God.⁷⁶ Weil thought that music, like mathematics (in the work of Pythagoras), served to purify the soul.⁷⁷ Weil argues that the Greeks saw beauty in the world in its rhythm and harmony, which points to the divine.⁷⁸ She adds that music (particularly sacred) frees the individual from its temporary attachments to pursue higher truths.⁷⁹ Caranfa echoes these themes about music in his citations to Plato, who links music to the development of the soul.⁸⁰ Further, Caranfa describes Weil's understanding of music through its connection to faith and suffering in the following way:

As she continued to listen with pure attentiveness, 'the thought of the Passion of Christ entered into [her] being once and for all' (WG, 68), and thus she experienced the eternal presence of God's love in her. In both experiences, absolute attention is seen by Weil as the very music or song of the soul – an attention that is an exchange between body and mind or soul, between being in time and timelessness, between speech or sound and silence, between tears and joy.⁸¹

However, Weil's insights into the effect of music are particularly interesting, as Caranfa states, Weil understood through the harmony of sacred music God transforms suffering. As Caranfa highlights, Weil's affliction finds its redemption in music. This is emphasised in Caranfa's work, in particular, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence."⁸² We know that Weil's conversion happened over several experiences, most of which occurred while listening to sacred monastic music. Weil suffered from migraines and would sometimes find

⁷⁶ Max Picard, *The World of Silence* (Wichita: Eighth Day, 1952).

⁷⁷ Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 133.

⁷⁸ Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 133, quoted in Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," 153.

⁷⁹ Weil draws on Plato. See: Plato, "The Republic, bk. III, 401–02," in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jewett (New York: Random House, 1937), quoted in *Gravity and Grace*, 133; Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," 152.

⁸⁰ Caranfa cites Plato, "Musical training is a more powerful instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful ..." Plato, "The Republic, bk. III," 401–02, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, trans. Benjamin Jewett (New York: Random House, 1937), quoted in Caranfa, "Simone Weil On Music: Listening With Tears Of Prayerful Silence," 152.

⁸¹ Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," 165.

⁸² Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence." It is important to note that the music referred to here is sacred in nature such as the Gregorian chant or liturgical music.

comfort in listening to sacred music.⁸³ For Weil, music signified the presence and love of God, which led to an experience of comfort and transformation in her suffering, which she describes in the following way:

I was suffering from splitting headaches; each sound hurt me like a blow ... I was able to rise above ... to leave it to suffer by itself, heaped me up in a corner, and find a pure and perfect joy in the unimaginable beauty of the chanting words. This experience enabled me to get a better understanding of the possibility of loving divine in the midst of suffering.⁸⁴

It is important to note that this connection of music and silence to the divine attested to by Weil has always maintained a presence within religious traditions. Buddhist and Gregorian chants, liturgical hymns within the Christian tradition, for example, and the emphasis on music within the contemporary movement of Hillsong Church all testify to the power of music in connecting with the divine. It is no surprise that mystics such as Weil and Hildegard of Bingen see this as a powerful way of spiritual transformation.⁸⁵ Therefore, including sacred music within contemplative education could be a powerful way of engaging students' affective dimensions and potentially leading to Christian prayer, worship, and religious experience. Contemporary

⁸³ In *Waiting for God*, Weil describes the conversion experience as happening quite unexpectedly, almost like a surprise. Caranfa omits this element of surprise. Here Weil describes herself as being consumed by God in the silence, which she describes as the "outside space" where God came to her. This surprise element illustrated below is consistent with her themes of waiting, listening and attentiveness to silence. Weil had this experience when visiting the Abbey with her mother, initially attending for aesthetic and not religious reasons. Weil writes of her unexpected conversion experience in the following ways: "In my arguments about the insolubility of the problem of God I had never foreseen the possibility of that, of real contact, person to person, here below, between a human being and God. I had vaguely heard tell of things of this kind, but I had never believed in them. In the Fioretti the accounts of apparitions rather put me off if anything, like the miracles in the Gospel. Moreover, in this sudden possession of me by Christ, neither my senses nor my imagination had any part; I only felt in the midst of my suffering the presence of a love, like that which one can read in the smile on a beloved face." Weil, *Waiting for God*. (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1951), 27.

⁸⁴ Weil, *Waiting on God*, 24. Furthermore, in *Gravity and Grace*, Weil points to the constant struggle with the forces which are beyond our control (which can be oppressive) to the moments of grace we receive from God that help us transcend these difficulties. Grace, Weil argues, comes to us often unexpectedly. We prepare for these moments, however, through the contemplative practices mentioned, such as attention, silence, waiting, humility, detachment, and prayer. Weil states in "pure attentiveness," we experience Christ and the presence of God's love. As she notes below, music can aid in our redemptive experiences of the divine. Weil states: "This movement of descent, the mirror of grace, is the essence of music ... The rising of the notes is a purely sensorial rising. The descent is at the same time a sensorial descent and a spiritual rising. Here we have the paradise which every being longs for: where the slope of nature makes us rise towards the good ... A double movement of descent: to do again, out of love, what gravity does. Is not the double movement of descent the key to all art? Weil, *Waiting on God*, 24.

⁸⁵ See: Hildegard Bingen, *Mystical Writings*, trans. Fiona Bowie and Oliver Davies (New York: Crossroad, 1993).

psychoanalyst Michael Eigen similarly describes the transformative and powerful effect of music, he states:

In the *Psychoanalytic Mystic*, I write that psychoanalysis is a form of prayer. Music can be, too. This does not mean prayer is all that psychoanalysis or music is. Far from it. But the link is worth entering. In my own life, they (music, and prayer, psychoanalysis came later) grew together ...⁸⁶

However, there are two juxtaposed positions presented in Weil's writings, God's redemptive presence in silence on the one hand, and God's absence, especially amidst suffering.⁸⁷ These claims are not addressed in any systemic way by Caranfa and Weil, and it is not entirely clear what the term silence of God means to Weil nor Caranfa.

In *Gravity and Grace*, for example, Weil states that affliction "... produces the absence of God, 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'"⁸⁸ Likewise she declares: "The abandonment at the supreme moment of the crucifixion, what an abyss of love on both sides."⁸⁹ In *Gravity and Grace*, Weil also claims that "the absence of God is the mode of divine presence which corresponds to evil – absence which is felt. He who has not God within himself cannot feel his absence."⁹⁰ Similarly there are references to this absence or silence of God, described early as, "... discover buried deep under the sound of his own lamentations is the pearl of the silence of God," which seems to suggest the positive presence of silence.⁹¹ So, the silence of God

⁸⁶ Michael Eigen, *Psychoanalytic Mystic* (London: Free Association Press, 1998), 132.

⁸⁷In "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," as the title suggests, Caranfa links silence to affliction and music. At the same time, this appears as an ambiguous synthesis. Caranfa, like Weil, argues that in the Cross there is a mix of suffering and beauty. The presence of God's beauty, human misery, silence, grace and love; all realities culminate in the event of the crucifixion. Weil proposes that the silence of God joins the individual soul, which leads to us metaphorically speaking a "treasure and our heart in God". According to Weil, when we lament in silence, we can be open to the possibility of experiencing what she describes as the "pearl of the silence of God". Here the silence of God paradoxically provides a hidden and a 'positive' presence to suffering and affliction. See: Weil, *Waiting for God*, 467–468; Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," 170–171.

⁸⁸ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 27.

⁸⁹ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 87.

⁹⁰ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 27.

⁹¹ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 467–468, quoted in Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," 171.

ironically is also redemptive, such as in the experience of attention to music, in which we can, metaphorically speaking, ‘hear the silence of God.’⁹²

Weil highlights the ambiguity of God’s seeming absence in suffering (or affliction) by bringing to light God’s implicit presence through the music’s notes. We can understand this paradox as pointing to the literature of negative and apophatic theology discussed in earlier chapters. Ann Pirruccello describes this contradiction in the following ways:

The Image that is heard as a full silence likewise refers to an absent person. For the Silence heard reminds us that he whom we must love is absent (GG, p. 99). But the absence of God means the condition of the presence of the word of God, and it is the vibration of this word that we hear.⁹³

V. Encounter with beauty/aesthetics leads towards a decreative process of the ego that can foster humility

It is important to note that Weil’s work has been critiqued (amongst other things) for its negative spirituality and focus on suffering and the ‘absence of God.’ Craig T. Maier, for example, claims that many scholars have associated Weil’s embrace of affliction with martyrdom, moral quietism, and disdain of the body.⁹⁴ It is not in the scope here to examine these claims. While Weil does write much about suffering, we also see in her work the ability to transform suffering through encounters with the arts (music), beauty, and divine love. In what follows, I will describe both Weil’s understanding of decreation (and letting go of the ego) that led towards transformation, and her notion of the aesthetic.⁹⁵

⁹² Weil, *Waiting for God*, 467–468.

⁹³ Ann Pirruccello, “Interpreting Simone Weil: Presence and Absence in Attention,” *Philosophy East and West* 45, no. 1 (Jan. 1995): 71.

⁹⁴ Craig T. Maier, “Attentive Waiting in an Uprooted Age: Simone Weil’s Response in an Age of Precarity,” *The Review of Communication* 13, no. 3 (2013): 225–242, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2013.843715>. See also: Christopher Frost and Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Simone Weil: On Politics, Religion and Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998); Ann Loades, “Eucharistic Sacrifice: Simone Weil’s Use of a Liturgical Metaphor,” *Religion and Literature* 17 (1985): 43–54; and, Tanya Loughead, “Two Slices from the Same Loaf? Weil and Levinas on the Demand of Social Justice,” *Ethical Perspectives: Journal of the European Ethics Network* 14 (2007): 117–138.

⁹⁵ The awareness of the subtle presence of God (through music and the experience of beauty), Weil proposes, lead us to a small sense of self or ego. This realisation places us within a larger context of the universe. This awareness can lead us to detach from our small or false egos (or self): potentially leading to humility. This process applies not only to the experience of listening

Weil's concept of detachment, or what is also termed 'decreation,' can be described as a stripping away of (what is commonly termed) the 'ego' or subject self. She describes this process as "attentive silence in which the heart empties itself of all attachments and receives new life."⁹⁶ In *Gravity and Grace*, Weil figuratively discusses what she terms as the "destruction of the I" or the ego.⁹⁷ Caranfa describes Weil's decreation process as the "soul must be stripped naked or must die to the self."⁹⁸ Rebecca Rozelle-Stone and Lucian Stone describe Weil's notion of attention (a patient waiting) as facilitating this process of decreation.⁹⁹ They claim that "Attention and decreation together represent the crucial elements of the 'conception of human life.'"¹⁰⁰ Weil argues that in destroying our ego and becoming 'nothing,' we make space for God. She claims, "The whole effort of the mystic has always been to become such that there is no part left in their soul to say I",¹⁰¹ and "... In so far as I become nothing, God loves himself through me."¹⁰²

Craig T. Maier describes Weil's notion of attention (like Caranfa and Plato) as not escaping reality, but rather "seeing it clearly without illusions." Maier states, "Attentive waiting, in contrast, is not an evasion of reality but rather a commitment to see reality more fully, to

to music but also to exploring literature. Weil (among many others) claims that the works of good writers can also awaken us to the 'truth.' Weil describes this in the following ways: "There is something else which has the power to awaken us to the truth. It is the works of writers of genius, or at least those with genius of the very first order and when it has reached its full maturity. They are outside the realm of fiction, and they release us from it. They give us, in the guise of fiction, something equivalent to the actual density of the real, that density which life offers us every day but which we are unable to grasp because we are amusing ourselves with lies." Simone Weil, *On Science, Necessity, and the Love of God*, trans. ed., Richard Rees (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 162.

⁹⁶ Caranfa, "Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence," 580.

⁹⁷ Simone Weil, *Grace, and Gravity*, 28.

⁹⁸ A. Rebecca Rozelle-Stone and Lucian Stone, *Simone Weil and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5.

⁹⁹ Rozelle-Stone and Stone, *Simone Weil and Theology*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Rozelle-Stone and Stone, *Simone Weil and Theology*, 5.

¹⁰¹ George A. Panichas, ed., *The Simone Weil Reader* (New York: David McKay, 1977), 318.

¹⁰² Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," 157.

According to Weil, in order to experience Christ, one's attention had to be directed toward stripping away of the ego or I. This is a de-centring of the self so that Christ could be fully present. For example, she states: "The soul empties itself [se vide] of all its own contents in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all his truth. Only he who is capable of attention can do this." Weil, *Waiting for God*, 65.

meditate on experience until in the end, illusions are shattered and the real becomes visible.”¹⁰³ This idea of detachment from the ego is commonly understood as integral within contemplative practice and is most evident in religious writings. This process towards enlightenment or mystical experiences with God is evident in the works of Eckhart, John of the Cross, and others (not mentioned by Caranfa) such as Teresa of Avila, Thomas Merton and Rumi (within the Sufi tradition) and the Desert Fathers and Mothers. However, what Weil amplifies in this process is an emphasis on ‘attention’ through what she termed decreation. Weil claims this can lead one toward personal transformation.¹⁰⁴

However, Timothy C. Baker points out contradictions in the above claims about decreation are not resolved in Weil (or Caranfa’s) work. On the one hand, Weil claims that a person’s ego must be annihilated or decreated; ironically, in the context of a God who remains absent. Nevertheless, this ‘self’ or ‘I’ still has a ‘presence,’ an entity, a self, able to speak, write and express itself. Baker writes:

And yet this uncreation is predicated on the self of another, the ‘I’ who keeps speaking, narrating the poem. Even as emptiness is revealed, as the self gives way to nothing, there is still a constant ‘I’: the voice which prays, which advises the self towards the void but cannot fully achieve it. Emptiness, the absence of God and the insufficiency of the material world all finally coalesce into, and are understood by, a constant ‘I’.¹⁰⁵

Baker highlights the ambiguous claims in Weil’s writings, which we can attribute to negative and apophatic theology (mentioned earlier and discussed in previous chapters). Here, the self or ego notion is understood as connected to a greater mystery, God, unfathomable, and more significant than the individual self or ego. It can also speak to the Buddhist influences in Weil’s

¹⁰³ Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 173, in Craig T. Maier, “Attentive Waiting in an Uprooted Age: Simone Weil’s Response in an Age of Precarity,” *The Review of Communication* 13, no. 3 (2013): 231, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2013.843715>.

¹⁰⁴ However, it is essential to note that this process of detachment and decreation of the ego espoused by Weil (and others) would be in tension with many within the psychological area of research who see the development of the ego and identity as a healthy part of human development and growth. See Chapter 6 for references.

¹⁰⁵ Rozelle-Stone, and Stone, *Simone Weil and Theology*, 70.

writings and notions of identity and the self. Within Buddhist teachings, the notion of the self is not fixed and is open to change and flux. We know that Weil was familiar with Buddhist texts. In *Gravity and Grace*, for example, Weil explicitly refers to Buddhism. She writes, “The extinction of desire (Buddhism) – or detachment – or *amor fati* – or desire for the absolute good – all these amount to the same: to empty desire ... To detach our desire from all good things and wait. Experience proves that this waiting is satisfied.”¹⁰⁶ While Weil’s notion of detachment echoes Buddhist influences, as we have seen in early references, these are woven into a Christian framework. However, it is important to point out that decreation leads one to humility; a significant theme in both Weil’s and Caranfa’s writings which they link to the contemplative classroom.

Weil and Caranfa posit that beauty must be contemplated at a distance, leading to a decreative process. They argue that the contemplation of beauty is decreative. Once we place ourselves within a larger context (of ultimate beauty), we experience a transformative aesthetic/spiritual experience. Similarly, Raymond Younis (drawing on Scruton) describes the experience of awe generated from an awareness of the “vastness of the cosmos; and our ‘small’ presence within it.”¹⁰⁷ He continues to state that this experience of awe at the awareness of our ‘small presence’ and realisation of its beauty lead to what he describes as “...the realm that is ontological, metaphysical, ethical and spiritual...”¹⁰⁸ Younis further states,

Scruton argues...in the context of the vastness of the cosmos and our sense of our own relatively ‘tiny’ presence (2006, p.412) ... That is, religious, awe or awe felt in the presence of the sacred, or in the experience of the sacred for example, takes us beyond the sense of mere beauty or splendor, into the realm that is ontological, metaphysical, ethical and spiritual, of ‘complete submission of the whole mind’ to something that transcends our relative smallness our imperfections—something which awakens in us

¹⁰⁶ Weil, *Grace, and Gravity* (Routledge: London, 2002), 13.

¹⁰⁷ Raymond Aaron Younis, *On the Ontology of the Sacred (and the Profane)* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 91.

¹⁰⁸ Younis, *On the Ontology of the Sacred (and the Profane)*, 91.

both humility and joy, and whose ‘glory’ we both fear and admire, even adore, and which we see as ‘fearfully and wholly good’ (2006, p. 414).¹⁰⁹

Iris Murdoch was influenced by Weil’s Platonic aesthetics and reiterated similar themes in her writings. This is particularly evident in her work *Existentialists and Mystics*, where she explores the role of art and beauty to transform the self. The arts and beauty reveal objective truths which move beyond the concerns of the subjective self and ego.¹¹⁰ Murdoch points to the objectivity of art in the following ways, “... greatest art is ‘impersonal’ because it shows us the world ... with clarity which startles and delights us simply because we are not used to looking at the real world ...”¹¹¹

According to Caranfa, Weil, resembling Immanuel Kant, advocates a ‘disinterested’ approach to aesthetics.¹¹² Like Caranfa, Weil’s appreciation of beauty, unlike Kant, is Platonic and marked by her experiences of Christ. For Weil, the aesthetic experience of beauty is to orient the soul towards the contemplation of the good and Christ.¹¹³ Caranfa is correct in claiming that while Kant emphasises reason as the navigator of aesthetic appreciation, Weil posits a passive approach that consists of ‘waiting’ and attention.¹¹⁴ Rebecca Rozelle-Stone and Lucian Stone describe this insight in the following ways:

... Because beauty is to be contemplated at a distance and in consent, not consumed through the greedy will, it trains the soul to be detached in the face of something irreducible, and in this sense it is similar to affliction. Both de-center the self and demand a posture of waiting (*attente*). Contemplating beauty, then, means transcending the perspective of one’s own project. Because beauty, as external to self, is to be

¹⁰⁹ Younis, *On the Ontology of the Sacred (and the Profane)*, 91.

¹¹⁰ Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics* (New York: Penguin, 1999).

¹¹¹ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics*, 352.

¹¹² Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence,” 161–162. This view is also reiterated by A. Rebecca Rozelle-Stone and Benjamin P. Davis, “Simone Weil,” *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2018): 37–38, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/simone-weil/>.

¹¹³ Angelo Caranfa, “The Luminous Darkness of Silence in the Poetics of Simone Weil and Georges Rouault,” *Philosophy and Theology* 23, no.1 (2011): 53–72; Rozelle-Stone and Davis, “Simone Weil,” 37–38.

¹¹⁴ Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence,” 161–162.

consented to, it implies both that one's reality is limited and that one does not want to change the object of her/his mode of engagement. Furthermore, beauty has an element of the impersonal coming into contact with a person. Real interaction with beauty is decreative.¹¹⁵

5.4 Other influences on Caranfa further develop our understanding of the aesthetic dimensions of contemplation

Caranfa also owes a debt to other thinkers he cites such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Jaspers, Henri Matisse, and Marcel Proust. These thinkers too argue that philosophy and the aesthetic, through its connection to silence and the dialectic (with its limitations), are also transformative.¹¹⁶ It is not in the scope here to explore these in depth but to say that silence, through the aesthetic experience within the works of these writers, showed redemptive qualities. Nietzsche, for example, states this process includes “a recreation of oneself” in that we are no longer the artists, but rather “[man] has himself become a work of art.”¹¹⁷ Similarly, Jaspers maintains that philosophy does not reveal transcendence; instead, this is discovered through art, “art ... make[s]transcendence perceptible.”¹¹⁸

Another influence on Caranfa's writings is Alfred Whitehead. Whitehead's ideas on education are essential for Caranfa's argument: that art and aesthetic emotions are an invaluable component of the spiritual experience.¹¹⁹ Whitehead argues that we should avoid structuring

¹¹⁵ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, trans. Arnold I Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995).

¹¹⁵ Rozelle-Stone and Davis, “Simone Weil,” 38.

¹¹⁶ Caranfa, “The aesthetic harmony of how life should be lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,”; Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education”; Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and the Gifts of Beauty, Love, and Silence”; Angelo Caranfa, “Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 37, no. 2 (2003): 99–113, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jae.2003.0013>; Angelo Caranfa, *Proust* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1990); Angelo Caranfa, “Augustine, And Paul Gauguin on The Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no. 4 (2013): 577– 604, doi :10.1111/1467-9752.12042.

¹¹⁷ Caranfa, “The Aesthetic Harmony of How Life Should Be Lived: Van Gogh, Socrates, Nietzsche,”10; Caranfa, “Augustine, And Paul Gauguin on The Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education,” 577–604.

¹¹⁸ Caranfa, “Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe.”

¹¹⁹ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence”; Angelo Caranfa, “Toward an Aesthetic Model of Teaching and Writing in the Humanities,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 33, no. 3, (Autumn 1999):103–108; Angelo Caranfa, “Whitehead's Benedictine Idea in Education: Rhythms of Listening, Reading and Work,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44, no. 4, (2011):386–402, doi: 10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00716. x.

or organising educational curriculums around what is “most technological, economical and usable” and instead strive for the “joy in learning and working by embracing an aesthetic appreciation to life.”¹²⁰ Whitehead (whom Caranfa cites) argues that silence, intertwined in art education, focuses on the development of the whole person, both intellectually and emotionally. He states,

... You cannot, without loss, ignore in the life of the spirit so great a factor as art. Our aesthetic emotions provide us with vivid apprehensions of value. If you maim these, you weaken the force of the whole system of spiritual apprehensions. The claim for freedom in education carries ... that the development of the whole personality [body, mind, and spirit] must be attended to.¹²¹

Whitehead claims that current education has failed to cultivate what he terms the “art of life,” and in doing so, caused a division, rather than a union of the aesthetic–spiritual life of the individual.¹²² Whitehead provides a framework for education that reintroduces concern for the aesthetic and the spiritual, which is not just a form of mysticism. He also develops an argument about the importance of art and religion. Even though Whitehead’s view of God is not Christian, it still provides an understanding of human life and the universe that moves away from the materialist interpretation and accepts that there is a transcendent reality. These are critical conceptual points of reference for Caranfa, which aid in supporting his claims. Caranfa

¹²⁰ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 44–46 and 17–19; Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence,” 562–563.

¹²¹ Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*, 40; Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 562. This theme is examined throughout the thesis. I draw on many scholars such as Martha Nussbaum, Azar Nafisi, and Iris Murdoch.

¹²² Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 562, 583. In his latest work, Caranfa develops this theme further. He proposes that Romantic poets, such as Wordsworth and Shelley, influenced Whitehead’s philosophy and understanding of nature. Caranfa suggests that aesthetics (which he termed “Whiteheads’ poetics”) was a tool that allowed him to develop a ‘unified understanding of the world’ – which extends to a religious dimension (p. 495). This view, he argues, replaces the mechanical lens adopted in science. Caranfa states that for Whitehead, the aesthetics replace “the mechanistic theory of science” with the theory of what he terms the “organic mechanism” from which we can understand the interconnectedness of “all forms of Nature” (p. 499). However, this meaning of the “whole” in “nature” and “human experience”, he argues, must be approached tentatively: these remain concealed in the “depths” and “hidden in the world of silence,” that connects to the religious dimension mentioned earlier (p. 499). See, Angelo Caranfa, “Literature, Art, And Sacred Silence in Whitehead’s Poetics of Philosophy,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (2015): 474, 495, 499, doi :10.5325/jspephil.29.4.0474.

draws on Whitehead's notions of the aesthetic–spiritual in the classroom and adds a Christian dimension.¹²³ However, while Whitehead develops sound theoretical concepts supporting the arts and aesthetic experiences (and religion), like Caranfa, he fails to propose concrete examples of what this could look like within a modern classroom context or critically discuss whether this approach is feasible.

5.5 Assessment of Caranfa and Weil's contemplative approach to education

As we have seen, Caranfa's contemplative framework combines many dimensions in developing an aesthetic–spiritual experience within the classroom.¹²⁴ As we know, the aesthetic experience, the concept of beauty, and the arts have engaged philosophers throughout history as they do today.¹²⁵ Discussions about their essence, role, formation, and impact are contested. Moreover, many writers have observed the powerful and transformative nature of the arts and the aesthetic experience, congruent with Caranfa's claims.¹²⁶ Caranfa's view of Socrates and Plato, for example, overall would seem to support Pierre Hadot's thesis.¹²⁷ Hadot highlights the *spiritual and existential dimensions* in their work. He proposes that they understood philosophy as not only debating propositional claims, but also as a way of life that was potentially spiritually transformative. Additionally, John Dewey also viewed the aesthetic

¹²³For a development of this see: Angelo Caranfa, "Whitehead's Benedictine Ideal in Education: Rhythms of Listening, Reading and Work," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44, no. 4 (2012):386–402, doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00716. x.

¹²⁴ Caranfa focuses on attention, silence, listening, humility, prayer and the aesthetic experience. Weil advocates a life of contemplation within learning and the educative process. According to Caranfa, Weil emphasises silence, solitude and prayer as training and cultivation of attention. Classrooms are places that allow students to be themselves. A house of silence is where students become in tune with the seasons and their rhythm; a notion adopted from Whitehead. Weil encourages solitude so that a detachment from worldly things is made possible. This sense of detachment and stripping of the ego allows a sense of emptiness, which can render one to be "fully present and attentive to the suffering of others" (a theme not developed in Caranfa's work, and I will examine it in Chapter 8).

¹²⁵ For example, see: Aristotle, "Poetics," In *Criticism: The Major Texts*, ed Walter Jackson Bate (Miami: Wolf Den Books, 2004), 17–36; John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Berkeley Publishing Group, 2005); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1933).

¹²⁶ For example: David Malouf, *Imaginary Life* (London: Vintage, 1999).

¹²⁷ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, trans. Arnold I Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995).

as significant to education. In his work, *Art as Experience*, as the title suggests, he describes the importance of the arts as a vehicle for positive experiences for students in the classroom.¹²⁸

Dewey argues that art “interrupts us” by engaging in everyday life. He states,

Art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from the association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing, and achievement. A primary task is thus imposed upon one who undertakes to write upon the philosophy of the fine arts. The task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognised to constitute experience.¹²⁹

Weil and Caranfa’s focus on the aesthetics, especially sacred music, in connecting to God within a contemplative framework, however, raises some critical questions.¹³⁰ Caranfa, for example, fails to critically assess whether sacred music is the correct genre to be used in the modern classroom. Is only sacred music exclusively a gateway to God as has been suggested, or can other forms of music also be necessary for spirituality? In *Finding Harmony*, Matthew Del Nevo explores this question and proposes that pop music can be soulful and spiritual, engaging our emotions and memories.¹³¹ Furthermore, we may note that the emphasis on the fine arts (largely speaking, forming part of middle- to upper-class culture) can potentially lead to a form of elitism, as not everyone has access to (or an appreciation of) the fine arts. It may exclude ordinary people who read the Gospel stories and find them rich in spirituality without appealing to choral music or great literature. The Gospel stories are simple and not generally classified as good literature. If these observations are correct, they may indeed inadvertently be an antithesis of the central tenets of Weil and Caranfa’s spiritual writings. This approach

¹²⁸ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Berkeley Publishing Group, 2005), 2.

¹²⁹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 2.

¹³⁰ See, for example: Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence.”

¹³¹ Matthew Del Nevo, *Finding Harmony* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2018)

may also further contradict the notions of Christian love and agape in the Gospels. As Yoda explains,

Caranfa argues for the importance of contemplation in education by discussing Plato and Weil. I am very sympathetic with his thesis, but he equates contemplation with aesthetic appreciation and ignores contemplation of the contradictions.¹³²

Kazuaki Yoda is critical of Caranfa's thesis, which he rightly claims focuses heavily on the aesthetic appreciation of contemplation, such as beauty, love, etc. Yoda does not dismiss this aspect of Weil's work. However, he shows how Weil's approach was also practical and engaged in real-world issues and problems that could be incorporated within the classroom. I agree with Yoda's criticisms. While Caranfa alludes to the distinctions between Weil's theoretical and practical, or the active life (*vita activa*), the latter remains undeveloped in his work.¹³³

5.6 Humility/attention and solitude for the classroom

We participate in the creation of the world by decreasing ourselves.¹³⁴

By 'decreasing' ourselves we grasp the very source of love: 'Humility is the root of love.'¹³⁵

Weil and Caranfa also advocate for the development of humility, attention, and solitude for the classroom. They both argue that process of detachment from the ego leads one to humility. As

¹³² Kazuaki Yoda, "Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?" (PhD, diss., Columbia University, 2014), 178.

¹³³ For example, Caranfa states; "Simone Weil; and that attention, beauty, love, and silence are indeed the key to the connection between the theoretical or the contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*) and the practical or the active life (*vita activa*) ...". Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," 563. Furthermore, some scholars, particularly feminist writers, have argued that Weil's notion of attention can provide valuable insights into learning and ethics. The ethical dimension of attention can contribute positively to Caranfa's model by further incorporating the Christian idea of *vita activa* central to Weil's writings. Weil also wrote on the importance of reading correctly, not discussed by Caranfa. 'Reading' through a disposition of detachment and discernment was part of her notion of attention and contemplation that facilitates a 'way of loving the other'. This aspect of Weil's work can also serve to extend Caranfa's concept of contemplative education, which I will do in Chapter 9.

¹³⁴ Weil, *Grace, and Gravity*, 29.

¹³⁵ Simone Weil, *The Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George A. Panichas (New York: David McKay, 1977), 436; Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," 579.

many other philosophers and religious writers have also noted, humility is one of the fruits of wisdom, virtue, and the holy spirit. Weil claims we need to encourage students to move away from personal achievement, grades, and ego gratification towards humility. She suggests that humility comes from an awareness of failures, which should be encouraged within the classroom.¹³⁶ Humility is also advocated by Caranfa, as we saw developed in Chapter 4 from Socrates, who can attain humility from the awareness of his limited knowledge. However, Caranfa does not adequately explain *how* we attain humility in the classroom, and I will examine this in Chapter 7.

Weil and Caranfa understood the importance of humility, silence, attention, and detachment as occurring within the context of solitude. Solitude is closely linked to silence and viewed as necessary for transformation. The themes of solitude and silence are also examined in previous chapters as Caranfa discusses the importance of solitude for transformation, for example, in Socrates, Augustine and Picard (and other figures such Nietzsche, Jaspers and Rousseau).¹³⁷

Weil and Caranfa tell us explicitly to ‘create silence’ so that we develop a “life of silence” that is the foundation of solitude.¹³⁸ Therefore, learning becomes the training of attention, “attentive silence,” so that classroom becomes the “house of silence.”¹³⁹ Solitude is deemed significant for developing other attributes discussed in this chapter, such as attentive listening, prayer, spiritual detachment, and humility. In *Human Personality*, Weil states, “...the practice of a

¹³⁶ This theme is evident throughout all of Weil’s cited works. Others have written on the redemptive dimensions within the experiences of “failure.” For example: Beverley Clack, *How to Be a Failure and Still Live Well: A Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020) explores the idea that ‘failure’ within a modern culture that prizes economic success over the ‘good life’ is limited.

¹³⁷ See earlier citations.

¹³⁸ Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and the Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil,” 80.

¹³⁹ Caranfa states; “The classroom is for Weil a gymnasium, a factory or workshop, a house of silence...” Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 575.

form of attention which is rare in itself and impossible except in solitude; and not only physical but mental solitude.”¹⁴⁰

Weil and Caranfa understood solitude as closely linked to silence and viewed as the necessary wholeness of being. Weil writes, “Keep your solitude ... Do not allow yourself to be imprisoned by any [earthly attachments].”¹⁴¹ Weil writes, for example, about the experience within the *Iliad* as Homer’s experience of solitude and silence eventually lead to transformation.¹⁴² However, these insights raise some issues (examined in Chapter 4) referring to the requirements of solitude; does it necessarily require physical aloneness, as Weil and Caranfa seem to imply? While this approach was the understanding of solitude found in the writings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, it raises some challenges for implementation within modern classroom contexts (which are often noisy), an issue I discuss in the next chapter.¹⁴³

5.7 Practical implications of Weil and Caranfa’s contemplative classroom

Some areas need mention and require further development in Caranfa’s model. Firstly, he does not critique Weil’s work in any significant way, only providing some basic ideas to inform a notion of contemplation. Secondly, Caranfa does not give concrete examples of what this approach could look like in a classroom. How can this model of aesthetic/silence be used in teaching and learning? The context of education that Caranfa discusses is not always clear. Furthermore, how do we embed Caranfa and Weil’s notion of waiting for answers, attention,

¹⁴⁰ Simone Weil, ‘Human Personality,’ in *The Simone Weil Reader*, 318; Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty Love and Silence,” 576.

¹⁴¹ Simone Weil, *Grace, and Gravity*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London; Routledge and Kegan, 1952), 60.

¹⁴² Weil proposes that silence and solitude should be freely sought out, however, the story of the *Iliad* would suggest that solitude was imposed due to difficult circumstances rather than freely chosen.

¹⁴³ It is interesting to note that not all philosophers favoured solitude. David Hume describes solitude as part of “vices” and unnecessary for intellectual pursuits. He includes it as part of what he terms as “monkish virtues.” David Hume, “An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals,” in *Hume’s Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 270.

and silence in an educational context which, as alluded to, is increasingly influenced by a neoliberal principal geared towards content-driven curriculums, efficiency, speed, and success?¹⁴⁴

Weil's approach is counter-cultural too much of Western values. Her notion of failure in developing humility and waiting for the 'correct' answers to come to us framed within a Christian metaphysical framework may only appeal to a few. The focus on success, achievements, and rankings is generally a feature of most education today. Most educational institutions have a student body that is often diverse (multifaith, atheist and agnostic) and might not appreciate the significance of Weil's viewpoints. Additionally, Caranfa and Weil do not address more complex issues about students' spiritual/religious development.¹⁴⁵ These issues point to the complexity of teaching and learning in the context of a classroom today. Neither Caranfa nor Weil address these practical matters adequately, and I will examine these in some depth in the next chapter.

Despite some of the practical challenges that entail the application of the contemplative model proposed, Caranfa and Weil's elucidations on contemplation have positive implications for society at large. Their work points to the importance of reflective, reverential, and disciplined speech (and discourse) that has engaged in contemplation and silence.¹⁴⁶ Advocating a speech that transcends ethnicity, race and religion, Caranfa proposes the highest achievement describing the person who "Satisfies the standards of the true master of instruction."¹⁴⁷ Caranfa

¹⁴⁴ See citations in Chapters 1 and 6.

¹⁴⁵As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, if we look closely at the literature regarding religious education in secondary schools in the UK and Australia, there are critical and complex issues related to student engagement, teacher training, and resources. Studies suggest that religious education is not relevant for many young people today. Moreover, there is no consensus within the literature about adolescents and young adults' spiritual/religious development.

¹⁴⁶ Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," 585.

¹⁴⁷ Caranfa, "Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence," 585.

asserts that our current education and society, sadly enough, favour the opposite, which is often “unreflective speech.”¹⁴⁸ There is no shortage of preachers, who, as Weil describes, “are not intended to awaken intelligence ... but rather induce somnolence ... to obscure real ... life.”¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

In reviewing Plato, we see how Caranfa draws on *The Republic*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus* to highlight the importance of spiritual and aesthetic experiences for individual transformation within his contemplative educational framework. In ‘seeing’ and experiencing the Platonic forms, such as the eternal truth and beauty, we can be elevated towards encountering the divine and God. Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, Caranfa suggests, can help us instruct students in identifying illusions in their lives that prevent them from perceiving the ‘truth.’ Through the *Symposium*, Caranfa highlights a step-by-step process of highlighting for students the beauties in this world, which then proceed to awareness and encounters with the ‘ultimate’ beauty, the Forms and God.¹⁵⁰

In elucidating some of Weil’s writing, we can appreciate how she contributes towards a more cohesive model of contemplation for education through her ideas on silence and attention.¹⁵¹

Weil claims that the development of attention for learning is an important skill not only for academic pursuits, but similarly for the soul. Developing what she termed the “gymnastics of attention” in schooling also prepared students to experience the soul and Christian prayer.

Caranfa uses this concept of attention for learning and prayer within his framework. Weil and

¹⁴⁸ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 585.

¹⁴⁹ Simone Weil, “The Power of Words,” in *The Simone Weil Reader*, 284; Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 585.

¹⁵⁰ In this context, the characteristics of silence involve an interior dialogue and internal withdrawal into the self. A typical process that is recognised when discussing contemplation. This process emerges from communion with the Platonic notions of the good, beautiful, and true eternal realities. The consequences of this process lead to personal transformation, which invariably addresses spiritual and existential concerns.

¹⁵¹ It is important to note that the concept of attention is also closely connected to Weil’s notion of prayer, religious faith, affliction (suffering) and ethics.

Caranfa also propose that developing a “life of silence” is the foundation of solitude.¹⁵² Therefore, learning becomes the training of attention or “attentive silence,” so that the classroom becomes the “house of silence.”¹⁵³

Additionally, Caranfa also examines Weil’s notion of contemplation through the experience of listening to sacred music. In being attentive to music and the aesthetic experience, we not only experience contemplation but move towards a transformation of our egos and suffering. Weil proposes that when we become aware and reflect in awe at the larger context of the universe (and its beauty), our small sense of self causes us to detach from our false egos or self. For Weil, the beauty of the world is the way to God. This detachment from our ego, Weil suggests, leads to transformation and an experience of detachment and humility.

Consequently, one of the critical arguments in this thesis is to highlight the importance of arts and humanities in a proper education that helps students find meaning and is helpful within a contemplative classroom framework. A framework in which silence is a vehicle for habituating students to encounter mystery and recognise their own ‘ignorance’ and need for epistemic humility. For humility brings to our awareness that our knowledge of the universe is never complete since uncertainty, rather than certainty, can give birth to new ideas. Humility and an awareness of our ignorance also lead to an encounter with ‘the mystery.’ For, despite all we know and discover, as many great minds have testified, the world remains mysterious. This

¹⁵² Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and the Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil,” 80.

¹⁵³ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 575. Solitude was also deemed necessary for developing other attributes such as attentive listening, prayer, ‘proper’ reading (discussed in Chapter 8) and spiritual detachment. However, the notions of silence and solitude implied here have issues of relevancy to the contemporary classroom context, which is generally a boisterous place. It raises the question, to what extent is it practically and ideologically feasible to have classrooms as “houses of silence.” A discussion I explore in Chapter 6.

awareness can propel people into a state of awe or wonder and induce a realisation and/or encounter with the mystery and God.¹⁵⁴

Caranfa attempts to link his discussion and approach to real life, which he claims is both communal and solitary.¹⁵⁵ It is a life lived with openness and dialogue with others and a time in personal silence.¹⁵⁶ When that unity or harmony is achieved, the inner and outer life become one act of gratitude and reverence, one undivided attention to the call of what he terms ‘creative love.’¹⁵⁷ Caranfa does not fully explain this term, yet it is a focal concept which Weil develops as part of her understanding of justice (discussed further in Chapter 9). This balance between our interiority and the wider community Caranfa alludes to above could be more developed in his work.

Caranfa and Weil’s model has challenges to overcome; nevertheless, contemplation remains a valuable pedagogical approach for education. This approach posits that through silence and contemplative practices, such as mindfulness, pausing, stillness and deep reflection, students can become attuned to their interiority (thoughts and feelings). These are significant for the spiritual and emotional development of students and for a rounded approach to teaching and learning. So, in keeping with the objectives of the overall thesis, this chapter has proposed that, contrary to the agenda of policymakers adopting neoliberal principles, fundamentally, education is more than gaining skills for future employment. Education has a more important

¹⁵⁴ These themes are discussed in other chapters. There is an attempt to achieve this in my textbook *Inquiry*. In Chapter 1, I include an epistemological exploration of the nature of ‘truth,’ ‘knowledge’ and ‘certainty.’ This culminates in discussions on mysticism and religion in the last chapter. The text also discusses the limitations of reasoning and logic as a doorway into an awareness of mystery and religious faith. It incorporates a linear process in developing faith, that could be fruitful within a contemplative classroom. See: Rosemary Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019).

¹⁵⁵ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 585.

¹⁵⁶ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 585.

¹⁵⁷ Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” 585.

long-term goal in attending to the soul and working towards holistic learning, *eudaimonia*, and the good life.

This chapter has summarised the importance of Caranfa and Weil's model for contemplative practices. Some of the challenges that their model faces in practical and theoretical applicability within a modern setting have been highlighted. I will examine these further in the next chapter by exploring some of the theoretical and empirical literature on spiritual and religious development for young people and how this can shed light on Caranfa and Weil's approach.

Chapter 6

The relevance of Caranfa's work for education today: Practical implications

Chapter 5 was an exposition of Caranfa's work drawing, on Plato and Weil, as he connects silence to the aesthetic experience in his conceptual framework of the contemplative classroom. Caranfa's model was also critically reviewed in reference to his theoretical and conceptual framework.

In this chapter, Caranfa's contemplative classroom will be assessed in terms of its practical applicability and relevance to the modern-day classroom. I will touch on some central issues that make Caranfa's model difficult to implement. I will begin with a recap of Caranfa and Weil on contemplation and religious/spiritual experiences within the classroom and identify some problems and challenges. I will examine theoretical approaches to spiritual/religious development, such as in the works of Richard Rohr and Søren Kierkegaard.

This is important in supporting my conclusion that there does not seem to be a consensus within the literature on the spiritual and religious development of adolescents and young adults. This is problematic for Caranfa's model, which assumes that spiritual experience is appropriate and relevant for young people.

Caranfa's approach will have to overcome the pervading neoliberal ideology which is often unquestionably accepted within education. Ironically, to maintain some sense of holistic education, silence and contemplation, as Caranfa and Weil have argued, are what is needed. The difficulty and challenge, however, for Caranfa's model is to convince or persuade educators and policymakers of its merit.

6.1 Recap – Caranfa (and Weil) on contemplation and religious/spiritual experiences within the classroom: some problems and challenges

Caranfa suggested that the “way of seeing or looking,” metaphorically speaking, is through contemplation reached through silence.¹ The term contemplation is understood in the general sense as reflection, pondering, to be still in silence, listening and mindfulness. Caranfa also extends this definition to include a way of seeing, feeling, and intuition that could be comprehended as a holistic approach to education. He writes, “Contemplation or silence is seeing, is looking, in which feeling is constantly being integrated into a thinking process in what is a sudden or an intuitive vision of ‘true Beauty.’”² Therefore, Caranfa’s notion of spirituality and/or religious experience (terms used interchangeably) is a form of contemplation that he described as an “aesthetic appreciation.” In developing this approach Caranfa draws on Socrates, Plato, Weil and Augustine.³

Caranfa draws heavily on Weil in developing his notion of contemplation and religious experience. Weil’s contemplation within the classroom is encapsulated in the practice of *attention* that is interchangeably linked to the practice of waiting and silence. Caranfa highlights Weil’s focus on silence, solitude and prayer for a way of training and cultivating

¹ For example, Caranfa cites the following: “Education takes for granted that sight is there but that it isn’t turned the right way or looking where it ought to look, and it tries to redirect it appropriately.” See Plato, “Republic,” in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. M. Cooper, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1977), 518 in Angelo Caranfa, “Learning to See: Art, Beauty, And the Joy of Creation in Education,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 50, no.2 (2016): 84, doi:10.5406/jaesteduc.50.2.0084.

² Caranfa, “Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education,” 92.

³ See citations in previous chapters. As mentioned at the start of Chapter 3, it is essential to note that in most cases, Caranfa’s understanding of contemplation is what he meant by religious and spiritual experience, and he used these terms interchangeably. His concept of spirituality was like a religious experience, for it was often about both the Platonic forms, the divine and Christian God. I will also interchange the terms contemplation and religious and spiritual experience in this thesis.

attention.⁴ Students are encouraged to undertake and engage in all learning, even subjects which are not liked, in order to develop what Weil terms the “gymnastics of attention.”⁵ Weil advocates ‘a slowness’ in arriving at understanding, a reflective and open approach to learning.⁶ While Caranfa refers to Weil’s approach, he fails to develop or critique it in any real depth. According to Weil (and Caranfa who cites Weil), the result of silence and attentiveness would lead to classrooms ideally becoming places that allow students to ‘be themselves.’⁷ Classrooms are described as ‘houses of silence’ where students become in tune with their own personal rhythms (a notion adopted from Whitehead as seen in Chapter 5) and as we shall see in Chapter 9 is evident within the writings of St Benedict.⁸ Weil advocates that to ‘look, listen and wait,’ are important contemplative practices most effectively placed within the context of values such as humility, openness and detachment.

Weil, like Caranfa, proposes that humility is an important quality to develop within the contemplative classroom. Humility results from the religious/spiritual experience of detachment from the ego. Weil rightly observes that current education is focused solely on personal success and achievement and not humility.⁹ A focus on failure, she argues, is a way that a person learns humility. In advocating for failure, rather than a focus on success in schooling, Weil makes some strong counter-cultural claims. Our education system, broadly

⁴ For example, See Angelo Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and The Gifts of Beauty, Love and Silence,” *Educational Theory* 60, no. 5 (2010): 575, doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.2010.00377.x; Angelo Caranfa, “Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence,” *Logos* 18, no. 2 (2015): 150-174, doi:10.1353/log.2015.0012; Angelo Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 44, no. 2 (2010): 63-82, doi:10.1353/jae.0.0085.

⁵ Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 108–109. See also, Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil.”

⁶ Weil, *Gravity and Grace*; Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Capricorn, 1959). See also: Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil.”

⁷ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence.”

⁸ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence.”

⁹ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence”; Weil, *Waiting for God*, Weil, *Grace and Gravity*.

speaking, barely tolerates ‘failure.’¹⁰ Caranfa acknowledges the challenges in this approach to education, but nevertheless argues that it is the highest form of attainment and should be part of the ultimate aim of education.¹¹ What could be more important, Caranfa argues, than emulating the things of humility, love, beauty and the holy?¹² Schooling should evolve around developing habits of humility, attention, detachment, self-emptiness, obedience, patience, gratitude, reverence, listening, waiting, solitude and silence. These attributes allow one to reach the ‘upwards steps’ (metaphorically speaking) to what he terms from Whitehead as the ‘aesthetic-spiritual’ sense of awareness.¹³ While some of us might recognise these as aspiring ideals for a contemporary classroom, as I will discuss further on, these are not easily implemented within a modern context.

In drawing on Weil, Caranfa challenges the current utilitarian and economic models of education that, as Max Picard claims, are based around ‘noise’ and what he argues are a narrow and destructive pedagogy.¹⁴ Picard, like Caranfa, claims that the disturbances of modern culture evident in schools attempt to divert us from our intimate yearning and longings (which he claims is God) rather directing our desires to materialism and worldly attachments.¹⁵

While we may agree with these claims based on our own observations and anecdotal evidence, addressing some of these issues, as I will discuss, remains challenging. The form of spirituality

¹⁰ See Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil”; Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence.” Others have also written on the redemptive view in the experiences of “failure.” See, for example: Beverley Clack, *How to Be a Failure and Still Live Well: A Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020) who explores the idea of success and failure within a culture that prizes economic success over the ‘good life.’

¹¹ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence,” 583.

¹² Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence”; Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons from Simone Weil.”

¹³ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence,” 583. See, Caranfa “Whitehead’s Benedictine Ideal in Education: Rhythms of Listening, Reading and Work,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44, no. 4 (2012): 386–402. doi:10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00716. x.

¹⁴ For example, see: Max Picard, *World of Silence* (Wichita: Eighth Day, 1952) in Angelo Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning” *Educational Theory* 54, no. 2 (2004): 211-230, doi: 10.1111/j.0013-2004.2004.0angelo_abstract.x.

¹⁵ Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence,” 585.

described as ‘decreation’ and detachment from the ego, and a focus on humility, can be problematic when we consider generally speaking the action, values and what some would propose are the developmental stages of young people today.¹⁶ The difficulty here is the range of theories on spiritual development, which are not always conclusive or agreed on, which point to a gap in the literature. Likewise, as alluded to by Picard (and others) the neoliberal agenda that has influenced education seeks goals that are contrary to the values of spiritual development mentioned. These issues will be discussed further on.

Also, as mentioned in previous chapters, Weil (whom Caranfa draws on) may find much of the culture of education in the West unfavourable to her main tenets. Her advocacy of failure in developing humility and waiting for the ‘correct’ answers to come to us framed within a Christian metaphysical framework may only reach a limited audience. Christian secondary or even tertiary educational institutions may see Weil’s relevance. However, even within these institutions there are many problems. Firstly, the emphasis on exams and content-driven curriculums is contrary to Weil’s contemplative approach. Secondly, a focus on success, achievements and rankings is generally a feature within most educational institutions today, which does not facilitate embracing failure or humility. Thirdly, the student body, even within a Christian educational institution, is often multifaith, atheistic and agnostic, which may not see the relevance of Weil’s ideas. Moreover, there are complex issues which pertain to the spiritual/religious development of students which Caranfa and Weil are aiming to engage. For example, if we look closely at the literature regarding religious education in secondary schools in the UK and Australia, there are many problems related to student engagement, teacher

¹⁶ For example, see: Richard M. Lerner, et al., *Developmental Psychology*, 2nd ed (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2013).

training and resources. Studies suggest that, for many young people today, religious education is not relevant.¹⁷ Furthermore, there is no consensus within the literature about the spiritual/religious development of adolescents and young adults, which calls into question the assumptions of both Caranfa and Weil. These issues point to the complexity of teaching and learning within the context of the classroom today, which have not been totally addressed by either Caranfa or Weil. In light of these factors, Weil and Caranfa's contemplative classroom, as I will discuss further, has some serious obstacles to overcome.

On the other hand, as evaluated, Caranfa's conceptual model of contemplation and religious/spiritual experience reminds us of the importance of silence and attention in learning and developing the whole person, mind, and spirit. The polyvalent benefits of silence have been shown in Chapter 1 to have positive educational benefits. There are sound empirical studies showing that silence and contemplative practices such as mindfulness can aid learning outcomes in the classroom.¹⁸ However, there are other limitations to Caranfa's work. Firstly, as I have shown throughout the previous chapter, Caranfa draws exclusively on Weil's aesthetics, while ignoring her work on the social action and the *vita* aspects of religious faith. This I will explore further in Chapter 7. Secondly, Caranfa does not give us concrete examples of what this approach *could look like* in a classroom. We could have seen some concrete examples of how the aesthetic and silence are incorporated within teaching and learning. There are some allusions made by Caranfa and Weil to suggest their work is aimed at a high school

¹⁷ For example, see: Patricia Hannam and Gert Biesta, "Religious Education, A Matter of Understanding? Reflections On the Final Report of The Commission on Religious Education," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 40, no. 1 (2019): 55–63. doi:10.1080/13617672.2018.1554330.

¹⁸ For example, see: "Bringing Mindfulness to Schools," *Mindfulness in Schools Project*, accessed Nov. 11, 2021, <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/>; Kimberley Holmes, "Neuroscience, Mindfulness and Holistic Wellness Reflections on Interconnectivity in Teaching And Learning," *Interchange* 50, no. 3 (2019): 445–460, doi:10.1007/s10780-019-09360-6; Kimberley Holmes, "Mindfulness as a Practice of Professional Life," *Journal of Educational Thought* 50, no. 1 (2017): 21–42; P.A. Jennings, *Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity In The Classroom* (New York, NY: Norton Series on the Social Neuroscience of Education, 2015).

context, such as references to “school” or “schooling” as highlighted in earlier chapters, however, the context of education Caranfa is aiming for is not always made clear.¹⁹ Furthermore, there are practical and physical challenges regarding the feasibility of having quiet classrooms today. Additionally, Caranfa and Weil’s notion of waiting for answers, attention, and silence (while it has many benefits in terms of teaching of the ‘whole person’) faces modern challenges in appealing to an educational context which is increasingly influenced by a neoliberal principle geared towards efficiency, speed, and success. Like any counter-cultural approach, contemplative education must find creative ways of appealing to the modern mindset. In the following chapters, I will attempt to extend Caranfa’s model with the aim of proposing a contemplative approach which may be feasible and appealing to the modern classroom.

In this section, I explore only some of the criticisms raised above, which are complex and nuanced; some are anecdotal evidence, and other points have already been raised in earlier chapters. Firstly, I will explore the assumption made by Caranfa and Weil, that young people are open to spiritual/religious insights and practices within a Christian contemplative framework. Secondly, the aims of the neoliberal framework within education (as Caranfa alludes to) broadly speaking, runs against the values of the contemplative education proposed by Caranfa. In light of these factors, Caranfa’s model of education is neither relevant nor feasible to the stage of (spiritual/psychological/emotional) development for young people (if in fact there is one), nor the goals of current neoliberal education. These points do not deny the

¹⁹ For example, references to “school” or “schooling” are made in the following works. Simone Weil, *Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George A. Panichas (New York: David McKay, 1977), 50, 153; Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 108-109; Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Capricorn, 1959), 113; Caranfa, “Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence,” 561, 573, 583; Caranfa, “The Aesthetic and The Spiritual Attitude in Learning: Lessons From Simone Weil,” 65, 66, 67, 78.

value of Caranfa's project, but rather highlight its challenges in appealing to a modern audience. In what follows, I will discuss Richard Rohr and Søren Kierkegaard's observations on spiritual/religious development and discuss how these may relate to Caranfa's contemplative model.

6.2 *Theoretical approaches to spiritual/religious development; Richard Rohr and Søren Kierkegaard*

While we may have anecdotal evidence on the spiritual and religious development of adolescents and young adults there does not seem to be a consensus within the literature on this process. Theoretical accounts of this process have been developed by some scholars such as Richard Rohr and Søren Kierkegaard. My survey of the empirical literature on this issue, however, leaves me with the conclusion that while there are some empirical findings on this process, overall, these remain suggestive, rather than conclusive.²⁰ It is not in the scope here to explore this complex issue in depth, but to briefly highlight some of the various perspectives on this process which call some of Caranfa's assumptions into question.

Franciscan monk, writer, and international speaker, Fr Richard Rohr's observations of human development claimed that it occurs in two phases. In his work *Falling Upwards*, Rohr distinguishes between what he terms the first and second half of life.²¹ The first half of life he claims is about formation of identity, personhood, ego development, accomplishments, and worldly success. The second half begins from about 40 or 50 years. This phase of development

²⁰ See scholars such as Thomas Kalam, "The Myth of Stages and Sequence in Moral and Religious Development" (Ph.D. diss., University of Lancaster, 1981); Heinz Streib, "Faith Development Theory Revisited: The Religious Styles Perspective," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11, no. 3 (2001): 143–58; Barbara Grossman, "Faith Development and Psychosocial Accomplishment: Trends in Adult Intimacy Growth and Higher Faith Stages" (Ph.D. diss., School of Theology at Claremont, 1991).

²¹ Richard Rohr, *Falling Upwards* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011).

is about the process of detachment from the ego and its accomplishments to be open for spiritual transformation.

According to Rohr, the first half of life (which is the most relevant to Caranfa's audience for contemplative education) is seeking out success and achievement. The person's identity is known as separate from others and often attributed to particular skills, knowledge, power, wealth and overall achievement, such as completing a degree, becoming a well-known dancer, etc.²² In this process, the individual person is 'attached,' so to speak, to their identity and often does not know who they are without it. This 'attachment' to what is sometimes termed the 'idealised or successful self' is what Rohr (amongst others, i.e., Merton and Weil) say is the 'false self' or illusionary self within a contemplative context.²³ The 'true self' which is the antithesis of the false self is not found in one's achievements or success in 'the world', but by ironically letting go of all attachments to this 'illusionary self'. This is the task of people entering the second half of life. Within the first half of life, people tend to adopt what Rohr describes as an 'all or nothing' way of thinking, what he terms as dualistic thinking.²⁴ The cognitive approach within this phase embraces religious laws, moral guidelines, and church teachings unquestionably. Here people tend to avoid paradox, ambiguity, and the sense of mystery that is an undertaking within the second phase.²⁵

While Rohr outlines this as a broad generality, he claims that some young people can show signs of reaching maturity characterised within the second half of life. He also notes that many

²² This psychological development is often observed in young people and noted by theorists. See Erik H. Erikson, and Joan M. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version / With New Chapters on The Ninth Stage of Development* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy* (Monterey, Calif: Brooks/Cole, 2001).

²³ Rohr, *Falling Upwards*.

²⁴ Rohr, *Falling Upwards*.

²⁵ Rohr, *Falling Upwards*.

adults (even within religion) do not reach the spiritual maturity of the second half of life. This is characterised by an embrace of perspectives, contradictions in life, and a movement towards detachment from worldly achievements.²⁶ Rohr's notion of a detachment from the false self or ego in the second phase of life is reminiscent of Weil and Caranfa's understanding of spiritual development, and as mentioned, reflects Weil's idea of decreation. Rohr's observations are also in line with a universal process often described in terms of 'shedding the ego' that is present within most religious mystical traditions. However, while his insights may reflect a common spiritual process within religious traditions, his ideas do not really address *how* we teach or address spirituality within young people. In other words, if most young people according to Rohr are in the first stage of life, how do we guide them spiritually, and/or move them toward the second half? Additionally, his work calls into question Caranfa and Weil's model of contemplation within the classroom. For if Rohr is correct, a contemplative classroom is not feasible for young people who, according to him, are still in the first half of life.

While Rohr's theory may not answer the questions of how we address the spirituality of young people directly, he nevertheless does reiterate some of the spiritual processes which both Caranfa and Weil discuss. The complexity of what constitutes the process of spiritual development and when this typically occurs is, as I will show further on, not easily demonstrated, or agreed upon among scholars. This, I would argue, is due to the complex nature of faith and what we mean by 'religiosity' or spirituality. Another theorist who sheds further light on the spiritual process is Søren Kierkegaard.

²⁶ Some of the theoretical influences on Rohr's model of spiritual development are from the works of Carl Jung and Ken Wilber. For example, Ken Wilber outlines the stages of spiritual development in four phases. These include mythical/literal, rational/perspective taking, the transrational and the 'wake-up' stage. The last stage is the integral stage of spiritual development. See, Ken Wilbur, "Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy," *Nova Religion: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 8, no. 2 (2004):125-127.

Søren Kierkegaard on religious faith

Like Rohr, Christian existentialist philosopher Søren Kierkegaard also observes that humans develop in stages or what he also termed ‘spheres of existence.’²⁷ These have been also termed by scholars as ‘existential stages’ or stages of religious faith.²⁸ Kierkegaard proposes that individual experiences of religious faith occur in three stages, *the aesthetic* (also referred to as *the esthetical*), *ethical*, and *religious*. The aesthetic stage is the initial stage. Here the focus of life is organised around pleasure and hedonistic endeavours.²⁹ Kierkegaard describes this stage as ultimately leading a person to despair and loss of oneself. The ethical stage is an awareness of a hierarchy in the moral life. The person here becomes aware of the importance of choosing and living a moral life. The individual becomes increasingly aware of their moral duties, choices, and responsibilities, which they attempt to fulfil. However, Kierkegaard argues that many in this stage come to realise their inability to fully live up to their moral responsibilities alone, which leads to a sense of despair. The last stage, as Kierkegaard shows in his famous work *Fear and Trembling*, is the religious phase.³⁰ Here the individual is aware of the human limitation to live up to their moral responsibilities on their own and thus becomes aware of the human need for God. The introspective journey toward God which Kierkegaard describes is directed by a strong invitation of divine love. The individual is always free to resist and reject this or submit to the process which, in the end, Kierkegaard states is an act of *pure faith*.³¹

²⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, “Either/Or, A Fragment of Life, I,” in *The Essential Kierkegaard* (Princeton University Press, 2013), 37; Søren Kierkegaard, “Either/Or, A Fragment of Life, II,” in *The Essential Kierkegaard* (Princeton University Press, 2013), 66.

²⁸ Søren Harnow Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*, 1st ed. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018), 10. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73186-5_5.

²⁹ Kierkegaard, “Either/Or, A Fragment of Life, I,” 37.

³⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling, And the Sickness unto Death*, Reprint (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968).

³¹ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling, And the Sickness unto Death*; also, Rosemary Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 229–230.

It is not in the scope here to explore Kierkegaard's stages of growth in depth, but to highlight some of their features in order to help educators recognise these phases within their students, and perhaps better appreciate some of the complexities of the nature of religious faith as it pertains to the contemplative classroom. To that end, I will touch on some of the complexities involved in Kierkegaard's stages of growth; for example, I compare Kierkegaard's understanding of aesthetics to that of Caranfa and highlight some of the ambiguities in his understanding. While debated amongst scholars, I will propose that essentially what Kierkegaard was suggesting is that all the stages are geared towards a deep religious faith. Despite the challenges in applying Kierkegaard's notion of religious faith, I will point out some positive implications of his existentialism to the contemplative classroom.

While Kierkegaard is not prescriptive in terms of the age at which these processes occur, anecdotal observations tell us that much of what he describes within the aesthetic and hedonistic stage is present in the behaviour of many adolescents and beyond. This is particularly evident in their exploration of their sexuality, which has been noted by theorists.³² As considered in earlier chapters, Caranfa understood the aesthetic experience as that which incorporates the practice of silence such as within sacred music, and the appreciation of the aesthetics was a way of eliciting an appreciation of the divine for young people in the classroom.³³ However, Kierkegaard's understanding of the aesthetic is multifaceted and differs from Caranfa's. Kierkegaard understands aesthetic as encompassing a range of experiences

³² See, for example, Karen J. Gilmore and Pamela Meersand, *The Little Book of Child and Adolescent Development* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2015); Angus Clark et al., "Sexual Development in Adolescence: An Examination of Genetic and Environmental Influences," *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 30, no. 2 (2020):502–20, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12540>; Laura Baams et al., "On Early Starters and Late Bloomers: The Development of Sexual Behavior in Adolescence Across Personality Types," *The Journal of Sex Research* 51, no. 7 (2014): 754–764. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2013.802758>.

³³ For example, see: Angelo Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," *Logos* 18, no. 2 (2015): 150– 174. Doi :10.1353/log.2015.0012.

sometimes referred to as the ‘poetic.’ This stage was characterised by pleasure seeking and it included the erotic and seduction. This is encapsulated in his depiction of his character Don Juan who, he claimed, ‘took pleasure’ in his seduction of women characters like Cordilla.³⁴ This points to the dark side of the aesthetics phase not discussed by Caranfa, which is also characterised by restlessness, boredom and constantly seeking new stimulation.³⁵ While this might typically describe the life of an adolescent we may see in our classrooms, Kierkegaard does not outline an age for this; for example, his character Don Juan is living out this state perpetually. Kierkegaard identifies this as in the end leading one to misery. The life of one in the aesthetic stage, Kierkegaard argues, is in transit, leading ultimately to an unhappy existence. He writes:

The poetic idealise always an untrue ideal, for the true ideal is always the actual. So when the spirit is not allowed to rise into the eternal world of spirit, it remains in transit and delights in the pictures reflected in the clouds and weeps over their transitoriness. Therefore, a poet-existence as such is an unhappy existence; it is higher than the finite and yet is not the infinite.³⁶

Like Caranfa, Kierkegaard also understood what Susan Leigh Anderson terms the “higher level of aesthetic life,” which is represented by artists whose aim is self-fulfilment and developing their talents. Examples of these were Wagner and Mozart, whom Kierkegaard held in high esteem.³⁷ Anecdotally, Kierkegaard’s observations are relevant here, as we also see some young people in our classrooms who have a healthy passion for the arts and music.

³⁴ Kierkegaard, “Either/Or, A Fragment of Life, I,” 39. It is important to note that Kierkegaard often wrote in pseudonyms as shown in his text *Either/Or*, which outlines his ideas on the aesthetic (or esthetical) and ethical. His fictional characters were tools in relaying his philosophical positions which leaves room for misinterpretation.

³⁵ In *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life I*, Kierkegaard writes about boredom in the following way “...Boredom is the root of all evil. It is very curious that boredom, which itself has such a calm and sedate nature, can have such a capacity to initiate motion. The effect that boredom brings about is absolutely magical, but this effect is one not of attraction but of repulsion. How corrupting boredom is...” (p 51).

³⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life II*, 7.

³⁷ Susan Leigh Anderson, *On Kierkegaard* (Belmont, CA, USA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2000), 46.

Kierkegaard, like Caranfa, also saw the aesthetics as a refined appreciation of beauty, such as in art and music (although Caranfa's focus was on sacred music). Conversely, Kierkegaard's appreciation of music and its role differed to that of Caranfa. As explored in previous chapters, Caranfa was very clear that sacred music was the medium that led to an encounter with the divine. Caranfa describes Weil's understanding of music through its connection to faith and suffering in the following ways:

As she continued to listen with pure attentiveness, 'the thought of the Passion of Christ entered into [her] being once and for all' (WG, 68), and thus she experienced the eternal presence of God's love in her. In both experiences, absolute attention is seen by Weil as the very music or song of the soul – an attention that is an exchange between body and mind or soul, between being in time and timelessness, between speech or sound and silence, between tears and joy.³⁸

However, Kierkegaard's understanding of the importance of music is not always clearly understood and appears to be ambivalent. When comparing music to the written word, Kierkegaard understood music as inferior. He states the following, "... I have never had any sympathy for the sublimated music that thinks it does not need words. Ordinarily, it thinks itself superior to words, although it is inferior ..."³⁹ Kierkegaard acknowledges the sensuality and immediacy of music that is characteristic of the aesthetic stage. He explains that sensuous sounds in music are greater than in language. While music is touched by the divine that is "qualified by spirit," he also states paradoxically that it is outside "the realm of the spirit." As mentioned above, this contrasts with Caranfa's unequivocal claim that music (mostly sacred) enables us to have a closer connection to the divine. Kierkegaard writes:

Sensuous immediacy has its absolute medium in music, and this also explains why music in the ancient world did not become properly developed but is linked to the Christian world. So it is the medium for the immediacy that, qualified by spirit, is qualified in such a way that it is outside the realm of spirit. Of course, music can express many other things, but this is its absolute theme. It is also easy to discern that music is

³⁸ Angelo Caranfa, "Simone Weil on Music: Listening with Tears of Prayerful Silence," 165.

³⁹ Kierkegaard. *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life I*, 49.

a more sensuous medium than language, in as much as considerably more emphasis is placed on the sensuous sound in music than in language.⁴⁰

While Kierkegaard discusses three stages of growth in *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life Volumes I and II*, scholars continue to debate whether Kierkegaard intended that each stage was to be ‘overcome,’ before one moved on to the next, and whether there was a hierarchy in his thinking about the different stages. Maria Lopez Calvo de Feijoo and Myriam Moreira Protasio claim that Kierkegaard did not intend to view the aesthetic as a stage that is to be worked through and overcome.⁴¹ They argue that Kierkegaard understood the aesthetic as a positive part of how one experiences unity or union.⁴² These scholars refer to Thomas Ransom Giles, who states, “...stages are not susceptible to time nor are they from one stage to a former stage, so therefore, overcome.”⁴³ Calvo de Feijoo and Protasio propose that this view is in keeping with Kierkegaard’s overall stand against the focus on objectivity of knowledge at the expense of ignoring subjectivity. They argue that his epistemology emphasised the sensory and aesthetic ignored during the Greeks which Kierkegaard revived.⁴⁴ These scholars also claim this view is not only contradictory to Kierkegaard’s overall epistemological approach (which moved away from a systemisation of knowledge), but also favoured an evolutionary and hierarchal approach which is detrimental in understanding his philosophical approach. They state:

It is believed that the flawed interpretations, that consider the stages as an evolutionary process that requires an overcoming of the sensory character of existence, are marked and traversed by our historic moment, which is predominated by the logic of evolution, growth productivity, overcoming, dichotomization, among others. Each of these orientations, cemented in the current era, end up hindering the comprehension of the

⁴⁰ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life I*, 49-50.

⁴¹ Ana Maria Lopez Calvo de Feijoo and Myriam Moreira Protasio, “The Rescue of The Aesthetic Character of Existence in Kierkegaard Philosophy,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 54, no. 4 (2015): 1470–1480, doi:10.1007/s10943-015-0026-5.

⁴² Calvo de Feijoo and Protasio also state, “...Kierkegaard also seeks out to recover the oneness of existence, however, without abandoning the senses, which, much to the contrary, he reinstates by describing a disposition that shall be named the stage of aesthetic. See Calvo de Feijoo and Protasio, “The Rescue of The Aesthetic Character of Existence in Kierkegaard Philosophy,” 1479.

⁴³ Calvo de Feijoo and Protasio, “The Rescue of The Aesthetic Character of Existence in Kierkegaard Philosophy,” 1473.

⁴⁴ Calvo de Feijoo and Protasio, “The Rescue of The Aesthetic Character of Existence in Kierkegaard Philosophy,” 1473.

aesthetic element and the positivity of its characterization as a guardian of space, where, truly, it can result in the achievement of oneness.⁴⁵

We can surmise from the above discussion, and the reference by Kierkegaard below, that Kierkegaard's view of the aesthetic experience was ambiguous. He discusses both the positive and negative aspects of the aesthetic experience. The aesthetics had the ability to transform the self, or what is described in *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life II*, as "... reconciles itself with life."⁴⁶ Like Caranfa, Kierkegaard understood art as fulfilling an existential role.⁴⁷ Likewise, as illustrated below, Kierkegaard also acknowledges the limitations of the aesthetics. That is, that the arts and aesthetic experience are also an "enmity to life," they can only reconcile with what he describes as 'one part of soul.' Kierkegaard writes the following:

That is why in the foregoing I called attention to the ruinous confusing of the esthetic and that which can be esthetically portrayed in poetic reproduction. Everything I am talking about here certainly can be portrayed esthetically, but not in poetic reproduction, but only by living it, by realizing it in the life of actuality. In this way the esthetic elevates itself and reconciles itself with life, for just as poetry and art in one sense are precisely a reconciliation with life, yet in another sense they are enmity to life, because they reconcile only one side of the soul.⁴⁸

What we saw earlier was Kierkegaard's discussion of the 'pleasures,' and limitations of the aesthetic stage that lead a person to then move onto the ethical. Kierkegaard argues that the individual in the ethical stage becomes aware of a reality beyond the individual self and their immediate concerns. The person here becomes more attentive of their moral duties and responsibilities to the wider community. There is a greater consciousness of moral and universal codes of conduct. Anecdotally, we also see this present in most young people as they move beyond the egocentricity of childhood and begin to become aware the need to consider

⁴⁵ Calvo de Feijoo and Protasio, "The Rescue of The Aesthetic Character of Existence in Kierkegaard Philosophy," 1479.

⁴⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life II*, 81.

⁴⁷ It is important to note that Kierkegaard was the first existentialist who had an influence on the thinking of Sartre, Beauvoir, Camus and Weil. All these writers understood the transformative power of the arts.

⁴⁸ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life II*, 70.

other people. In high schools, for example, students adhere to certain codes of behaviour that force them to consider the welfare of not only themselves but of others. As explained below, Kierkegaard describes this phase as one where the person moves into greater self-knowledge and is not as easily distracted as they were in the previous stage. According to Kierkegaard:

Let us now compare an ethical and an esthetic individual. The primary difference, the crux of the matter, is that the ethical individual is transparent to himself and does not live in *Blaue hinein* [in the wild blue yonder], as does the esthetic individual. This difference encompasses everything. The person who lives ethically has seen himself, knows himself, penetrates his whole concretion with his consciousness, does not allow vague thoughts to rustle around inside him or let tempting possibilities distract him with their juggling; he is not like a ‘magic’ picture that shifts from one thing to another, all depending on how one shifts and turns it.⁴⁹

Kierkegaard’s insights can be likened to the empirical works of Lawrence Kohlberg, who wrote much later (1927–1987), on moral development and his conventional and postconventional phases.⁵⁰ Kohlberg proposes that there are three stages, which he termed as preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. The first stage is linked to obedience and authority; here moral behaviour is motivated by self-interest and avoiding punishment. The conventional phase is characterised by adherence and observances to social norms, customs, and laws.⁵¹ The importance of relationships and approval from social classes is the focus. In the postconventional stage, the person can move beyond social norms, customs, and laws to understand abstract and universal principles which govern morality.⁵²

Kohlberg’s empirical research appears to support Kierkegaard’s observations that moral development is a process. While they differ in their understanding of this process and what

⁴⁹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life II*, 81.

⁵⁰ See Nancy Porter, “Kohlberg and Moral Development,” *Journal of Moral Education* 1, no. 2 (1972): 123–28. See also Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 228–229.

⁵¹ Porter, “Kohlberg and Moral Development,” 123–124, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724720010206>.

⁵² Porter, “Kohlberg and Moral Development,” 124.

constitutes moral development, these thinkers can help us understand that a young person could very well be on a trajectory of development. That is, they might be in the aesthetic (using Kierkegaard's category) or pre-conventional stage, as put forward by Kohlberg, and could potentially move towards a 'higher' stage of growth that would allow them to experience reality and their experiences more meaningfully. The question of *how* we move people toward these 'higher' stages, however, still remains problematic and was not addressed adequately by either thinker. As Kierkegaard writes:

No, one shall be forgotten who was great in the world. But each was great in his own way, and each in proportion to the greatness of that which he loved. For he who loved himself became great by himself, and he who loved other men became great by his selfless devotion, but he who loved God became greater than all.⁵³

The reference above, from *Fear and Trembling*, would seem to suggest a hierarchy in Kierkegaard's understanding of the stages.⁵⁴ Kierkegaard's works, mostly *The Five Ways*, *Fear and Trembling*, and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, point to the importance of the religious domain as the peak of all the other stages. Likewise, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* Kierkegaard states, "it is the God-relationship that makes a man a man."⁵⁵ As highlighted earlier, this view is contrary to what some scholars have claimed. Anderson's interpretation of Kierkegaard's words above is ambiguous, for she claims Kierkegaard thought that we had a choice ("of living for *oneself* or living for *others* or living for *God*"). And while Kierkegaard did write a lot more on the religious phase (and it was his obvious personal choice), she concludes that he does not necessarily view it as the "absolute choice" for *all* people.⁵⁶ This claim by Anderson is very unconvincing and is not developed well nor supported by any

⁵³ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling, And the Sickness unto Death*, 31.

⁵⁴ This is in line with the opinion of others such as, Peter Vardy, *Kierkegaard* (Liguori, Mo.: Triumph Books, 1997).

⁵⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, Walter Lowrie, and Joseph Campbell, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 219.

⁵⁶ Anderson, *On Kierkegaard*, 46.

references to Kierkegaard's work. What it does point to, however, is the difficulty in interpreting Kierkegaard's work, and the complexity of religious faith. This complexity should be a warning to educators about not making conclusions too hastily; also learning from Weil to wait for insights and adopt a notion of 'slow understanding.' This may serve educators well, not only as they navigate Kierkegaard's stages, but more importantly for the purpose of this thesis, in the spiritual development of their students.

Kierkegaard sets up a high standard to follow in the last stage, which is the religious. The description of faith set up is undeniable. In the religious stage, an individual becomes aware of the limitations in relying on their own resources and the need for God. In *Fear and Trembling*, for example, Kierkegaard explores the biblical story of Abraham's sacrifice of his child to show how one is to move beyond the reliance on ethical codes (e.g., human sacrifice) to a radical *trust in God*. This is known as the 'knight of faith' as it illustrates the struggle and radical nature of religious faith and the importance of trust in the divine.⁵⁷ This challenging biblical story exemplifies that, for Kierkegaard, what is required by adherents is a radical and 'passionate' commitment that requires an ongoing trust in God, even if that means moving beyond what is conventionally accepted as ethical or even rational (e.g., to sacrifice your son). This is in line with his approach to religious faith. Kierkegaard asserts that despite the paradoxes and uncertainties in life, we must remain inwardly trusting and 'passionate' about our faith. Kierkegaard writes the following:

Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping God objectively,

⁵⁷ Kierkegaard decided to end an engagement with his fiancée, Regine Olsen. Some scholars attribute this experience has having a profound influence on his writings. For example, Kevin Hoffman argues that his breaking the engagement is based on his religious convictions and not ethical or aesthetic. He writes, "What we know for sure is that his reasons for breaking the engagement are decidedly not esthetic ones, and that he has ordered his life around religious presuppositions, beyond the ethical life." Kevin Hoffman, "Suffering and Discourse Ethics in Kierkegaard's Religious Stage," *The Journal of Religion* 82, no. 3 (2002): 396. Kierkegaard philosophical works can be seen from a psychoanalytic view. For example, see Vincent McCarthy, *Kierkegaard as Psychologist* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith, I must constantly be intent upon holding fast to the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith.⁵⁸

The religious stage, which has been of interest to educators, is extremely challenging for adults, let alone young people. The premise of this stage is that one has a deep reliance on God. This is, generally speaking, more of a challenge for young people to process, as unlike adults, they do not yet have the wisdom of personal experiences to draw on. While this last pivotal phase of Kierkegaard's stages is important, it does pose challenges in *how* we help students to move towards this stage within an educational context.

Implications of Kierkegaard for the classroom

Søren Harnow Klausen's recent work, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*, proposes that Kierkegaard's work can help educators work towards a holistic approach to education.⁵⁹ Klausen argues that Kierkegaard's existential approach lays out a solid framework in helping educators cultivate qualities that lead towards individual *authenticity*. What he argues is that Kierkegaard's work includes an emphasis not on content or skills, but rather the development of a person's attitude or mode of being.⁶⁰ Klausen writes that Kierkegaard was influenced by the ideal of *Bildung* (referring to personal formation or self-cultivation) proposed by many German writers such as Goethe and Humboldt.⁶¹ Likewise Solveig Reindal claims

⁵⁸ Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 182.

⁵⁹ Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*.

⁶⁰ Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*, 74. Klausen writes, "It was widely held during the romantic (and the preceding classic) period that a human being should strive for self-perfection, and that this meant that all its capacities should be developed and integrated into a harmonious whole." See, Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*, 4.

⁶¹ Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*, 4. Klausen writes, "The notion of *Bildung* has played a central role in educational thought and policy ever since (though more explicitly so on the European continent than in the English-speaking world). In contemporary discussions, it is often presented as an alternative to a more instrumental, utilitarian, or piecemeal approach to education, which centres on the development of specific, labour-market relevant skills (see Horlacher 2015)". Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*, 4.

that what Kierkegaard's existentialism can offer is more aligned to the concept of *Bildung*. Kierkegaard's existentialism explores the notions of choice, responsibility, and personal meaning, and also important epistemological questions, such as the nature and limitations of reason.⁶² Reindal argues that Kierkegaard's emphasis on existentialism and subjectivism makes the notion of *Bildung* possible, as he moves away from the emphasis on 'objective' knowledge towards subjectivity, making 'content' relevant to students.⁶³ Reindal argues this encourages a personal engagement with knowledge which can help precipitate meaningful integration within an educational context.⁶⁴

However, what is problematic about both Klausen and Reindal's interpretations of Kierkegaard is their dismissal of the impact and influence of his religious faith on his work. What Reindal forgets to mention, and Klausen highlights, is that Kierkegaard's philosophy is deeply influenced by religious ideas, and his stages and notions of subjectivism are essential in relation to Christian faith. While Reindal's reference to Kierkegaard's subjectivisms can be taken to a secular educational content, it is incomplete. This shortcoming can also be applied to Klausen's analysis; while he alludes to Kierkegaard's religiosity at the start and claims he will not be focusing on this, his omission, in my opinion, is a hindrance to his assessment of his works.⁶⁵ Klausen does, in the end, state that despite the insights of Kierkegaard toward helping educators achieve a holistic approach to education, ultimately Kierkegaard presents an overly ambitious project for education today.

⁶² Solveig M. Reindal, "Bildung, The Bologna Process and Kierkegaard's Concept of Subjective Thinking," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32, no. 5 (2012): 533–549, doi:10.1007/s11217-012-9344-1.

⁶³ Solveig M. Reindal, "Bildung, The Bologna Process and Kierkegaard's Concept of Subjective Thinking."

⁶⁴ Reindal, "Bildung, The Bologna Process and Kierkegaard's Concept of Subjective Thinking."

⁶⁵ Klausen states the following "... Kierkegaard's conception of Christianity arguable provides a model for this. I shall not, however, pursue this line of thought further, as I will mostly ignore the religious aspects of Kierkegaard's thinking." See Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*, 7.

While I agree with the main tenets of Klausen’s concluding remarks below (especially in the context of a neoliberal approach to education, to be discussed later on), what he fails to highlight is that the fundamental basis of integration which the individual is working towards, his “passionate commitment” as I have argued above, is in reference to Kierkegaard’s deep religious convictions. In other words, Kierkegaard’s whole project, both implicitly and explicitly, is to move towards a deeper and radical faith that culminates in the religious phase. The difficulty in Kierkegaard’s aims of a “personal integration” (mentioned below) is in reference to his strong belief in a Christian God. This calls for a deep trust in God in the face of uncertainty and paradox. This is an important theme missing in Klausen’s observations. He writes:

I have repeatedly voiced a concern that Kierkegaard’s thinking may, for all its intellectual brilliance and suggestive power, be too far removed from the actual concerns of teachers and educational policymakers. There is a legitimate worry that the more Kierkegaard succeeds in exposing superficial ideals and half-hearted commitments, the more he renders his own thinking practically irrelevant ... If we take it to embody an educational ideal – and even this may be to read too much into it – then this ideal appears extremely ambitious. Kierkegaard puts authenticity and fundamental character development above all; he requires a total integration of the knowledge and skills of an individual into her personality, and the unreserved, indeed passionate commitment of the individual to her own process of self-cultivation and self-realization.⁶⁶

As Klausen has rightly pointed out, the process of holistic education, which he describes a self-cultivation and integration (and personal faith, described in the last stage), is an ambitious goal for most young people today, at least in the West. Anecdotal evidence tells us there are only a few young people who have this passionate and trusting faith, as Kierkegaard describes in this later stage. For example, the small minority of young people who decide to take up religious life. What seem most relevant in Kierkegaard’s stages, anecdotally, for young people are the

⁶⁶ Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard: Educating for Authenticity*, 68.

aesthetic and ethical stages. While this section did not go into depth in discussing Kierkegaard's stages, it does give us some insights into where the minds and hearts of young people *might be at*. These are important observations in helping educators think seriously about *how* we can move young people into a more meaningful and fulfilling way of being in the world that has an appreciation of the importance of morality and an awareness of the transcendence.

The extent to which we *can prepare young people for this* process in moving them towards religious faith remains a contentious issue. As Andrew Torrance observed, this process is challenging and somewhat ambiguous.⁶⁷ It requires both the receptivity of the individual to be open to God and the unexpected workings of grace. Torrance continues to argue that Kierkegaard advocated a spirituality that moved away from a focus on individual autonomy to one of reliance on the mysterious workings of God.⁶⁸ Torrance claims that Kierkegaard's descriptions of faith were less about the individual's works and more about God's activity. He writes, "The story of Christian conversion is to be told as the story of God finding that person in the wilderness. It is not a story of how a person prepared herself to find God in the wilderness."⁶⁹ The importance of the reliance on God for Christian conversion and faith is further exemplified in the following:

For Kierkegaard, the Christian does this because it is a part of her faithful calling to recognize and confess that God has spoken to her that God has called her out of her confusion into a life that is devoted to the living God. Any temptation to reduce this calling to the ramblings of her own imagination would be to prompt a forgetfulness of her calling. It would be to deny the reality of God and turn her own idea of God into the object of her faith. Furthermore, it would be to disregard the one true grounding of the Christian faith the God who delivers a person into a life of truth. So for Kierkegaard,

⁶⁷ Andrew B. Torrance, "Can A Person Prepare to Become a Christian? A Kierkegaardian Response," *Religious Studies* 53, no. 2 (2016): 199-215, doi:10.1017/s0034412516000172.

⁶⁸ Torrance, "Can A Person Prepare to Become a Christian? A Kierkegaardian Response," 211.

⁶⁹ Torrance, "Can A Person Prepare to Become a Christian? A Kierkegaardian Response," 211.

the Christian must always testify that God prepares her to become a Christian in a way that she could never do for herself.⁷⁰

The implications of Torrance's interpretation of Kierkegaard's strong faith are a reminder of not only its importance, but also its complexity and mystery, particularly in relation to young people. Preparing young people for the spiritual life is not a straightforward process. While we can take his suggestion of 'receptivity and openness' of the individual towards religious faith as a guide, *how* we navigate and encourage this disposition, while also having an openness towards God's grace, appears to be paradoxical and is not a straightforward process. Incidentally, as I touched upon earlier, the theme of paradox in relation to faith was identified by Kierkegaard (and Weil) as an important component of religious faith.

However, despite the complexity in religious faith formation, Kierkegaard's insights into a complex area of human experience remains remarkable. Kierkegaard's work does not attempt to reduce the complexity of human experience (particularly religious experience) into a simplistic formula. His work tackles the complex journey that individuals can make, not only towards self-fulfilment and meaning (aesthetic and ethical), but also through their *leap of faith* into the experience of God and the transcendence that can be uncertain and paradoxical.

Kierkegaard explores the wide range of human experiences, the aesthetic, ethical and religious, giving us insights into how each of these can play out in a person's life, as well pointing out their limitations. His descriptions and elucidations of these processes highlight the importance of what *it can mean to be a human person within a wider framework of transcendence*. To this end, his work is valuable in helping educators become aware of some behaviours of young

⁷⁰ Torrance, "Can A Person Prepare to Become a Christian? A Kierkegaardian Response," 211.

people which may show in any of these stages. These potentialities of personal growth may germinate in the life of a student in our classrooms. These insights can provide some useful signposts of where young people may be, and where they might potentially *move towards*. Of course, Kierkegaard provides a theoretical account; in what follows I will explore some of the empirical research on faith development.

6.3 *Empirical research on faith development*

James Fowler's work on Faith Development Theory (FDT) has influenced the work of many practitioners and scholars in the field of religious education for over 30 years.⁷¹ Fowler outlined spiritual development from early childhood till late adulthood. Fowler drew on theorists such as the psychosocial aspects of Erik Erikson, the cognitive structural works of Piaget, and Kohlberg's moral development.⁷² He understood faith development as a synthesis of cognitive and moral reasoning which make up parts of what he termed the "stages" of faith. Hence, faith is understood in the broad sense not as accumulation of content, but rather as a 'universal activity' of making meaning and a way of seeing and experiencing the world.⁷³

According to Fowler, faith is understood to occur within six stages which are hierarchal and sequential. These include Stage 0: Primal Faith, Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith, Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith, Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith, Stage 4: Individual-Reflective Faith, Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith, and Stage 6: Universalizing Faith. The titles of these stages are generally suggestive of the processes involved. For our purposes Stages 3 and 4 are

⁷¹See for example, Stephen Parker, "Research in Fowler's Faith Development Theory: A Review Article," *Review of Religious Research* 51, no. 3 (2010), 233; Kalevi Tamminen, "Comparing Oser's and Fowler's Developmental Stages," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 7 no. 2 (1994): 75–112.

⁷²For example, see: Jean Piaget, *Piaget's Theory* (1970), 710-32 in Carmichael's *Manual of Child Psychology*, 3rd Ed., Vol. 1, ed. Paul Mussen (New York: John Wiley & Sons. Redmore, C. & J. Loevinger. 1979); Erik Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton,1968); Lawrence Kohlberg, *Moral Stages and Moralization* (1976), 31-53 in *Moral Development and Behavior*, ed. Thomas Lickona (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston).

⁷³Parker, "Research in Fowler's Faith Development Theory: A Review Article," 234.

relevant. Stage 3 includes childhood and beyond; the individual is still reliant on role models and authority but is moving towards more personal understandings and meanings. Stage 4, Individual-Reflective faith, is late adolescence/young adulthood and beyond. The individual begins to question the notion of faith by their parents and authority structures and develops a personal understanding. An awareness of different perspectives emerges. Stage 5 emerges in mid-life and includes the ability to appreciate differences, understand symbols and move beyond the exclusive rational modes of knowing, which is reminiscent of Rohr's second half of life and also the aims of Caranfa's contemplative classroom. Stage 6 are the rare individuals whose deep faith makes them the pioneers who challenge society, such as Gandhi and Luther.

As Stephen Parker explains:

After nearly thirty-five years the empirical support for FDT continues to present a mixed picture. While there are some intriguing and well-designed studies that directly address the validity of Fowler's claims (e.g., Driedger 1998; Snarey 1991), most research continues to assume a face-validity to FDT and thus neglects some basic questions that have not been resolved. Furthermore, FDT research continues to be hampered by the length and overly cognitive emphases of its chief operational measure. Shorter measures also suffer from neglect of the affective and relational dimensions as well as from lack of good reliability and validity data. Clearly, a central need for future research is the development of a shorter, reliable, and valid measure of FDT.⁷⁴

While many scholars within the field of religious and pastoral education have drawn on Fowler's stages of faith, as illustrated by Stephen Parker, there are many limitations to his model.⁷⁵ Parker highlights Fowler's methodology as open to question. His use of short interviews, numerous forced choice questionnaires, and a written essay, Parker claims, are problematic regarding the efficacy of accurate results.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Fowler's claim that his

⁷⁴ Parker, "Research in Fowler's Faith Development Theory," 246.

⁷⁵ Parker, "Research in Fowler's Faith Development Theory"; See also Adrian Coyle, "Critical Responses to Faith Development Theory: A Useful Agenda for Change?" *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 33, no. 3 (2011): 281–298.

⁷⁶ Parker, "Research in Fowler's Faith Development Theory," 235.

model has universal appeal has been critiqued. Philip Baxter has argued that from a Vygotskian view, the Piagetian influence regarding the core of faith development theory can be said to have missed the cultural impact on mental concepts and cognition.⁷⁷ It is important to note that since Piaget's work has been published it has also received serious criticisms in regard to its approach and method.⁷⁸ Additionally, as Adrian Coyle points out, in his later writings Piaget moved away from a set phase structure.⁷⁹

Coyle highlights Fowler's reliance on the cognitive and moral dimensions of thinking within each stage of faith (drawn from Piaget and Kohlberg), which he claims have been critiqued for omitting the relational and affective dimensions of faith. Some feminists claim that Fowler ignores the feminine way of relating to the divine. This is characterised not only by cognition, but also a more fluid, relational, emotive, and imaginative approach to faith.⁸⁰ Coyle highlights research on women's faith development that found that processes were more conversational, including more references to metaphors and narrative, and a personalised approach.⁸¹ Others have noted that women tended to embrace a more process orientation of faith, which is different to the hierarchal and sequential stages proposed by Fowler.⁸² Furthermore, Kohlberg's work on moral development (which Fowler draws on) has also been critiqued for its exclusion of the feminine. Carol Gilligan, for example, in her publication, *A Different Voice*, argued this point by exploring moral maturity in women.⁸³

⁷⁷ Philip Baxter, "From Ubuzungu to Ubuntu: Resources for pastoral counselling in a Bantu context," (PhD diss., Kimmage Mission Institute of Theology and Culture, Milltown Institute, Dublin, 2006): 103-104 in Coyle, "Critical Responses to Faith Development Theory, 292.

⁷⁸ Coyle, "Critical Responses to Faith Development Theory," 286.

⁷⁹ Baxter, "From Ubuzungu to Ubuntu," 103-104 in Coyle, "Critical Responses to Faith Development Theory," 292.

⁸⁰ Coyle, "Critical Responses to Faith Development Theory," 291.

⁸¹ Coyle, "Critical Responses to Faith Development Theory," 287.

⁸² Coyle, "Critical Responses to Faith Development Theory," 287.

⁸³ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982).

The issues discussed above point to the complexity of Fowler's project in attempting to measure 'religiosity' by drawing on the various development theories. This is a difficult and complex project. Firstly, due to the contentious notion of 'religiosity.' Whether religiosity is necessarily found within the domains of cognition, intuition, moral behaviour or beyond, is a debate that has existed amongst scholars for millennia, and is not easily resolved.⁸⁴ Secondly, as alluded to, can the signposts (or stages) of universal meanings be applied to all cultures? One could argue that Fowler's work falls short of the complexity of faith, and some Christian scholars have critiqued Fowler, claiming that we cannot apply developmental theory on what is a gift from God. Faith, John McDargh argues, is not found within theories, but is ultimately a gift from God known as grace.⁸⁵ Likewise, Fowler's structural description of faith fails to include the spiritual experiences of what mystics have termed the dark night of the soul. Here the religious adherent can ambiguously encounter experiences of doubt in their faith over a period and remain faithful to the religious tradition. This subtle and paradoxical spiritual experience been documented by well-known mystics such John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila.⁸⁶ Additionally, while it appears that Fowler's Stages 3 and 4 are the most relevant to

⁸⁴ The question of what it means to be 'religious' has engaged scholars and believers for some time. Likewise, how religious faith is expressed; rationally, emotionally, intuitively or through moral behaviour is also a complex and debated issue. These questions move into the realm of the Philosophy of Religion. However, its origins are in the Gospels. When the Pharisees asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul. Equally love your neighbour as yourself." Mark: 2:30-3. (NIV). Likewise, Jesus hints at responding to this question also through his parables and sermons. For example, The Beatitude alludes to how to be 'religious.' Jesus points to qualities such as meekness, peacemaker and the 'poor in spirit.' Furthermore, from Søren Kierkegaard to Thomas Merton, religious thinkers have tried to work out what Jesus meant by these teachings and what constitutes religiosity in the general sense. Kierkegaard argued strongly for a movement away of the reliance on the church for moral and religious guidance towards an existential and personal aspect of faith. His understanding of personal faith and 'religiosity' encompasses but essentially transcends 'reasoning' or logic and adherence to church dogma or teaching. See, for example, Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Merton also thought personal faith was essential and tended to be critical of the focus on moralism. He argued that spirituality and the experience with the divine should be the focus of religious faith that could lead to a moral and ethical life. See, for example, Thomas Merton, *The New Man* (London: Bloomsbury), 116. These elucidations do not answer the question of what it means to be religious but are only brief reflections on what is a complex issue.

⁸⁵ John McDargh, "Faith Development Theory and The Postmodern Problem of Foundations," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11, no. 3 (2001): 185–199.

⁸⁶ David Lewis, *The Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross* (New York: Burns & Oates, 2002); E. Allison Peers and Edgar Silverio, *The Complete Works of St Teresa of Jesus* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1978).

religious education, there do not appear to be any concrete or suggested approaches on *how* to engage students in their faith development. More importantly, how relevant is Fowler's work to the demographics today, where largely speaking the student body, even within a Christian institution, claims not to subscribe to any religious beliefs?⁸⁷

Nevertheless, we can see Fowler's work as not definitive but still of some use in attempting to outline a complex process. While having some limitations, Fowler's developmental stages can be viewed as useful signposts in helping us understand how faith might possibly develop within an individual over a lifetime that can guide educators. To his credit, Fowler humbly claims that his theory isn't without limits, and should not be adopted dogmatically, but rather approached tentatively and even "playfully." He writes:

Theories can be exciting and powerful, giving us names for our experiences ... They can also become blinders, limiting our ability to see only those features of the phenomena what we can name and account for...In that gentle warning there is a kind of double faith— faith that we can in some measure grasp, clarify and work effectively with the most vital process of our lives, but also faith that the reality of any such complex process will not be exhaustively contained in our theoretical frameworks.⁸⁸

Other scholars have described the process of faith and spiritual development in several ways, such as in demonstrating a list of characteristics. In other words, they have identified a number of descriptors which they claim are indicative of a religious and spiritual life and have attempted to show the various ways young people demonstrate these. Kathleen Engebretson has written extensively about religious and faith formation and argues that that spirituality of young people is evident at least within the Australian Catholic school context. Like Crawford and Rossiter, she claims that while most young people do not consider themselves as 'religious'

⁸⁷ This trend has been observed anecdotally and noted by scholars. For example, see Jones, Marion D. "Youth Decline in Church Growth and Attendance" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2020); Mackay, Hugh. *Beyond Belief* (Sydney, New South Wales: Macmillan, 2016).

⁸⁸ James, W, Fowler. W. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. 1st ed. (Blackburn, Vic: Dove Communications, 198), xiii.

in the traditional sense, they still demonstrate a level of spirituality in the broad sense.⁸⁹ She defines this in the following ways:

Spirituality is experience of the sacred other, which is accompanied by feelings of wonder, joy, love, trust and hope. Spirituality enhances connectedness within the self, with others and the world... Spirituality may be expressed in relationships, prayer, ... rituals ... service. Spirituality may be named in new and re-defined ways, or through beliefs, rituals, symbols.⁹⁰

Engebretson goes on to demonstrate, in *Connecting: Teenage Boys, Spirituality and Religious Education*, how teenage boys in Catholic schools show evidence of 'spirituality.'⁹¹ She claims these spiritual traits are demonstrated in some of the following ways: 1) aspirations of hope for a future career, 2) looking towards role models within family and community, 3) challenging societal notions of masculinity, 4) developing important friendships, 5) private prayer, and finally, 6) the experiences of the 'fullness of life.'⁹²

While some of these characteristics above may point to Engebretson's broad definition of spirituality, these may be suggestive rather than conclusive. One can argue most of these visible traits or behaviours may be attributed to the normal psychological developmental stages of young boys (observed by many theorists) rather than necessarily evidence of spirituality. Furthermore, Engebretson makes some inferences that cannot be totally justified. For example, she connects the experience of what she describes the 'fullness of life' to inferring that this indicates spirituality and a belief in God. She writes, "Experiences of the fullness of life ... were not necessarily named as experiences of God. However, there was enough evidence to

⁸⁹ Kathleen Engebretson, Richard Michael Rymarz, and Joe Fleming, *Thriving as an RE Teacher: A Handbook for Secondary Education* (Australia: Social Science Press, 2002), 34–35.

⁹⁰ Kathleen Engebretson, *Connecting: Teenage Boys, Spirituality and Religious Education* (Australia: St Pauls Publication, 2007), 206–207.

⁹¹ Engebretson, *Connecting: Teenage Boys, Spirituality and Religious Education*.

⁹² Engebretson, *Connecting: Teenage Boys, Spirituality and Religious Education*.

suggest that boys can and do experience the presence of God in their lives ...”⁹³ Engebretson’s inferences here are open to criticism. There are many people today, for example, who claim to experience the ‘fullness of life’ without any reference to a belief in God, religion, or spirituality. Moreover, many of the characteristics of spirituality cannot be a conclusive test of a person’s spirituality or ‘religiosity’ (which she also connects to belief in God). Many people today do not claim to believe in God, religion or even to be ‘spiritual’ and still demonstrate many of the characteristics put forward, such as service, importance of relationships, feelings of wonder, joy, love, trust and hope and even the ‘sacredness’ of life.

While Engebretson’s definitions and behaviours observed can give us some indication of ‘spirituality’ as it is broadly defined, it cannot, however, offer us conclusive findings or evidence. Finally, Engebretson’s huge task is riddled with similar challenges faced by anyone trying to define the complex phenomena of spirituality and religiosity, which as alluded to, have been topics of debate amongst theologians for centuries.

Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter claim that spirituality of young people has changed over the past 50 years, as a result of many cultural shifts, particularly in the West. For example, the introduction of mass media in informing stories that influence personal and societal meanings, the hegemony of science and its discard of religion, and the pluralism from which students can gain access to personal meaning.⁹⁴ Although these observations were 10 years ago, anecdotal evidence tells us that they are still relevant amongst young people. Moreover, a recent study

⁹³ Engebretson, *Connecting: Teenage Boys, Spirituality and Religious Education*, 206–207.

⁹⁴ Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter, “Teaching Wisdom: Religious Education and the Moral and Spiritual Development of Young People,” *Journal of Christian Education*, no. 101 (1991): 47–63; Graham Rossiter, “Perspective on Contemporary Spirituality: Implications for Religious Education in Catholic Schools,” *International Studies in Catholic Education* 2, no. 2 (2010): 129–147, doi:10.1080/19422539.2010.504019.

on the spirituality of young people today found similar attitudes.⁹⁵ The authors describe their findings in the following way:

The study found that there were quite a few teenagers who were moving between alternative patterns of belief. It concluded: Most of this movement appears to be away from traditional spirituality, either towards eclectic blends of traditional and alternative spiritualities, or more frequently in the direction of secular indifference (Mason et al., 2006, p. 95).⁹⁶

While all these theories offer us some understanding of how young people engage in religious and spiritual issues, as we can see, they are not conclusive or in agreement. Another question to consider is *how effective are these theories that inform best practice within Religious Education (RE)?*⁹⁷ Engebretson claims that RE needs to encourage inquiry, critical and open questioning. She writes, "...students need to be encouraged to be inquirers in religious education as in other subjects in the curriculum ..."⁹⁸ If we take the research on the effectiveness of RE to engage young people it would seem, at least in Australia and the UK, that this subject is in need of great reform.

⁹⁵ Philip Hughes and Stephen Reid, "How Australian Young People Understand and Experience God and The Influences on Their Thinking: A Review of Secondary Research and Literature Study" (repr., Nunawading: Christian Research Association, 2019), <https://younglife.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Young-Peoples-Understanding-and-Experience-of-God-Literature-Review-....pdf>.

⁹⁶ Hughes and Reid, "How Australian Young People Understand and Experience God and The Influences on Their Thinking," 6.

⁹⁷ It is important to note studies that show a decline in church attendance amongst young people. RE educators and pastoral ministers need to examine this trend carefully and reflect on how to reshape their work in relation to these trends. See, Leslie J. Francis, Gemma Penny, and Ruth Powell, "Assessing Peer and Parental Influence on the Religious Attitudes and Attendance of Young Churchgoers: Exploring the Australian National Church Life Survey," *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 39, no. 1 (2016): 57–72.

⁹⁸ Engebretson et al., *Thriving as an RE Teacher*, 35.

6.4 Religious Education in secondary schools today

While Engebretson's comments hold some ideal aims for Religious Education (RE), the literature on this area, broadly speaking, suggests that this is not occurring and young people are not engaging in this subject. If the studies I present in what follows are correct, then this could potentially pose difficulty for the relevance and appeal of Caranfa's model, which has some similar aims to RE. Some what follows is also included in my work, "Should Philosophy be the tool for Inquiry-Based learning in Religious Education?"⁹⁹

Over the past 10 years many scholars have written about the failure of RE to engage students effectively in the classroom.¹⁰⁰ Some of the reasons proposed are a lack of adequate teacher training (including skills and knowledge of the subject area), and inadequate resources (this includes time to teach the subject, and relevant, appropriate and agreed upon pedagogy).¹⁰¹ James Conroy's work, for example, has revealed some serious problems in RE regarding engagement and RE literacy. Drawing on his recent ethnographic studies of over 24 schools in the UK, he observed that RE literacy of students within schools was in sharp decline.¹⁰² He concluded that this has serious implications for overall student learning and engagement in this subject.¹⁰³ Conroy's research has led him to state that teaching and learning of RE is under pressure and largely speaking is in need of change, with teachers often under resourced and

⁹⁹ Rosemary Laoulach, "Should Philosophy be the tool for Inquiry-Based learning in Religious Education?" *Religion & Education* 48, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2021.1932399>.

¹⁰⁰ For example, see James C. Conroy, David Lundie, and Vivienne Baumfield, "Failures Of Meaning In Religious Education," *Journal Of Beliefs & Values* 33, no. 3 (2012): 309-323, doi:10.1080/13617672.2012.732812; Philip L. Barnes, "What is Wrong with the Phenomenological Approach to Religious Education?," *Religious Education* 96, no. 4 (2001): 445-461, doi:10.1080/003440801753442366; M. Grimmit, ed., *Pedagogies Of Religious Education: Case Studies In The Research And Development Of Good Pedagogic Practice In RE* (London: McCrimmon Publishing, 2000); Aaron J. Ghiloni, "Interreligious Education: What Would Dewey Do?" *Religious Education* 106, no. 5 (2011): 476-93.

¹⁰¹ See Peter Gilmour regarding his observation regarding a lack of adequate teacher training in Catholic schools. Peter Gilmour, "Educating the Educators: A Fifty-Year Retrospective of Religious Education in the Catholic Context," *Religious Education* 110, no. 5 (2015): 555-68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2015.1089727>.

¹⁰² James Conroy, "Religious Illiteracy in School Religious Education," *In Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, 1st ed. (Bristol, United Kingdom: Policy Press, 2015), 167, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1t89c7n.14>.

¹⁰³ Conroy, "Religious Illiteracy in School Religious Education," 167.

lacking adequate knowledge.¹⁰⁴ Conroy concludes that a subject that espouses meaning ironically fails to demonstrate this for students.¹⁰⁵ He writes the following:

Religious Education teachers often felt under exceptional pressure, significant numbers of them appeared to be insufficiently sophisticated in their understanding of religion, resources varied enormously but were, most especially in the common school, often inadequate and the examination system acted in ways that were unlikely to conduce to effective learning ... During a conversation with students in Northwest, that is to some extent corroborated in our student questionnaire responses, they unequivocally ranked RE very low when compared to subjects such as English, Maths and Physics ...¹⁰⁶

Stephen Lloyd was part of an extensive study in 2013 which included over 400 schools, and concluded that RE needed extensive reform in England. Lloyd's findings revealed that RE programs were mostly undermined and not adequately supported by schools, authorities with little time for RE, and there was inadequate teacher training.¹⁰⁷ Lloyd argued that RE plays a significant role in addressing cultural diversity needs in England and was a necessary subject within the UK education system. These findings were reiterated in a more recent report published in 2018 in England from *The Commission On Religious Education* which found there had been few improvements in RE since the study in 2013, and in fact in many cases, RE was in a worse situation.¹⁰⁸ This recent study was extensive, and interviewed many educators, students and pastoral workers across the country, collecting data over a period of two years.¹⁰⁹ Some of their findings on secondary education in 2018 included the following:

¹⁰⁴ Conroy, "Religious Illiteracy in School Religious Education," 220.

¹⁰⁵ Conroy, "Religious Illiteracy in School Religious Education," 226; also see, Conroy, Lundie, and Baumfield, "Failures of Meaning in Religious Education," 317.

¹⁰⁶ Conroy, "Religious Illiteracy in School Religious Education," 220, 226.

¹⁰⁷ Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), *Religious Education: Realising the Potential* (Manchester: Ofsted, 2013).

¹⁰⁸ Commission on Religious Education (CORE), *Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward, A National Plan for RE* (London: CORE, 2019).

¹⁰⁹ Over 2,200 responses from a wide range of individuals and organisations with an interest in RE were gathered. This included qualitative written responses and oral evidence. An Interim report was also published in September 2017. See Commission on Religious Education, *Interim Report: Religious Education for All* (London: CORE, 2017), 19. www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Commission-on-Religious-Education-Interim-Report-2017.pdf.

1. Only 53.6% of RE teachers had relevant qualifications. This was considered one of the main factors contributing to the quality of RE in the 2013 report.
2. There was a sharp decline in RE chosen by pupils for Key Stage 4 from 260,300 in 2018, down from a high of 433,750 in 2011.
3. There were disparities in the quality of RE between religious and nonreligious schools.¹¹⁰

The *Commission On Religious Education* proposed a new curriculum to address some of the problems they found, which is outlined in the *Final Report, Religions and Worldviews: The way forward: A national plan for religious education*.¹¹¹ Their new approach echoes a similarity to the previous curriculum in its phenomenological framework.¹¹² Leni Franken and Patrick Loobuyck's observations are correct in claiming that most schools in the West today have replaced a predominately confessional approach with a non-confessional and phenomenological framework for RE.¹¹³ Franken and Loobuyck also point out that this shift in pedagogy is still heavily debated in many Western countries.¹¹⁴ The changing sociological landscape in the UK and Western Europe, as well as the limitations of the confessional approach, meant that the phenomenological approach was viewed as the answer to RE's problems.¹¹⁵ However, as I will briefly point out, the phenomenological approach has inherent problems and limitations in fully engaging students in RE and has been rightly criticised by scholars for some time. As Patricia Hannam and Gert Biesta write:

¹¹⁰ Commission on Religious Education, *Religion and Worldviews*, 21–23.

¹¹¹ Commission on Religious Education, *Religion and Worldviews*.

¹¹² There are debates about the meaning of the term 'phenomenology of religion' regarding its inquiry and methodology which are not within the scope here to explore. However, it is important to point out that the understanding of phenomenology in RE currently taught and discussed in these studies are distinct from the philosophical phenomenology derived from Husserl's Phenomenological Movement. For further clarification, see Jonathan Tuckett, "Clarifying Phenomenologies in The Study of Religion: Separating Kristensen and Van Der Leeuw from Otto and Eliade," *Religion* 46, no. 1, (2016): 75-101.

¹¹³ Leni Franken and Patrick Loobuyck, "Neutrality and Impartiality In RE: An Impossible Aim?" *British Journal of Religious Education* 39, no. 1 (2016): 1–6, doi:10.1080/01416200.2016.1218219.

¹¹⁴ Franken and Loobuyck, "Neutrality and Impartiality In RE: An Impossible Aim?"

¹¹⁵ Franken and Loobuyck, "Neutrality and Impartiality In RE: An Impossible Aim?"

What it means to live a life with a world view is objectified as something to be studied; any question as to the significance of living a life with a religious orientation in existential terms is missing from the report.¹¹⁶

As illustrated above, Hannam and Biesta are critical of the recent changes to the new curriculum in England, arguing that it has little insight into how the existential questions and issues will be engaged with by both teachers and students. Likewise, Philip Barnes has been a strong opponent of the phenomenological approach for some time and has argued, like Hannam and Biesta, that it has failed to engage students in the deep religious questions.¹¹⁷ Additionally, Franken and Loobuyck also point out the lack of adequate training of RE teachers, which poses problems in its delivery. They claim that there is confusion regarding some of the understanding of the phenomenological approach and its underlying concepts amongst educators and in government policy documents. For example, the notion of epistemological understanding of key terms such as ‘neutral, objective, descriptive, critical and pluralistic’ is often unclear.

The observations of Philip Barnes, Andrew Wright, and Aaron J. Ghiloni still apply today and agree with the insights of scholars mentioned above.¹¹⁸ These writers claimed that the phenomenological approach had not delivered the educational outcomes it had hoped for (historically in replacing the confessional approach). I would agree with their critique in claiming that the phenomenological approach has huge limitations, mostly due to its emphasis

¹¹⁶ Patricia Hannam and Gert Biesta, “Religious Education, A Matter of Understanding? Reflections On the Final Report of The Commission on Religious Education,” *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 40, no. 1 (2019): 60, doi:10.1080/13617672.2018.1554330.

¹¹⁷ Philip Barnes, “What is Wrong with the Phenomenological Approach to Religious Education?” *Religious Education* 96, no. 4 (2001): 445-461, doi:10.1080/003440801753442366; See also, Philip Barnes, *Crisis, Controversy and the Future of Religious Education* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

¹¹⁸ Andrew Wright, “The Contours of Critical Religious Education: Knowledge, Wisdom, Truth,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 25, no. 4 (2003): 279-291, doi:10.1080/0141620030250403; Aaron J. Ghiloni, “Interreligious Education: What would Dewey do?” *Religious Education* 106, no. 5 (2011): 476–493.

on content with little room for questioning and dialogue.¹¹⁹ Ghiloni has rightly pointed out that, in an age of relativism, the accumulation of ‘facts’ about religion without any critical understanding of its meaning is a huge limitation.¹²⁰ Barnes, likewise, claims that its apparent secular approach inhibits a meaningful dialogue that address existential concerns.¹²¹ Michael Grimmitt too argues:

... the broad, liberal educational value that the model attributes to the study of religion, including its capacity to address the personal and existential concerns of the pupil, is largely absent, and consequently phenomenology has become a byword for a narrowly descriptive and content-centered approach to teaching RE ...¹²²

Barnes’ recent work *Crisis, Controversy and the Future of Religious Education*, as the title suggests, gives a critical assessment of the state of RE in England.¹²³ He examines critically the pedagogy, reports and research into RE, and claims that much of the discussion remains inadequate in addressing what he describes as a ‘crisis’ in RE. Barnes articulates his concerns in the following way.

It is on this basis that it can be confidently concluded that none of the suggested efforts to overcome the weaknesses are likely to be wholly successful. This is because the kinds of radical solutions that could work challenge too many ‘hallowed’ assumptions and would require a more critical, reflexive attitude to the beliefs and commitments that have shaped and continue to shape current theory and practice. For the most part, critical debates that characterise other disciplines and fields of study are largely absent from religious education, yet it is through such debates that genuine progress can be made. There is a range of factors that inhibit debate in British religious education, particularly debate and criticism of current policy and theory.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Wright, “The Contours of Critical Religious Education”; Ghiloni, “Interreligious Education”; Barnes, “What is Wrong with the Phenomenological Approach to Religious Education?”; Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, xvi-xx.

¹²⁰ Ghiloni, “Interreligious Education: What would Dewey do?”

¹²¹ Barnes, “What is Wrong with the Phenomenological Approach to Religious Education?”

¹²² Michael Grimmitt, “Contemporary Pedagogies of Religious Education: What Are They?” in *Pedagogies of Religious Education: Case Studies in the Development of Good Pedagogic Practice*, ed. Michael Grimmitt (Great Wakering, Essex: McCrimmons 2000a), 24–52, 28.

¹²³ Barnes, *Crisis, Controversy and the Future of Religious Education*.

¹²⁴ Barnes, *Crisis, Controversy and the Future of Religious Education*, 192.

It is not in the scope here to discuss in depth issues discussed above, but rather to point out that while most schools testify to the importance of RE, some of the research would suggest that this is not fully demonstrated within classrooms, at least in the UK and Australia. If the findings of these researchers represent an accurate picture, or even a partial one of RE today, this questions the adequacy of theories which inform RE or faith development. *It also calls into question the need for further research into approaches to RE and faith formation which engage students in meaningful questions and work towards holistic learning.*

However, one must not forget that while RE has its problems, in principle its aims remain an important subject for young people today. Despite the various approaches in its pedagogy and definition, RE, broadly speaking, claims implicitly and explicitly that the human person is more than material, but also spiritual, and that education is more than just gaining practical skills for employment. As discussed earlier, this is in line with the assumptions of both Caranfa and Weil, that education is about spiritual and religious matters, and in this light, we can see how their approach to education may help to inform some of the practices and discussions on pedagogy. As Parker argues:

...However, those inclined to look elsewhere for models of spiritual or religious development with more empirical support will not find the picture any better, and often not as well supported as Fowler's model. Whether FDT will inspire a new generation of researchers that can overcome these problems and provide more definitive answers regarding the claims of FDT or whether FDT will continue to limp along with suggestive, but inconclusive support is yet to be seen.¹²⁵

The inconclusiveness on the approach on faith development and the state RE has implications to the applicability and relevance of both Caranfa and Weil's model of contemplation. Both

¹²⁵ Parker, "Research in Fowler's Faith Development Theory," 246.

Weil and Caranfa assume the receptivity of young people to engage in the contemplative ideas and practices they propose; as we have seen this remains a challenge. The complication of not only demographics of a largely secular student body, but also the inclusiveness of theories on faith development in young people, all highlights the difficulty in assuming that young people are open and willing to engage in the contemplative practices suggested by Caranfa.

Nevertheless, despite the challenge of how their ideas can be applied in a modern-day context, Caranfa's and Weil's ideas are important in providing a meaningful framework within education. RE pedagogy largely speaking also attempts to achieve similar goals; as we have seen, further research needs to be done in this area. Caranfa's model of contemplation may indeed fill in a gap within the literature of best practice in RE, and also the model which I hope to outline in the following chapters. While Caranfa's model is not comprehensive in its approach, nor specifically intended for RE (but for education more generally) it may contribute to the ongoing discussion of best practice within RE. In the next section, we see how the effects of neoliberalism at large pose negative influences on the aims of holistic education, and therefore the contemplative approach advocated by Caranfa.

6.5 Neoliberal agenda within education and its clash with a contemplative framework

As considered in Chapter 1, the broader political and ideological framework, which is commonly referred to today as neoliberalism, might be another significant factor which incorporates both implicit and explicit values that do not lend themselves to the recognition of silence or contemplative practices as a legitimate type of discourse within the West. Neoliberalism can be defined, broadly speaking, as an economic system whereby the free

market is the pivotal factor affecting many social and political aspects within a society. As

Michael Sandel writes:

If the only advantage to affluence were the ability to buy yachts ... inequalities of income and wealth would not matter very much. But as money comes to buy more and more – political influence, good medical care ... elite schools ... the distribution of income and wealth looms larger and larger. Where all good things are bought and sold, having money makes all the difference in the world ... So to decide where the market belongs, and where it should be kept at a distance, we have to decide how to value the goods in question—health, education, family life, nature, art, civic duties and so on. These are moral and political questions, not merely economic ones. To resolve them, we have to debate, case by case, the moral meaning of these goods and the proper way of valuing them. This debate we didn't have during the era of market triumphalism. As a result, without quite realising it, without ever deciding to do so, we drifted from *having* a market economy to *being* a market society. The difference is this: A market economy is a tool – a valuable and effective tool – for organising productive activity. A market society is a way of life in which market values seep into every aspect of human endeavour. It's a place where social relations are made over in the image of the market.¹²⁶

Sandel's work, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, examines the phenomenon of economic rationalism as a focal point in education and all society. He contends while economics has its functional place, we have moved from “*having* a market economy to *being* a market society.” As he highlights, this has critical implications for equity and our democracy. I would agree with Sandel's comments. Economic thinking alone cannot facilitate the needed discussions around truth, wisdom, happiness, the purpose of education and democracy.

As noted in Chapter 1, many researchers have written on the ideology of neoliberalism, which is deemed to be a hindrance rather than a positive influence on education.¹²⁷ These scholars argue against the pervasive and negative influences of neoliberalism on education. Pierre

¹²⁶ Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (London: Penguin 2013), 8, 10–11.

¹²⁷ For references, see pages 24–25 in Chapter 1.

Bourdieu, for example, argues that this framework has filtered throughout the language of discourse within education and is reflected within the bureaucratic nature of the state.¹²⁸ Ewan Ingleby describes the effects of neoliberalism in the UK as evident through the regulation of the state (such as OFSTED) responding to the market forces and the growth in bureaucratic roles.¹²⁹ This has resulted in a division amongst the teaching profession about best practice, with increased pressure experienced by educators.¹³⁰ Likewise, many teachers in NSW have expressed their concerns over pressures imposed by bodies such as NESA, who increasingly require unrealistic administrative duties that take them away from focused attention on classroom teaching. The recent demonstrations and strikes by teachers in NSW are an example of these concerns. As revealed below, Ingleby concludes that the neoliberal approach has resulted in diminished quality of education. She states:

Moreover, the interventionist nature of neoliberalism witnesses a generation of bureaucratic standards attempting to regulate the early years educational context. The resulting labyrinth of professional practice may be characterized by fragmentation and discord ... This draws attention to the moral criticisms of the neoliberal approach to education. Coffield (2006) argues for a return to the Platonic notion of 'philosopher kings' who make policies based on expertise. The moral objection to neoliberalism within education rests in a series of policies that are based on economy and heavy-handed managerialism. Such approaches are less likely to 'draw individuals out of themselves to look at the world in a different way'.¹³¹

Martha Nussbaum argues that neoliberalism and its utilitarian approach is a narrow framework within education, with an emphasis on 'usefulness' and 'impact' in the economic sense, and is devoid of education of the 'whole person' (especially that espoused by Dewey).¹³² As shown

¹²⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction : A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

¹²⁹ Ingleby, "Teaching Policy and Practice."

¹³⁰ Ingleby, "Teaching Policy and Practice."

¹³¹ Ingleby, "Teaching Policy and Practice," 127.

¹³² Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 128.

below, Nussbaum concludes that the neglect of the arts and humanities has negative consequences for the development of the person, interpersonal relationships and democracy. Nussbaum's critique of neoliberalism in relation to its neglect of the arts and humanity in favour of 'usefulness' has ramifications for how silence and contemplation can be recognised and harnessed within the classroom. For Caranfa, silence is experienced through the arts, which leads to self-transformation and development of the 'whole person.' Nussbaum and Caranfa would both view the neglect of the arts and humanities as having a detrimental effect on the development of the 'whole person', which equally continues in our education system today. As Nussbaum explains:

If the real clash of civilizations is, as I believe, a clash within the individual soul, as greed and narcissism contend against respect and love, all modern societies are rapidly losing the battle, as they feed the forces that lead to violence and dehumanization and fail to feed the forces that lead to cultures of equality and respect. If we do not insist on the crucial importance of the humanities and the arts, they will drop away, because they do not make money. They only do what is much more precious than that, make a world that is worth living in, people who are able to see other human beings as full people, with thoughts and feelings of their own that deserve respect and empathy, and nations that are able to overcome fear and suspicion in favor of sympathetic and reasoned debate.¹³³

If these observations on the effects of neoliberalism on education are accurate, then how we incorporate contemplative education is a challenge. As discussed in Chapter 1, a growing amount of literature has emerged in recent years, reacting against the fast-paced culture focused on profit. For example, these trends are reflected in the 'Slow Movement,' with mindfulness, meditation, and books all advocating an emphasis and importance on slowness.¹³⁴ The literature here emphasises the need to operate more 'slowly' and mindfully to enhance deep

¹³³ Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 143.

¹³⁴ For citations see Chapter 1.

thinking and wellbeing. Based on these observations, a contemplative classroom would be of great benefit.

Likewise, we can extend Weil's notion (discussed in Chapter 5) to argue for the need for 'slow reading.'¹³⁵ The busyness evident within classrooms today often leads to an emphasis on efficiency and outcomes, forgetting the need for slow and reflective reading. This idea, for example, is also examined in Michelle Boulous Walker's work *Slow Philosophy*.¹³⁶ Walker proposes that slow reading is a vital skill for deep thinking, which is increasingly eroded within modern educational institutions.¹³⁷

The neoliberal and capitalist approach adopted by policymakers today, which affects education, civic life, and society in general, has not only resulted in a fast-paced culture observed by researchers, but also challenged issues related to equity and democracy.¹³⁸ The Gospel message of love which espouses compassion towards the marginalised and poor, supported by Catholic social justice teachings and religious traditions in general, is also challenged by neoliberal principles.¹³⁹

As noted in Chapter 1, social researcher Hugh Mackay speaks to the social inequities in Australia. He paints a provocative picture of Australian society, highlighting the growing gap between the rich and poor, the increase in people living below the poverty line, and upsurges

¹³⁵ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1951).

¹³⁶ Michelle Boulous Walker, *Slow Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018). The book *Slow Professor* also advocates for a rejection of the efficiency and profit focused culture in higher education and a return to an awareness of the need to operate 'slowly' to enhance creativity and inventiveness. See, Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber, *The Slow Professor* (Toronto: University of University Press, 2018).

¹³⁷ Walker, *Slow Philosophy*.

¹³⁸ For example, see: Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*. The rate of anxiety and depression amongst young people particularly in the West has increased over the past 50 years leaving the need for contemplation even more vital for our wellbeing. See Martin Seligman, *Flourish* (Sydney: Random House Australia, 2012), 223.

¹³⁹ See Chapter 9 for citations.

in anxiety and depression, all impacting the social fabric of society.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, as recalled, a study on poverty that supports Mackay's work conducted by the University of NSW and Australian Council of Social Service in 2020, found that 3.24 million people in Australia (13.6% of the population) lived below the poverty line. These were trends observed prior to the COVID outbreak. This study showed 774,000 children under the age of 15 years living in poverty. This figure of poverty exceeds the number in OECD nations.¹⁴¹ These figures point to the growing social inequity in Australia, which is a result of conscious economic policy, or what we might refer as the effects of neoliberalism more broadly.

Likewise, Beverley Clack's recent work, *How to Be a Failure and Still Live Well*, examines the idea of success and failure within a current culture that prizes economic success over living the attributes of the 'good life'.¹⁴² She proposes that we must reimagine what it means 'to be human' within the negative constraints and influences of the neoliberal paradigm.¹⁴³ What these factors point to are the dehumanising impacts of neoliberalism on society in general. The focus on monetary gains, efficiency and competition affects the fabric of our society. These issues *impede* rather than support a holistic approach to teaching and learning.

It will be argued that the presence of silence can only be adequately acknowledged and applied within a pedagogy that appreciates and explicitly endeavours to incorporate a 'qualitative' approach to education. This, I will argue, is contrary to the quantitative framework that forms the basis of neoliberalism. The quantitative approach will be defined as having a focus on content, 'facts,' and 'visible outcomes' within a utilitarian and economic framework. However,

¹⁴⁰ Hugh Mackay, *Australia Reimagined: Towards A More Compassionate, Less Anxious Society* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan Australia, 2018).

¹⁴¹ Peter Davidson, Peter Saunders, Bruce Bradbury, and Melissa Wong, "Poverty in Australia 2020 Part 1: Overview," (Sydney: University of New South Wales, Australian Council of Social Service, 2020), <https://apo.org.au/node/276246>.

¹⁴² Beverley Clack, *How to Be a Failure and Still Live Well: A Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020).

¹⁴³ Clack, *How to Be a Failure and Still Live Well*.

as recalled throughout this thesis, silence essentially points to a *contemplative practice* with a focus on the qualitative aspects of teaching and learning. This focus includes dispositions and skills such as pausing, stillness, listening and deep thinking, all of which are not easily measurable, and do not fit neatly into the aims of a neoliberal framework of education, essentially aimed at economics and profit. Silence as understood within a contemplative approach to teaching and learning, on the other hand, has the potential to lead towards self-transformation, meeting existential needs and the development of the whole person, which appear to be incompatible with the aims of profit and utility within economic thinking.

Policymakers within education need to be careful not to give in to the short-sighted goal of economics as a framework for life and education and be seduced by it. For they, too, as Rabindranath Tagore notes below, might be selling their soul for money and *taking all of us with them*. As Tagore writes,

[W]hile making use of [material possessions], man has to be careful to protect himself from [their] tyranny. If he is weak enough to grow smaller to fit himself to his covering, then it becomes a process of gradual suicide by shrinkage of the soul.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

As I have explored, Caranfa's model of contemplation offers counter-cultural and worthwhile goals in developing a contemplative model of education. As shown in Chapter 1, there is much research to suggest that the use of silence and contemplative practices creates positive learning outcomes. However, this approach is still largely on the periphery in discussions on best

¹⁴⁴ Tagore Rabindranath in Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 1.

practice within education. This chapter has summarised the importance of Caranfa and Weil's model for contemplative practice. It has also highlighted some of the challenges that their model faces. Firstly, the clash of values with the neoliberal agenda which is increasingly influencing education. This framework has a focus on utility and profit, which reduces all learning to measurable outcomes, mostly geared towards skills for the workplace. Hence contemplation and spirituality do not factor as valuable qualities and dispositions within this framework. Secondly, while discussions on spiritual formation and religious education point to the importance of the contemplative, as I have shown in this chapter, they have some problems. Firstly, there does not appear to be consensus on what constitutes 'religiosity' and faith formation. Furthermore, how we encourage and engage young people towards religious and spiritual matters affectively, within a secular, context framed in neoliberal framework, remains inconclusive. Additionally, RE according to the literature, at least in the West, broadly speaking has not been effectively engaging young people in the classroom. These factors pose some potential challenges for Caranfa and Weil's model in terms of its relevance and appeal to the modern secular audience.

Despite the challenges that Caranfa and Weil's model face, contemplation remains a valuable pedagogy for education today. What this approach points to is that through silence and contemplative practices, such as mindfulness, pausing, stillness, deep reflection and listening, students can become attuned to their personal self. While neoliberal agendas filter into education, their by-product, which is a growing economy, has not resulted in overall happiness for most. Martin Seligman's work suggests that as Western countries have increased their GDP, their overall happiness and wellbeing have not necessarily improved.¹⁴⁵ He claims that

¹⁴⁵ Martin Seligman, *Flourish* (Sydney: Random House Australia, 2012).

individuals in America, largely speaking, over the last 50 years have become more anxious and depressed.¹⁴⁶ Considering this, and the ‘slow movement’ which has reacted against the stresses and pressure of modern-day living, contemplation then turns out to be a vital component for overall wellbeing.

What the model of contemplative education proposed by Caranfa and Weil points to, however, is more than a greater sense of wellbeing. It points to the suggestion that the human being is not only material but also spiritual; for a human to ‘flourish’ they need to connect to the transcendence and God. These are essentially the aims of both Weil and Caranfa. Despite the inclusiveness in the consensus on what constitutes ‘religiosity’ and faith formation discussed in this chapter, the ideas of Kierkegaard, Rohr, Fowler, and others, have shown us some valuable benchmarks of what faith looks like over a lifetime, and what it means to be a person living with an awareness of a greater mystery and transcendence.

Finally, in keeping to the objectives of the overall thesis, this chapter has proposed that, contrary to the agenda of policymakers adopting neoliberal principles, fundamentally education is more than gaining skills for the workplace. It has a more important long-term goal in attending to the soul and working towards holistic learning. As Klausen articulates pertinently below, an education which attempts to cultivate the whole person, aesthetically, culturally, morally, and I will add spiritually, is an education *par excellence*. As he explains,

On the one side, there are researchers and policymakers chiefly concerned with finding ways of reliably fostering skills that will assumedly be important for future success at work and in practical life in general. On the other side, there are those – often more philosophically minded educationalists – who insist that education should aim both higher and broader. They do not wish teaching to become guided by narrow concerns for employability or measurable skills. Instead, they want to maintain a focus on the learner as a complete human being, including her personal well-being, her role as a

¹⁴⁶ Seligman, *Flourish*.

citizen in democratic society and in the world as a whole, her capacity for aesthetic and cultural expression and her moral character.¹⁴⁷

In the following chapters of this thesis, I extend Caranfa's contemplative model in order to possibly 'appeal' to young people today. Firstly, by drawing on Socrates (and others) even more than Caranfa does in developing the dialectic method. Secondly, Weil's social activism and notions of attention and care, and her use of provocations will be explored. Thirdly, I will also draw on other contemplative practices within the tradition of St Benedict, Confucian education, and mindfulness as tools for contemplative practices. In the next chapter I will focus on developing a conceptual approach to contemplative education to engage students. This will be titled *teaching towards epistemic humility*, and I propose that to achieve teaching towards humility (wonder and wisdom) we need to teach philosophy.

¹⁴⁷ Klausen, *Søren Kierkegaard*, 67.

SECTION C – My curriculum – How do I do this in the classroom?

Chapter 7: Teaching philosophy for a contemplative mindset

In Chapter 6, I outlined some of the conceptual and practical limitations of Caranfa’s model for contemplation. These factors do not detract from the overall importance of Caranfa’s thesis, but rather pose some potential challenges for his model in terms of its relevance and appeal to a modern secular audience.

In light of the above, I will be addressing these limitations and further extending Caranfa’s model by proposing a contemplative curriculum that focuses on developing the dialectic within a contemplative mindset.¹ Caranfa does not dismiss the use and importance of reason within education, but as seen in previous chapters, *favours the aesthetic–spiritual experience over reason*. While the aesthetic–spiritual experience has some benefits (as shown in Chapter 2), this approach on its own is problematic. Our current education system requires the use of logic and reasoning skills, especially when we consider the broader aims of education from a Socratic tradition that relates to independent and critical thinking.

So the question is: How do we combine the use of ‘reasoning skills’ with the call for contemplation within the classroom? How do we develop and recognise contemplative skills, dispositions, attitudes and values such as humility, mindfulness and deep thinking within the classroom while also minimising the mindlessness and distractions of modern life? I will integrate these seemingly disparate views through a conceptual (in Chapters 7 and 8) and experiential (in Chapter 9) approach to contemplative classroom practice. This chapter will extend the epistemological tension which Caranfa identifies between the ‘rational dimensions’ and ‘affective and intuitive’ aspects of knowing, and how they may unfold within a

¹ This will apply mostly within secondary education that can also extend to the tertiary sector.

contemplative classroom.² I will combine these seemingly opposing dichotomies, the use of ‘reasoning skills’ with the call for contemplation within the classroom, by proposing we teach philosophy.

Philosophy is a subject that can teach students to question and reflect deeply on themselves and the world they live in. It can attend to the mind by arousing a sense of curiosity and wonder about the world. As discussed in Chapter 4, the philosophy of education literature pointed to the claim that philosophy is not only for educating the mind but also the soul. Philosophy, in essence, is the teaching of wisdom. This holistic approach to education that philosophy can offer may also be linked to the aims of *Bildung*.

In drawing from philosophy to address the aims of holistic learning within a contemplative classroom, I will endeavour to examine the following themes:

1. The importance of teaching towards the development of epistemic humility. Epistemic humility through the dialectic can potentially lead to an awareness of mystery. As Socrates and Weil have taught, understanding how we can reach the limits of our knowledge allows us to develop a diminishing of our egos and self-preoccupation that can facilitate humility. Humility, in turn, can lead to a sense of wonder about the world. This awareness can potentially also lead to an encounter with the greater mystery and God.
2. The disposition of humility has important attributes we want to develop within a contemplative classroom. From the literature we can see that many have attributed humility to generating self-reflection, virtue, and an awareness of a ‘wider

² While an emphasis on the aesthetic–spiritual, as Caranfa proposes, may be significant for contemplation, it is not the focus I will be taking. Caranfa claims that ontology is about silence, and the limitations of reason lead naturally to the aesthetic, where he states, “logic fails.” However, the need to move beyond the reach of reason to recognise the aesthetics is a contested issue.

perspective.’ Scholars have also pointed to humility as eliciting greater curiosity and awe about the world. A sense of wider perspective, awe, wonder, and virtue are positive attributes we want to develop within a contemplative pedagogy to teach holistically.

3. Philosophy can engage our minds in deep reflection and thinking by examining complex problems and contradictions. The provocations of Simone Weil, through the engagement of contradictions and paradox, for example, can engage students’ ‘thinking skills.’ Likewise, the detailed epistemological descriptions of Jacques Maritain allow students to recognise some of the important distinctions in knowledge, such as empirical and mystical/religious. This is important in developing students’ deep understanding of religious and contemplative themes. This component helps in developing students’ cognitive dimensions within a contemplative classroom.
4. Philosophy can teach students that reason and logic are important but alone are limited in understanding all of reality. Philosophy can bring to light a broader understanding of ‘thinking skills’ to include silence, intuition, and what Josef Pieper describes as the ‘totality of life’ beyond logical arguments. This approach moves us beyond the notion of instrumental reasoning that characterises much of Western dialogue. This, I will describe as teaching towards a *contemplative mindset*. This mindset is what I will argue is needed if we are serious about holistic education more broadly.

In developing these themes, I will draw on the elucidations of Socrates, Weil, Jacques Maritain, Josef Pieper, and Sean Steel. These philosophers will help inform how we can understand ‘thinking’ and the dialectic more broadly for the purposes of a contemplative classroom. These thinkers are of particular significance and relevance to the subject matter of the thesis as they understood the dialectic and thinking more broadly. Their elucidations of the dialectic move

beyond the bounds of instrumental reasoning to a way of understanding reason that includes the good, virtue, humility, wonder, human flourishing, transcendence, and God. These philosophers show us that to be contemplative is not to negate thinking or philosophy but rather engage in thinking with the view of a larger perspective. This echoes much of Martin Heidegger's epistemology and understanding of thinking. Heidegger's notion of 'meditative thinking' provides a language for discussing an approach to 'thinking' that is suited to a contemplative classroom.

The philosophers mentioned above are important for this project as they present a way of teaching epistemic humility. Humility, as Socrates has taught, is an important aspect of wisdom and the contemplative classroom. The elucidations of Socrates and others mentioned will help us teach towards a 'contemplative mindset' that not only engages with silence and attention but also deep reflection. This approach will address some of the primary themes of holistic learning and teaching towards *flourishing*. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the idea of flourishing is understood as an ingredient in attaining *eudaimonia* or happiness and is important for learning. Subsequently, we see in this chapter (and throughout this thesis) that I will draw on both the philosophical and Christian traditions in developing an understanding of contemplation.

Furthermore, we will consider how teaching philosophy can lead to a 'broader perspective' as espoused by Socrates and Weil. This approach includes a 'contemplative mindset' characterised by slow thinking and silence. The practice of silence within contemplative pedagogy need not preclude the dialectic. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, Socrates did not dismiss silence but embraced it as part of his reflective process. Furthermore, Chapter 2 demonstrated the positive benefits of silence within learning. This chapter will show how the dialectical method, as Socrates and others have taught, can help students develop thinking skills and potentially lead them toward an awareness of the limitation of knowledge and

understanding and Socratic ignorance. This process can help students widen their perspectives on the world, facilitating the disposition of humility, awe, and wonder, and possibly an awareness and encountering of the broader mystery and God.

The theme of developing epistemic humility through the dialectic, leading to an awareness of mystery, is explored through the writings of Weil and Maritain. Weil's discussion of contradictions and provocations with her students in extending their 'thinking skills' is examined. Weil shows us how this rigour, if we persist, can lead to students reaching an impasse in thought, potentially allowing students to encounter the 'pervasive mystery' in reality. Understanding how we can reach the limits of our knowledge also allows us to develop a diminishing of our egos and self-preoccupation that can facilitate humility. Weil, too, reflects on the importance of developing a more expansive perspective through 'proper reading.' Here Weil suggests that helping students read literature that contains contradictions and 'real life events' can help them go beyond their ego and limited perspectives – to widen their 'perspectives on reality.'

Maritain's work highlights the importance of the distinctions within knowledge, for example, the empirical, metaphysical, and mystical, which can lead us towards God. As a Thomist, Maritain reminds us that while the mystical experience is dependent on grace, the development of the mind is essential for individual autonomy and informing the will. Weil and Maritain similarly advocate for the importance of the arts and humanities in developing the mind and how we can encounter and experience transcendence.

Additionally, I will extend the ideas of Socrates, Weil and Maritain to explore a discussion on *theoria* and contemplative thinking. The works of Sean Steel and Josef Pieper on thinking and contemplation will be included. These scholars examine the notion of *theoria* and link it to the teaching of philosophy. They argue that *theoria* is achieved when it is linked to silence and

slow thinking. Steel and Pieper also discuss the challenges posed by technology and neoliberalism on the attainment of contemplation and *theoria*, a common theme explored throughout this thesis.

This chapter will show that while reasoning skills have their place, true learning, as Socrates and others have understood, is ultimately about ignorance and humility.³ The importance of the dialectic method for understanding a ‘wider perspective’ (in the context of wisdom and the good life) will be argued as important in developing the *epistemic humility* that potentially can draw students’ attention to encounter the greater mystery. Furthermore, philosophers and theologians have observed that epistemic humility facilitates a sense of wonder and awe about the world, ironically leading to inquiry and deep understanding. These insights are also noted by some empirical researchers on humility.

Inter alia, I will continue to provide an argument for the importance of arts and humanities in a worthwhile education that helps students find meaning in their lives. Through a connection to silence and contemplative practices, the arts and humanities can potentially enable students to be open to an awareness of the mystery and acknowledge the importance of humility.

This chapter will examine the key conceptual underpinnings of a proposed approach to contemplative education. This is not a comprehensive framework, nor does it provide prescriptive and specific examples. Nevertheless, it will provide elucidation from many significant thinkers to inform educators. This chapter will demonstrate that to be contemplative and a listener of silence is not to betray some of the broader aims of education concerning thinking skills, but rather to transcend them. Drawing on the work of these philosophers, I

³ The term ignorance is drawn from Socrates and is sometimes called ‘Socratic ignorance.’ According to Socrates, this term has a favourable inference paradoxically; as one becomes aware of the vastness and limitations of knowledge, they are led to a sense of ‘ignorance’ and humility. Socrates claims that the attainment of wisdom is the awareness of our ignorance within the enormity and limitations of knowledge.

propose that engaging students and educators in philosophical questions can help guide the pedagogy of contemplative teaching and learning.

7.1 Caranfa's focus on the aesthetic–spiritual. Why do I need to extend Caranfa's model?

As considered in previous chapters, Caranfa's contemplative framework combines many dimensions in developing an aesthetic–spiritual experience within the classroom.⁴ Equally, we know that the aesthetic experience, the concept of beauty, and the arts have engaged philosophers throughout history as they do today.⁵ Discussions about their essence, role, formation, and impact are contested. Moreover, many writers have observed the powerful and transformative nature of the arts and the aesthetic experience, congruent with Caranfa's claims.⁶

If, therefore, education does not lead to 'an elation of feeling,' it will have failed in its aim; or, if education does not cultivate the love of beauty through art, it betrays its mission. For, without beauty, Whitehead insists, truth 'sinks to triviality,' the good loses its attractiveness, and knowledge becomes sterile.⁷

However, a recurring theme in Caranfa's writings is a tendency to *focus* on the aesthetic and experiential aspects of the contemplative experience (and classroom) rather than the dialectic process. This focus poses a limitation in his model and its appeal to a modern-day audience, which ideally espouses the importance of critical thinking in education. The practical process of *how we can engage with reason and the dialectic* in a way that can lead students towards an encounter with the mystery, God, humility, and virtue are not developed in Caranfa's writings.⁸

⁴ This includes a focus on attention, silence, listening, humility, prayer, and the aesthetic experience.

⁵ For example, see: Aristotle, "Poetics," In *Criticism: The Major Texts*, edit. Walter Jackson Bate, 17-36 (Miami: Wolf Den Books, 2004); John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Berkeley Publishing Group, 2005); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1933).

⁶ For example, see: David Malouf, *Imaginary Life* (London: Vintage, 1999); Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*.

⁷ Angelo Caranfa, "Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 50, no. 2 (2016), 85, <https://doi.org/10.5406/jaesteduc.50.2.0084>.

⁸ For example, in his work "Silence as the Foundation of learning," *Educational Theory*, 215. Caranfa claims that the Socratic teaching of virtues was more about humility than cross-examination. He states, "According to Socrates, holiness, justice, wisdom, and virtue are more about humility than about examination and cross-examination; they arise from letting go of our pretensions to wisdom rather than from pretending to speak rationally about things." Additionally, we don't understand in

This is exemplified in his work, *Silence as the Foundation of Learning*; he states, “Socratic teaching of virtues was more about humility than cross-examination.”⁹ This claim needs further clarification and is not adequately supported by Caranfa. Furthermore, it contradicts the main line of thinking throughout his work, which is that the process of cross-examination *leads* toward humility and therefore implies its centrality in the process of gaining virtue and humility. Another illustration included below, from *Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter*, Caranfa claims that the contemplative practice of listening to ‘silence takes priority over discourse and critical thinking.’¹⁰ He states,

Our failure to teach that there is ‘more’ to knowledge than what ‘we can tell’ is perhaps our greatest shortcoming as educators. The problem of education is a direct result of our failure to listen, to teach silence. To be alone and to listen should have priority over discourse and critical thinking.¹¹

This claim, on a surface reading, can be viewed as problematic as it contradicts the main aim of education in the broader sense, which is ideally to cultivate thinking skills. Additionally, it is not entirely clear what Caranfa means when he refers to “more” knowledge than what “we can tell.” However, this could be suggestive of the notion of mystery, a prominent theme in his writings that also points to apophatic and negative theology.¹² Nevertheless, it does indicate an

Caranfa’s work exactly how this linear process of reasoning occurs in the classroom. Yet we know that Augustine incorporated the use of reason and the dialectic in his teaching and writings. While God supported reasoning, he still struggled with it and sought to challenge his students into deep thinking, for we know that Augustine did not shy away from the dialectic in his teaching method. These provocations can result in independent thinking that touches on education’s broader aims. For example, Mathew Kent Siebert points out, for Augustine, “... the goal of trusting the teacher of a *disciplina* is to make that teacher obsolete by learning to understand the subject matter of that *disciplina* for oneself.” See: Matthew Kent Siebert, “Augustine’s Development on Testimonial Knowledge,” *Journal of The History of Philosophy* 56, no. 2 (2018): 202. Augustine alludes to this engagement and tensions with reason in the following way: “...Since these arguments were troubling me, I meant to rid my mind of them by the strongest reasoning I could. This was done with the Lord’s mercy and assistance. See: Augustine, *Against the Academicians [and] The Teacher*, trans. Peter King. (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub,1995), 167.

⁹ Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of learning,” 214–215.

¹⁰ Caranfa, “Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 40, no 1, (2006):98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9752.2006.00499.x>.

¹¹ Caranfa, “Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter,” 98.

¹² Caranfa may also be alluding here to a very a subtle process of deep thinking. If we are to really think deeply about important issues, it does call for a deep attentive listening to silence within our internal dialogue and to the ideas of others. This maybe reiterating Heidegger’s claim that a man who thinks is one who is able to listen deeply. However, like the earlier claim, this needs further development and clarification. It also might point to a critique of the ‘nature’ of critical thinking or logic removed from affective and silence that is used within the sciences (which as many phenomenologists have suggested) is limited in adequately understanding subjective experiences, for he also states, “This paper maintains that the critical method is in itself insufficient to achieve its purpose. Its failure is in its exclusion of feeling and of silence from the thinking process. See: Caranfa, “Voices of Silence in Pedagogy: Art, Writing and Self-Encounter,” 85.

area where Caranfa's model needs further development in his model to engage young people today. As Caranfa writes,

...for Plato, the creative person is contemplation, is silence: 'a lover of wisdom or beauty, or [someone]who will be cultivated in the arts and prone to erotic love' (Phdr., 248d) ...

Contemplation or silence is seeing, is looking (Smp., 212a), in which feeling is constantly being integrated into the thinking process in what is a sudden or an intuitive vision of 'true Beauty.'¹³

Furthermore, Caranfa's interpretation of Plato's allegory (and the Symposium) includes a heavy focus on *aesthetic* appreciation. While the aesthetic appreciation of the forms and beauty may have valuable benefits (as part of aesthetic education), the inclusion of the dialectic would result in a more balanced methodology that addresses students' thinking skills.

Considering the above, this chapter will work on developing Caranfa's model further to include an exploration of the dialectic within a contemplative classroom. We will also include literature that may help inform educators who are interested in developing 'the mind' of the student within a contemplative pedagogy.

7.2 The importance of humility towards human flourishing and contemplative education

I. Socratic ignorance leads to humility and virtue

We cannot adequately talk about pedagogy within the classroom unless we address the importance, nature, and limitations of reason. This chapter will explore this theme in the work of Socrates. One cannot ignore the significance of Socrates for Western culture and education. The ideas of Socrates were foundational to Western culture, particularly in the value placed on independent and critical thought. This notion has been generally adopted by educators, at least

¹³ Caranfa, "Learning to See: Art, Beauty, and the Joy of Creation in Education," 92.

in theory. How wide or effective critical thinking is in schools and tertiary educational settings, is another complex matter not in the scope here to examine.

Socrates argued that what distinguishes humans from animals is their ability to think. He called himself a “midwife to the truth,” and viewed himself as someone who helped people give birth to ideas.¹⁴ He did this by posing provocative questions to encourage people to think critically and reflectively about their own ideas and assumptions. Socrates proposed a dialectical approach which included the process of examining and cross-examining to arrive at truth, or to at least expose falsehood. This is known as the Socratic method, and in Hellenistic Greek is *elenchus*, meaning ‘inquiry’ or “cross-examination.”¹⁵ It is also referred to as the *maieutic method*.

What is important for our purposes here, as Caranfa and other scholars have noted, is that Socrates talked about the limitations of reason and logic that can lead one to be silent and potentially develop a sense of humility. That is: the more one knows, the more they are aware of their ignorance in the face of the vastness of knowledge. According to Socrates, true wisdom originates with ignorance. This sense can lead one towards humility or what many have described as ‘Socratic ignorance.’ As Brian Magee explains,

In our attempts to understand the universe, we cannot get outside the empirical world. In our attempts to understand ourselves as human beings, we cannot get outside ourselves as human beings. This is not, and I hope obviously not, to say that we cannot understand anything. But it is certainly to say that we cannot understand everything.¹⁶

¹⁴ In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates discusses the nature of knowledge, where he describes himself as a midwife, “SOCRATES: Well, my art of midwifery is in most respects like theirs; but differs, in that I attend men and not women; and look after their souls when they are in labour, and not after their bodies: and the triumph of my art is in thoroughly examining whether the thought which the mind of the young man brings forth is a false idol or a noble and true birth. And like the midwives, I am barren, and the reproach, which is often made against me, that I ask questions of others and have not the wit to answer them myself, is very just – the reason is, that the god compels me to be a midwife, but does not allow me to bring forth. And therefore, I am not myself at all wise, nor have I anything to show which is the invention or birth of my own soul, but those who converse with me profit. Some of them appear dull enough at first, but afterwards, as our acquaintance ripens, if the god is gracious to them, they all make astonishing progress; and this in the opinion of others as well as in their own. It is quite dear that they never learned anything from me; the many fine discoveries to which they cling are of their own making.” Socrates quoted in, Plato, “Theaetetus,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, eBook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892), 148c–151d.

¹⁵ Rosemary Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 13.

¹⁶ Bryan Magee, *Ultimate Questions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 16.

This limitation to our reasoning and, by extension, our knowledge, as reiterated by many, does not necessarily need to be understood as human defeat or a limitation to our progress.¹⁷ Rather than diminish our understanding of reality, limits can help us deepen our knowledge. Limits can, if we have the intellectual imagination (as Magee puts it) to conceive them, potentially keep us from arrogance and self-righteousness.¹⁸ Our awareness of what we cannot know has the potential to develop a sense of humility and wisdom, as exemplified in the life of Socrates, propelling us to pursue further questions with curiosity and a sense of wonder.¹⁹ This sense of wonder is espoused by both philosophical and religious thinkers. *This understanding of humility is what I would like to propose is a key feature of good pedagogy in teaching and learning that aims at what I have labelled as teaching towards a notion of epistemic humility within a contemplative classroom.*

Socratic pedagogy appeals to a contemplative classroom because he connected knowledge (and wisdom) to virtue and ethics. He believed that thinking critically about beliefs allowed a person to live a good life, one that could lead to wisdom and happiness; Socrates said, “[I] sought to persuade every man ... that he must look to himself and seek virtue and wisdom.”²⁰ Socrates claimed that all wisdom came from virtue.²¹ The ancient Greek philosophers considered the notion of virtue as a disposition that included the presence of morally right action for the right reasons consistently and in a reliable manner.²² An ignorant person lacked knowledge of virtue or morals and the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Socrates argued that

¹⁷ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 81.

¹⁸ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 81.

¹⁹ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 81.

²⁰ Plato, “Apology,” 1:418.

²¹ Plato, “Apology,” 1:413.

²² Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3.

understanding morals was essential to attaining wisdom, which he considered the highest form of knowledge.²³

Socrates offers moral education, the notion that to be wise is to live a good and moral life. Our thinking, if sound, is not only connected to a broader context such as the good life but also attempts to incorporate the moral implication of decisions individually and collectively. To this end, it is clear how *Socrates can provide us with a positive and holistic way of understanding thinking skills that places thinking within a broader context of the good life that encompasses notions of wisdom, morals, and virtue*. For these reasons, the inclusion of Socrates within a teaching model towards a notion of epistemic humility within a contemplative classroom is imperative.

Many educators have drawn on Socrates for their work in developing critical thinking skills in the classroom.²⁴ What Socrates offers is an approach to ‘thinking’ that helps us understand critical thinking through the dialectic method. However, ‘thinking well’ from a Socratic sense is not merely just about logical coherence but also an awareness that we are always *limited in what we can know*. This limitation can potentially facilitate a sense of humility rather than arrogance and self-righteousness, which is the antithesis of the spirit of a contemplative classroom. Humility can allow learning to flourish as students become more receptive to new

²³ Wisdom then is that which develops virtue of the soul. This connection between attaining wisdom (the highest form of intelligence) and moral life is a valuable concept for the modern-day classroom. The importance of teaching ethics and morals within education in nations that claim to be democratic and foster individual liberty and dignity cannot be ignored. According to researchers Hofer, Pintrich, and Kuhn, most people are not skilled in ethical justification. Their findings show that, on average, 80% of the population made their ethical decisions based on authority, culture, or religion, or they refused to make a definitive stance, stating that ‘everyone has a right to their opinions’ adopting a relative stance. These findings have serious implications on the notion of democracy and ‘active’ citizenship. See Barbara K Hofer and Paul R. Pintrich, “The Development of Epistemological Theories: Beliefs About Knowledge and Knowing and Their Relation to Learning,” *Review of educational research* 67, no. 1 (1997): 88–140; Deanna Kuhn, *Education for Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); See also: Rosemary Laoulach, “Should Philosophy be the tool for Inquiry-Based learning in Religious Education?” *Religion & Education* 48, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2021.1932399>.

understandings and insights. Socrates is also critical as he places reason and thinking into a broader perspective beyond just its usefulness for skills in the workplace.

Socrates' understanding of reason is that it can lead us towards wisdom, virtue, and human *flourishing*. This holistic view of reason is a positive framework for educators within a contemplative model that seeks to educate the 'whole person,' potentially leading to a flourishing life. As reviewed in Chapter 4, the idea of a *flourishing life* that leads to happiness or *eudaimonia* was concerned with living the good life. As Socrates has shown us above, the good life was connected to the development of virtue. These are essential themes for the contemplative classroom framework and extend Caranfa's understanding of Socrates and the dialectic.

Moreover, as I demonstrated in Chapter 3, Caranfa draws out useful links that Socrates makes between silence and the dialectic, which leads to humility. This chapter showed many examples of where Socrates sought silence and equated silence to the notion of divinity. Similarly, as one becomes aware of their ignorance within the vastness of knowledge, Socrates proposes, a person *becomes silent*.²⁵ These observations on the role of silence within the dialectic approach allow us to consider its importance in facilitating deep reflection and learning within a contemplative pedagogy. As empirical studies revealed in Chapter 2, silence can allow space for students to engage more effectively in learning. The implications we can draw from the research and anecdotal observations are that silence can develop a *capacity for self-reflection and ethical decision-making*. The silent space can lead to an understanding of 'wider perspectives' and enhance 'thinking skills.'²⁶ These claims will be supported further through

²⁵ For example, see: Angelo Caranfa, "Socrates, Augustine, And Paul Gauguin on The Reciprocity Between Speech and Silence in Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no. 4 (2013):577–604, doi 10.1111/1467-9752.12042; Angelo Caranfa, "Silence as The Foundation of Learning," *Educational Theory* 54, no. 2 (2004):211230, doi: 10.1111/j.0013-2004.2004.0angelo_abstract.x.

²⁶The understanding of critical thinking is not always clearly defined within educational literature. As I will show later, we can extend the notion of critical thinking to incorporate an understanding that moves beyond its focus on instrumental reasoning or the logic used in science to a contemplative mindset.

the works of Weil, Maritain, Pieper, Steel and Heidegger, who examined the use of thinking and reason within the context and awareness of a greater mystery. These writers also explored how we could understand ‘thinking’ or reflection within a contemplative mindset that embraces silence and humility. Before exploring the works of these philosophers and as an extension of Socrates’ views on epistemic humility, I will turn our attention to what the broader literature says on humility.

II. *Literature on the importance of humility for virtue and ‘seeing the wider perspective’*

There is growing literature on the role of humility within organisations and how it impacts leadership.²⁷ Rob Nielsen and Jennifer A. Marrone’s extensive review of the literature on humility found that the disposition of humility was a positive character strength that showed overall positive outcomes.²⁸ Some outcomes include resilience, wellbeing, interpersonal skills (e.g., greater acts of forgiveness) and effective teamwork.²⁹ Humility also correlated with higher coursework scores.³⁰ These researchers found that leaders who were identified as ‘humble’ often exemplified and encouraged self-improvement and personal growth for their teams.³¹ The findings also showed that humble people are generally more generous and helpful.³² As they explain:

²⁷ C.C. Chiu, B.P. Owens and P.E. Tesluk, “Initiating and Utilizing Shared Leadership in Teams: The Role of Leader Humility, Team Proactive Personality, And Team Performance Capability,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* no. 101 (2016): 1705–1720. Nielsen, and Marrone state: “The cumulative body of work provides support that humility is positive and productive in a variety of diverse social settings, including organizations and work teams”. See: Rob Nielsen and Jennifer A Marrone, “Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations: Humility,” *International Journal of Management Reviews: IJMR* 20, no. 4 (2018), 818.

²⁸ Nielsen, and Marrone, “Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations: Humility.”

²⁹ Nielsen, and Marrone, “Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations: Humility.”

³⁰ Nielsen, and Marrone, “Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations: Humility”; For further educational developments from humility see also: Kelley Haynes-Mendez and Jill Engelsmeier, “Cultivating Cultural Humility in Education,” *Childhood education* 96, no. 3 (2020): 22–29.

³¹ Nielsen and Marrone state, “Finally, qualitative data from Owens and Hekman (2012, p. 802) indicate that humble leaders model growth to followers; that is, ‘humble leaders were reported as making outwardly explicit the step-by-step process of personal development’. The outcomes of these behaviours for followers resulted in followers feeling validated in their own development efforts. Specifically, this situation entailed psychological freedom for both the leader and the followers. Followers of humble leaders were also accepting of unpredictability, open to new information, and willing to take a trial-and-error approach to experiments at work” See: Nielsen, and Marrone, “Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations: Humility,” 816.

³² For example, Nielsen, and Marrone state; “...Research has thus found that humble individuals are more generous and helpful than non-humble individuals, and that they are more likely to be regarded by others as cooperative and worthy of forgiveness.

Humility has recently been defined as a dispositional quality of a person – whether that person is a leader or an employee – that reflects ‘a self-view that something greater than the self exists’ (Ou *et al.*, 2014, p. 37). Humble persons possess a self-regulatory capacity that guards against excess and fosters pro-social tendencies (Jankowski *et al.*, 2013; Owens *et al.*, 2013), which mitigate common human vices that lead to dysfunction over the long term, such as hubris, self-aggrandizement and pride (Peterson and Seligman 2004).³³

Nielsen and Marrone’s findings on humility also echo some philosophical and theological concepts. The notion that humility is connected to an understanding that ‘something greater than the self exists’ is an example of what theologians and philosophers call the transcendence or God. Nielsen and Marrone, drawing on Ou *et al.*, claim that a humble person adopts a “transcendent self-concept” where they are aware of the “small role that one plays in a vast universe ... and that some things are not under one’s control.”³⁴ Additionally, the humble person does not dominate others, or promote themselves, for their traits of humility keep them from “... hubris, self-aggrandisement and pride,” humble people are also more generous and helpful; all of which point to virtues espoused by religious and philosophical thinkers such as Socrates, Aquinas and St Benedict (among others).³⁵

P 814 ...humble individuals do not have strong needs to self-enhance or to dominate others (Peterson and Seligman 2004).” Nielsen, and Marrone, “Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations: Humility,” 807.

³³ Nielsen, and Marrone, “Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations: Humility,” 805.

³⁴ Nielsen, and Marrone, “Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations: Humility,” 807.

³⁵ Nielsen, and Marrone, “Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations: Humility,” 805. While Nielsen and Marrone provide us with some useful data on the issue of humility by identifying certain character and cognitive traits, their research does not explore exactly what *constitutes the development* of humility. In other words, they do not examine how to improve and develop the trait of humility or teach humility. Nevertheless, their observations are useful in informing and supporting the practice of humility within a contemplative educational framework, since a contemplative framework wants to encourage the development of humility and virtue.

III. Humility's connection to awe, wonder and religious virtue

For wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder.³⁶

The sense of awe and wonder about the world as we know it is a characteristic of philosophical literature. Socrates/Plato, Aristotle, and Russell (among others) all link awe and wonder strongly to the process of philosophy. Additionally, there is a growing literature within education which recognises the importance of wonder and curiosity to enable learning. Mark Church et al., in the *Harvard Project Zero*, advocated an approach that encourages students to wonder. The researchers called it the “see, think–wonder” technique/routine.³⁷ A recent publication edited by Anders Schinkel offers a comprehensive examination of the interconnections between wonder, education, and human flourishing.³⁸ This work draws on education, philosophy, and empirical research. These findings by researchers are important for the aims of this chapter. For in a contemplative classroom, we want to elicit and evoke a sense of wonder about the world and, in doing so, move students towards the possibility of them ‘wondering’ about its origins, purpose, and mystery. As I will be developing further on, wondering can not only connect us to something greater than ourselves, it can also elicit a sense of awe and connect us to the sacred. Ideally, these are the necessary experiences we want to create within a contemplative classroom. The understanding of humility as a cognisant trait that points to a broader reality than oneself will be extended to the works of religious and

³⁶ Plato, “Apology,” 178. See also Aristotle, “For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters...” Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, A 2.982b 12–17.

³⁷ Mark Church, et al., *Making Thinking Visible How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners* (San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass, 2011).

³⁸ Anders Schinkel, ed., *Wonder, Education, And Human Flourishing. Theoretical, Empirical, And Practical Perspectives* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij / VU University Press, 2020). See also: Sophia Vasalou, *Practices of Wonder* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013); Musaio Marisa, “Rediscovering Wonder in Education: Foundations, Approaching Methods, Feelings,” *Estudios sobre educación: ESE* 23 (2012): 9–24; Les Ball and Peter Bolt, *Wondering About God Together: Research-Led Learning & Teaching in Theological Education* (Macquarie Centre, Australia: Sydney College of Divinity, 2018); Stephen Richard Turley, “Awakening Wonder: Education as Encounter,” *Chesterton Review* 38, no. 1 (2012): 235–247; Kieran Egan, Annabella Cant, and Gillian Judson, *Wonder-full Education: The Centrality of Wonder in Teaching and Learning Across the Curriculum* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

philosophical writers in what follows. These writers propose that humility can induce a sense of awe and wonder and an encounter with the greater mystery, the divine and the development of virtue. As I have previously argued,

Wonder can be attributed to awe and curiosity. It can connect us to something greater than ourselves. It may be argued that philosophy and religion *arose out of wonder*. Wonder is an attitude which allows a person to ponder and contemplate the universe.³⁹

As Bertrand Russell explains below, wonder can liberate us by opening possibilities and new ways of seeing and understanding the world. He states:

As soon as we begin to philosophize, on the contrary, we find, as we saw [in our opening chapters], that even the most everyday things lead to problems to which only very incomplete answers can be given. Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom. Thus, while diminishing our feeling of certainty as to what things are, it greatly increases our knowledge as to what they may be; it removes the somewhat arrogant dogmatism of those who have never travelled into the region of liberating doubt, and it keeps alive *our sense of our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect*.⁴⁰

Russell effectively weaves the dialectic approach together with notions of uncertainty and wonder. He explains that our sense of wonder can cast a light on ‘somewhat familiar things and place them in unfamiliar light.’ Russell’s approach to philosophy and the explication of wonder and inquiry provides positive pedagogical insight. Educators can draw on the works of Russell to provoke and stimulate students in a way of thinking that engages them in a sense of curiosity and wonder about the world which are conducive to the contemplative classroom.

Václav Havel, like Socrates, connects the notion of humility to wisdom. Humility is a characteristic of the wise person. According to Havel, humility brings us in touch with the limitations of the natural world and the mystery which points beyond it. This awareness, Havel

³⁹ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 6.

⁴⁰ Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 81 (emphasis added).

suggests, helps motivate students to “constantly rediscover and experience” an approach that is conducive to learning within a contemplative classroom. Havel writes:

We must honor *with the humility of the wise* the limits of that natural world and the mystery which lies beyond them, admitting that there is something in the order of being which evidently exceeds all our competence. We must relate to the absolute horizon of our existence which, if we but will, we shall constantly rediscover and experience.⁴¹

A contemplative framework would seek to engage students in learning and encourage ‘enlarging’ students’ experiences and views on the world. Havel is useful here, as he suggests humility can facilitate a sense of discovery in experiences. Havel, however, does not detail how we reach the state of humility. Similarly, Raymond Younis draws on Scruton, who links humility to the experience of awe and wonder. He describes this awe as that which is generated from an awareness of the vastness of the cosmos and our ‘small’ presence within it. This deep realisation, as noted by many, is characteristic of a religious awakening. It also awakens within us a sense of humility. We feel humbled in our awareness of ‘smallness’ in such a vast and complex universe. Younis connects this to religious awe experienced with an encounter with the divine. He states:

Scruton argues that awe is linked to humility, in the context of the vastness of the cosmos and our sense of our own relatively ‘tiny’ presence (2006, p.412) ... That is, religious, awe or awe felt in the presence of the sacred, or in the experience of the sacred for example, takes us beyond the sense of mere beauty or splendor, into the realm that is ontological, metaphysical, ethical and spiritual, of ‘complete submission of the whole mind’ to something that transcends our relative smallness our imperfections – something which awakens in us both humility and joy, and whose ‘glory’ we both fear and admire, even adore, and which we see as ‘fearfully and wholly good’ (2006, p. 414).⁴²

⁴¹ Havel Václav, *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1964–1990* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 267, quoted in Mary M. Keys, “Humility and Greatness of Soul,” *Perspectives on political science* 37, no. 4 (2008): 220 (emphasis added).

⁴² Raymond Aaron Younis, *On the Ontology of the Sacred (and the Profane)* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 91.

Humility, the divine and virtue

Humility is one of the hallmarks that characterise much of religious literature. It is exemplified in the life and writings of religious leaders and great activities. These include Jesus, Siddhartha Gautama, Gandhi, Martin Luther, Pope Francis, and the Dalai Lama (among others). All these great men were humble and wrote about the importance of humility for the religious virtues.⁴³ Humility then becomes a central ingredient in the contemplative classroom.

Mary M. Keys, in her work, “Humility and Greatness of Soul,” unpacks the importance of humility for the development of virtue and the soul.⁴⁴ She refers to Aquinas, who understood humility as that which expels pride so that God has ‘space’ to infuse the soul with grace. Aquinas, likewise, drew on the work of St Benedict for his understanding of humility. Benedict identified humility as one of the virtues, together with silence, obedience, charity, chastity, and stability. He claimed that humility was essential to the spiritual life and dedicated Chapter 7 of his Rule to this topic.⁴⁵

St Benedict describes the process of attaining humility through the image of a ladder with twelve steps. One who has reached the top has reached spiritual maturity and transformation in God. Benedict claims that each step of the ladder presents dispositions and actions that help us reach humility, such as renunciation, patience, obedience, and silence.⁴⁶ Humility is understood by Benedict as a disposition that avoids narcissism, individualism, pride, and

⁴³ Much religious literature points to the importance of humility in living a spiritual life. Jesus talks about humility in the Gospels, for example, in LK14:11 and 18:14. Humility is often characterised by care for others, listening, and using power and influence for the good of others. These are all critical features of humility noted by researchers alluded to earlier. See: Mary Margaret Funk, *Humility Matters for Practicing the Spiritual Life* (London: Continuum, 2009).

⁴⁴ Mary M. Keys writes about humility in the following way: “Humility is therefore (in our terminology, not Aquinas’s) a religious virtue, in that it flows from “reverence for God” ...and removes obstacles that keep us from advancing along the road to our “spiritual welfare,” ultimately to God (*ST II- II*, 161, 5, ad 4). By expelling pride, humility opens up an interior space that God can fill with grace and the “infused” moral virtues. See: Mary M. Keys, “Humility and Greatness of Soul,” *Perspectives on political science* 37, no. 4 (2008), 218.

⁴⁵ Benedict, *The rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Justin McCann (London: Sheed and Ward, 1976).

⁴⁶ Benedict, *The rule of St. Benedict*. Lawrence Freeman suggests that humility can be understood as self-knowledge, which is one of the fruits of Christian meditation. He explains that meditation allows one to let go of their attachments and ego, returning only to the simplicity of the *matra* or word. Lawrence Freeman, “Reflections on Silence and Wellbeing,” in *Sacred Silence in Literature and The Arts Conference* (Strathfield: Australian Catholic University, 2019).

egoism.⁴⁷ Susan Muto and Lori McMahon describe Benedict's notion of humility metaphorically as the "disposition of the heart" that grounds us in the divine.⁴⁸ Many have drawn on Benedict's Rule for spiritual development and education.⁴⁹ This approach can also provide some valuable insights to inform the teaching and learning curriculum proposed in this thesis. I will draw more on the implications of Benedict's Rule for contemplative practice in Chapter 9.

Therefore, in conclusion to this section, it has been argued that the Socratic dialectic can induce a sense of ignorance at the realisation of the vastness in the nature of knowledge in its totality and the difficulties in gaining certainty. This awareness potentially provides a way of experiencing humility. Empirical research has shown that the disposition of humility within a person can be seen as a positive trait demonstrating care for others, personal awareness, and movement away from narcissistic tendencies. These characteristics point to virtues we want to develop in a contemplative classroom. Research has also shown that a humble person displays an awareness that there is something 'more significant than themselves,' which is also desirable and conducive to a contemplative approach to education.

Accompanying humility can also include a sense of awe and wonder about the world that is positive for teaching and learning within a contemplative setting. There is also empirical literature that is beginning to recognise the importance of wonder and curiosity for learning within the classroom.

⁴⁷ Benedict, *The rule of St. Benedict*.

⁴⁸ Susan Muto and Lori McMahon, "Humility of Heart Keys to Understanding St Benedict of Nursia," Webinar Ave Maria Press, Nov. 18, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NMWhCRWEZU.

⁴⁹ For example: Joan Chittister, "St. Benedict's 10th Step of Humility: When Is Funny Not Funny?" *National Catholic reporter* 56, no. 4 (2019): 11–12; Charles Dumont, "A Phenomenological Approach to Humility: Chapter VII of the Rule of St Benedict," *Cistercian studies (Spencer, Mass.)* 20, no. 4 (1985): 283–302; Maureen McCabe, "Truthful Living: Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2000): 265; Jānis (John) Tālivaldis Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 100–101.

The sense of wonder, awe and humility are at the heart of philosophical and religious discourse, as exemplified through the works of many such as Socrates, Russell, and Benedictine (among others). Wonder, awe, and humility are present within religious literature, potentially enabling an encounter with the divine and the development of virtue. It is the sense of wonder and humility that are integral to a contemplative classroom that does not avoid using reason but rather transcends and integrates it.⁵⁰ This approach can also *posit a synthesis between the required academic rigour in education: to also include a sense of wonder and awe about the world* as espoused by the ancient Greek philosophers as the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. In what follows, we see how Weil used ‘provocative thinking’ in her classrooms to entice students into thinking about epistemic limitations and elicit their wonderings about the greater mystery.

7.3. Developing epistemic humility through the dialectic, which leads to an awareness of the mystery

I. Simone Weil’s contradictions and provocations lead to mystery and humility

Caranfa argues for the importance of contemplation in education by discussing Plato and Weil. I am very sympathetic with his thesis, but he equates contemplation with aesthetic appreciation and ignores contemplation of the contradictions.⁵¹

Kazuaki Yoda is critical of Caranfa’s thesis, which he rightly claims (and I have already noted), focuses heavily on the aesthetic appreciation of contemplation, such as beauty, love, etc. Yoda does not dismiss this aspect of Weil’s work. However, he displays how Weil’s approach was also practical and engaged in real-world issues and problems that could be incorporated within the classroom. I agree with Yoda’s criticisms. Caranfa’s interpretation of Weil, as I

⁵¹ Kazuaki Yoda, “Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014), 178.

demonstrated in Chapter 5, is heavily focused on the aesthetic–spiritual at the expense of her ethics and her teaching of the dialectic and ‘proper reading.’

In developing the Socratic tradition and further highlighting the importance of the dialectic I introduce Weil’s notion on contradictions and reading. Weil explores the tensions between the use of reason and the presence of mystery. She does this through her deliberate provocations in dealing with contradictions. Weil purposely provokes her students with contradictory claims for them to wrestle with. In the process of deliberately creating these tensions and challenges, Weil shows how students can potentially arrive at an awareness of ‘mystery’ – a presence greater than themselves. *This process differs from Caranfa’s account, which places emphasis on aesthetic appreciation/experience in encountering the experience of mystery.*⁵²

Weil’s contradictions and provocations lead to the mystery

Method of investigation: as soon as we have thought about something, try to see in what way the contrary is true.⁵³

Weil dedicated a chapter in *Gravity and Grace* titled “Contradictions” to illustrate the dialectic method she used with her students. Eric O. Springsted points out that Weil proposes that as we seek to find unity in claims, those things which seem ‘opposed’ are only so as they are in contrast and depend on each other.⁵⁴ In other words, it is only when ‘placed together’ that these opposing factors are brought to light. When intelligence has reached an impasse, and there has been some rigour in our thinking, mystery, Weil argues, carries our understanding ‘beyond the realm of intelligence.’ She writes:

The notion of mystery is legitimate when the most logical and rigorous use of the intelligence leads to an impasse, to a contradiction which is inescapable in this sense: that the suppression of one term makes the other meaningless and that to pose one term

⁵² This is an important distinction to make. As I demonstrated in Chapter 5, Caranfa argues that Plato provides an outline of a journey within the soul. This journey according to Caranfa begins by appreciating beauty in the world until it arrives at the beauty in the soul extending to an awareness of the eternal beauty, which is ultimately God.

⁵³ Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 102; Eric O. Springsted, “Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil,” *Religion & literature*, 17, no. 2 (1985), 3–4.

⁵⁴ Simone Weil, *First and Last Notebooks* (London: Oxford UP, 1970), 181.

necessarily involves posing the other. Then, like a lever, the notion of mystery carries thought beyond the impasse, to the other side of the unopenable door, beyond the domain of intelligence and above it. *But to arrive beyond the domain of the intelligence one must have travelled all through it, to the end, and by a path traced with unimpeachable rigor...* Another criterion is that when the mind has nourished itself with mystery, by a long and loving contemplation, it finds that by suppressing and denying the mystery it is at the same time depriving the intelligence of treasures which are comprehensible to it, which dwell in its domain, and which belong to it (First and Last 181).⁵⁵

Weil explains above that when reason and logic have reached their limits in our understanding and the contradictions have no immediate resolution, we are then faced with mystery. However, what is clear in her writing is that before “we arrive beyond the rational” to the awareness of mystery – we must have travelled and been involved in the *dialectic process till the end*, with “unimpeachable rigour.”⁵⁶ In other words, we need to engage with “logical and rigorous use of the intelligence” before we are led to the other side, to an encounter with the mystery. What is evident is that Weil was familiar with the dialectic process. This would be congruent with her work as a philosophy teacher in many institutions within France. Still, her emphasis on ‘intellectual rigour’ in *reaching* the mystery is often ignored by scholars such as Caranfa (as shown in Chapter 5).

This idea of contradiction proposed by Weil is also present in Eastern Daoist philosophy. If you think you have grasped the Dao, you have not. If you think you know the Dao, you do not, etc.⁵⁷ Weil’s processes described above also echo something of the infinite regress argument adopted by scepticism. Here one belief requires evidence and justification, which leads to another claim eliciting further evidence, that leads to another claim that requires the same, and so on, which results in an endless chain of contingency. If we use this lens of analysis, we see that what addresses this ongoing chain within the regress argument, for Weil, is ‘the mystery.’

⁵⁵ Weil. *First and Last Notebooks*, 181 (emphasis added).

⁵⁶ Weil. *First and Last Notebooks*, 181.

⁵⁷ Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 100–101.

Weil argues, “the notion of mystery carries thought beyond the impasse ... beyond the domain of intelligence.”⁵⁸ Weil’s reflections, like Plato’s, move beyond reliance on the senses towards an awareness of eternal forms; she claims that contradictions can lead us or “draw us upwards” toward these eternal truths. Therefore, the contemplation of contradictions, Weil proposes, can potentially lead a person to a higher notion of “truth.”⁵⁹ Weil writes:

[A]t each instant of our life we are gripped from the outside, as it were, by meanings that we ourselves read in appearances. That is why we can argue endlessly about the reality of the external world, since what we call the world are the meanings that we read; they are not real. But they seize us as if they were external; that is real. Why should we try to resolve this contradiction when the more important task of thought in this world is to define and contemplate insoluble contradictions, which, as Plato said, draw us upwards?⁶⁰

Springsted explains further Weil’s notion of mystery. He suggests that essential to the understanding or encounter with the mystery, is the notion of limits for Weil. Weil understood that it is through opposition in thought and contradictions that we encounter ‘mysteries.’⁶¹ Springsted claims that in Weil’s work, the meaning of contradiction is generally understood as what would normally be known in philosophy as “incommensuration,” which is essentially the contrast of two things that have no common intellectual features.⁶² Weil also uses contradiction interchangeably with words such as “contrary,” “paradox,” and “mystery.”⁶³

Rebecca Rozelle-Stone, Lucian Stone, and Springsted, point out that contradiction understood purely through formal logic alone would not allow the coexistence of suffering and an omnipotent and benevolent God. However, the notion of contradictions, as ‘mystery,’ makes room for these two juxtaposed positions.⁶⁴ They also argue that Weil sought Christ as the

⁵⁸ Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, 181.

⁵⁹ A. Rebecca Rozelle-Stone and Benjamin P. Davis, “Simone Weil,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 21. Published: Mar. 10, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/simone-weil/>.

⁶⁰ Simone Weil, *Late Philosophical Writings*, trans. Eric O. Springsted and Lawrence E. Schmidt (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

⁶¹ Springsted, “Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil,” 3–4.

⁶² Springsted, “Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil,” 3–4.

⁶³ Springsted, “Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil,” 3–4.

⁶⁴ Rozelle-Stone and Davis, “Simone Weil,” 21; Springsted, “Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil,” 7.

solution to the principal contradiction between necessity and good.⁶⁵ It is not entirely clear what is meant by this later claim. However, one way of examining Weil's understanding of contradictions is through her writing about suffering and the silence of Christ at the cross (discussed in Chapter 5). For we often see contradictory claims in her writing about faith. Weil writes, for example, "The mystery of the cross of Christ lies in a contradiction, for it is both a free-will offering and a punishment which he endured in spite of himself."⁶⁶ These ambiguous and contradictory claims can be understood as pointing to the literature within negative and apophatic theology. As discussed in previous chapters, within this literature domain, contradictory and ambiguous terms commonly referred to as the divine are understood as ineffable and difficult to define in language.

Springsted maintains that Weil's contribution to the understanding of 'mystery' within the literature has been largely ignored. He rightly points out that the term mystery is acknowledged by many religious scholars as an essential component in our understanding of God. The mystery here is described not as a problem to be solved but rather as an essential part of our intuitive understanding of the universe, which transcends logic and technique. Springsted, for example, refers to Rudolf Otto, who states that mystery is "beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible and familiar."⁶⁷ Springsted writes:

Marcel has further noted that a mystery needs to be distinguished from a problem. Problems, he says, are 'subject to an appropriate technique ... whereas a mystery by definition transcends every conceivable technique.' Mysteries are not an obstacle to thought but are apprehended by 'an essentially positive act of the mind' (211). Finally, Rahner has also noted that mystery is not a lack of knowledge which will be solved in the beatific vision, but 'rather [is] one of the attributes of such intuitive knowledge [of God]' (118). Mystery for all these writers is not a blank unknown, nor a puzzle to be solved, but something that is actually enlightening and an essential part knowledge of God.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Rozelle-Stone and Davis, "Simone Weil," 21.

⁶⁶ Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 103.

⁶⁷ Springsted, "Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil," 1.

⁶⁸ Springsted, "Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil," 1.

Contradiction alone is proof that we are not everything. Contradiction is our wretchedness, and the sense of own wretchedness is the sense of reality ... We participate in the creation of the world by decreasing ourselves.⁶⁹

As discussed in Chapter 5, Weil wrote much on the importance of humility, which emerges due to suffering and human limitations. Weil claimed that it had an important role in education. Rozelle and Stone point out below that Weil understood epistemic humility as an important factor that helps us understand and expand the mind beyond our limited perspectives.⁷⁰ Epistemic humility allows one to have an openness to truth and leads the knower to become aware of their limitations to knowledge. They write:

Knowing the truth requires not extending one's own limited perspective but suspending or abandoning it such that reality – including the reality of the existence of others – could appear on its own terms. This suspension involves practice of epistemic humility and openness to all ideas; intelligence for Weil demands the qualified use of language, acknowledgement of degrees, proportions, contingencies, and relations, as well as an ability to call the self into question. These epistemic practices are part of a broader recognition that the individual knower is limited.⁷¹

... Whoever goes through years of study without developing this attention within himself has lost a great treasure ...⁷²

Additionally, Weil wrote extensively about the importance of attention for learning (as discussed in Chapter 5). What is important for our contemplative framework is that Weil advocated for a slow approach to learning and reflection. Weil thought that, to engage in deep learning, we need to develop the skills and dispositions of “waiting patiently for answers to come to us.” She states, “In every school exercise, there is a special way of waiting upon truth.”⁷³ Weil’s notion of waiting and attention is not only important for learning at school but also for the development of the soul and an encounter with the divine.

⁶⁹ Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 95, 29.

⁷⁰ Rozelle-Stone and Davis, “Simone Weil,” 21.

⁷¹ Rozelle-Stone and Davis, “Simone Weil,” 21.

⁷² Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: G. P. Putman’s Sons, 1951), 64. Weil also states the following: “Although people seem to be unaware of it today, the development of the faculty of attention forms the real object and almost the sole interest of studies...”, Weil, *Waiting for God*, 57.

⁷³ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 63.

To conclude this examination of Weil, we may ask whether any of Weil's claims are relevant today. Weil has some apparent problems in convincing young people of God's existence or presence. In addition, students may struggle with contradictions and provocations and yet still not attain the sense of mystery she is describing. It is not always clear how encountering paradoxes and an impasse in our logic and understanding of the world can necessarily lead one towards the process of attaining humility and/or encountering the greater mystery and God. Many philosophers and scientists, for example, have grappled with unanswered questions and anomalies and have not resorted to an awareness of mystery, God, or humility.⁷⁴

While Weil could not provide further explanations of her methods in the classrooms regarding provocations, she offers a concrete tool for engaging young people. This is through literature. Weil argues that engaging in good literature can facilitate confronting contradictions in the events of characters' lives, and in doing so, we expand our 'perspectives on the world.'

Furthermore, although most educational models cannot guarantee student engagement and positive outcomes, Weil's focus on intellectual rigour may appeal to the inquisitiveness and curiosity of students. While Weil's provocations cannot promise that they will lead one to an awareness of humility, mystery, or God, they still work on developing students' thinking skills and curiosity. These remain important for holistic learning despite some limitations in Weil's approach. Besides, what is insightful in Weil's approach, is that her explanation of the mystery does not 'shy away' from rigour in thinking but rather embraces reason by transcending it. Her insights provide a synthesis of the academic use of reason (e.g., in developing critical thinking skills through her provocative techniques) and a connection to the notion of mystery and humility.

⁷⁴ For example: Robert Nozick, *The Examined Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006); Bryan Magee, *Ultimate Questions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, many writers have spoken about the importance of eliciting a sense of awe, wonder, and curiosity about the world, which may lead students to an encounter and awareness of the mystery and sacred. Moreover, it will be important in this pedagogy to highlight for students that the concept of ‘mystery’ is not only a term used by religious scholars, but that philosophers, writers, and scientists have also recognised this mystery, which is not easily explained though language, yet remains a powerful phenomenon.⁷⁵ Mystery was not a problem to be solved, but a pervading presence which induces awe and wonder. The mystery in *Sophie’s World* by Jostein Gaarder, for example, was the world depicted outside the rabbit’s snug fur.⁷⁶ Albert Einstein never subscribed to the notions of a personal God attributed in theistic religious traditions; however, in Einstein’s attempt to understand the universe he wrote about religious feelings experienced in what he sensed was an “expansive mystery” within the universe unfathomable to the human mind.⁷⁷

The insights about mystery may appeal to a student’s curiosity within a modern classroom, addressing the religious, agnostic, and atheistic student, and meet some of the broader aims of education. Introducing students to the writers mentioned in this chapter can provoke their thinking skills and elicit a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world. This was one of the tools Weil used. Weil (among others) believed that good literature was a way of allowing students to think deeply. In what follows next, Weil discusses the use of literature and ‘proper reading’ as enabling students to engage in contradictions (about events in the world), which she argues enlarges their perspective on the world.

I would also like to add that good literature, such as in *Sophie’s World* (among others) can also evoke a sense of mystery for students. This awareness of mystery is a critical dimension in

⁷⁵ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 110.

⁷⁶ Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie’s World* (Phoenix House, London, 1995).

⁷⁷ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 110.

creating a positive and educational atmosphere which is encouraging deep learning and inquiry within the classroom.

II. *Weil on developing a more expansive perspective through ‘proper reading’*

To read, and read at the same time one’s own reading, the notion of reading, the mechanical or quasi-mechanical necessity for that particular reading ... As one reads, one should also read one’s own reading. It involves awareness of the fact that one is reading, and it is naturally inclined to be from the self-centred perspective. In the same way, one notices that other people may read from their own perspective. ‘A centre from which may be seen the different possible readings – and their relationship – and our own only as one among them’ ... It is indispensable to notice that ‘my’ reading is one of many other readings, all of which are deficient and ‘incorrect’ so far as one’s reading is bounded by a self-centred perspective.⁷⁸

Previously we saw the importance of intentionally engaging in contradictory claims with students to have them struggle with complexity when it comes to attaining certainty in knowledge. This process, Weil states, is intended to lead students to the awareness of limitations in knowledge and a sense of mystery. As an extension of Weil’s ideas, the importance of ‘reading well’ further exemplifies the notion of decreation and detachment, which is essential for developing humility. Weil suggests that in ‘proper reading,’ we encourage students to not only become aware of contradictions but also the wider perspective beyond their own personal views and ‘self-centred perspective.’

Weil goes on to state that by engaging in contradictions and various perspectives in reading (some of which reflect the ‘state of affairs’ in the world), we are better prepared in relating and engaging with the world. This attainment of *different perspectives*, Springsted points out, Weil understood as leading toward the awareness of the ‘universal view.’ He writes: “This faith is an ability to read not from one’s self-perspective, but from a universal perspective...”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Simone Weil, *The Notebooks of Simone Weil*, trans. Arthur Wills (London: Routledge, 2004), 42, 47; Yoda Kazuaki, “An Approach to Simone Weil’s Philosophy of Education Through the Notion of Reading,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 36, no. 6 (2017): 663–82, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-017-9576-1>.

⁷⁹ Springsted, “Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil,” 10.

However, this idea could be further developed: To what extent can exploring contradictions and perspectives in our reading allow us to engage better in the real world or with people?

In response to the above question, Kazuaki Yoda rightly suggests that preparing students to love God (as Weil claims) as an educational goal, may be a challenging, if not an impossible task today; but teaching students to develop ‘perspectives’ is a feasible and possible goal, at least to some extent.⁸⁰ The goal of education, in the general sense, should ideally teach this skill, so this in itself is not a new idea. What is perhaps unique to Weil, which Yoda touches on, are the connections between *enlarging one’s perspectives through reading from a self-detached place, and the role of attention in this process*. This ability to read from a larger perspective, which includes the view of the ‘other,’ Yoda extends towards expressing a love for the other, and God; and points to an ethical response in ‘learning to read’ within a contemplative framework. He writes:

By changing our perspective, we learn to love God... Although it is perhaps inappropriate to include the love of God in the purpose of education (especially school education), the claim that we need to learn to change our perspective and read (in Weil’s language) reality better is still compelling. To learn to love is to change how we read. Through proper apprenticeship, we learn to create a comprehensive reading and read reality better. This is achieved through the contemplation of contradictions. Thus, education is apprenticeship in reading and the learning of the method of contemplation.⁸¹

The importance of reading, especially good literature, such as the well-known writers and poets: Shakespeare, T.S Elliot and Dostoevsky, all deal with themes of contradictions, conflicts, moral dilemmas and the ‘stuff of living.’ In this way, we can ‘extend our perspective’ to include the experiences and ideas of others, as Weil is suggesting. Contradictions can be present in many forms, for example, epistemologically when we examine the truth of claims, and psychologically within the psyche and relationships between real people. This is

⁸⁰ Yoda, “Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?” Abstract, 2.

⁸¹ Yoda, “Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?” Abstract, 2.

exemplified in the works of the above writers. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, for example, the ideas of jealousy, love and power within relationships are explored. Weil describes the power of literature in the following way:

There is something else which has the power to awaken us to the truth. It is the works of writers of genius, or at least those with genius of the very first order and when it has reached its full maturity. They are outside the realm of fiction, and they release us from it. They give us, in the guise of fiction, something equivalent to the actual density of the real, that density which life offers us every day but which we are unable to grasp because we are amusing ourselves with lies.⁸²

There are many like Weil who have observed the power of literature and the arts to make us more aware of truths, perspectives, and moral dilemmas (e.g., Martha Nussbaum, Iris Murdoch, Azar Nafisi, Martin Heidegger, Caranfa, Alfred Whitehead, and Theodor Adorno, among others).⁸³ Contemporary scholar Christopher Chaves, for example, examines the importance of the arts and humanities in helping us develop a high level of critical and creative thinking.⁸⁴ He argues this leads to ethical thinking capabilities and problem solving that are conducive to democracy and 'effective citizenship.'⁸⁵

What makes Weil's aesthetic distinctive, however (as discussed in Chapter 5), is her claim that the arts and aesthetic experience can help us detach from our ego and self-preoccupation, leading to humility and an encounter with the mystery. Iris Murdoch, influenced by Weil, also argues that good literature can engender us to connect with a reality greater than ourselves and counteract the small egoic preoccupation with the self.⁸⁶ This disposition is insightful for a contemplative classroom, for it can help students become aware of the suffering of others and

⁸² Simone Weil, *On Science, Necessity, and the Love of God: Essays*, trans. Richard Rees (London: Oxford U.P, 1968), 162.

⁸³ These are cited in various chapters throughout the thesis.

⁸⁴ Christopher A. Chaves, *Liberal Arts and Sciences: Thinking Critically, Creatively, and Ethically* (Bloomington Indiana: Trafford Publishing, 2014).

⁸⁵ Chaves, *Liberal Arts and Sciences*.

⁸⁶ Iris Murdoch also explores in depth the importance of the arts as a vehicle in encountering the mystery and transcendence. See: Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics* (New York: Penguin, 1999).

work towards a development of virtue (discussed in Chapter 8). Murdoch writes about the importance of arts in the following way:

It is important too that great art teaches us how real things can be looked at and loved without being seized and used, without being appropriated into the greedy organism of the self. This exercise of *detachment* is difficult and valuable...Beauty is that which attracts a sort of selfish attention. It is obvious here what is the role, for the artist or spectator, of exactness and good vision: unsentimental, *detached, unselfish, objective attention*.⁸⁷

Likewise, John Herman Randall argues that the arts help us make sense of and find meaning in the world, leading to transformation. The arts, he claims, can also “teach” our minds and emotions to encounter the divine. He states:

The work of the painter, the musician, the poet, teaches us how to use our eyes, our ears, our minds, and our feelings with greater power and skill ... It shows us how to discern unsuspected qualities in the world encountered, latent powers and possibilities there resident. Still more, it makes us see the new qualities with which the world, in cooperation with the spirit of man, can clothe itself ... Is it otherwise with the prophet and the saint? They too can do something to us; they too can effect changes in us and in our world ... They make us receptive to qualities of the world encountered; and they open our hearts to the new qualities with which that world, in co-operation with the spirit of man, can clothe itself. They enable us to see and feel the religious dimension of our world better, the ‘order of splendour’ and of man’s experience in and with it. They teach us how to find the Divine; they show us visions.⁸⁸

Good literature and the arts can be tools that enable and facilitate openness to interior life. Literature can connect us with our emotions, imagination, and values. This opening to the subjective experience serves the contemplative education paradigm well in helping students find personal meaning. Literature can similarly meet the demands of education by proposing a holistic approach to teaching and learning. Therefore, music, art, and literature are some art forms for which a focus on an appreciation of the transcendent can be achieved. Weil proposes that we must be taught how to read with an awareness of contradiction and a broader perspective. Eventually, this may lead to the mystery which is God. Weil draws our attention

⁸⁷ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics*, 353.

⁸⁸ John Herman Randall, *The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion* (Boston: Starr King, 1958), 114.

to an approach to reading, as Pierre Hadot observed below, is complex, challenging, and includes seeds of potential spiritual growth. He writes:

And yet we have forgotten *how* to read: how to pause, liberate ourselves from our worries, return to ourselves, and leave aside our search for subtlety and originality, in order to meditate calmly, ruminate, and let the texts speak to us. This, too, is a spiritual exercise and one of the most difficult. As Goethe said: Ordinary people don't know how much time and effort it takes to read. I've spent eighty years at it and still can't say that I have reached my goal.⁸⁹

III. Jacques Maritain on the development of reason and accent of the mind towards God and the mystery

Jacques Maritain, a French philosopher and mystic like Weil, discussed the importance of reason or intelligence in understanding God. Maritain, like Aquinas, thought that the human mind could understand metaphysical concepts about God (such as in the five proofs of God's existence). In *The Degrees of Knowledge*, Maritain outlines his epistemology which includes:

1. Empiricism – knowledge through the senses
2. Metaphysics – knowledge through reason
3. Mystical knowledge – universal principles and the 'highest wisdom.'⁹⁰

Maritain understood mystical knowledge to be the most critical area which leads us to wisdom and the experience of God, where he states metaphorically, "Here the soul finds pastures, and feeds upon its God."⁹¹ While our minds were able to understand metaphysics and concepts about God, ultimately this mystical experience was dependent on the works of grace.⁹² Like

⁸⁹ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, trans. Arnold I Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 109.

⁹⁰ Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Charles Scribers Sons, 1938), 16–18.

⁹¹ Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 16–18.

⁹² Similar to Maritain, Bonaventure shows how the mind can ascend to God with the aid of grace. *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum* is an account of the ascent of the mind to God through different types of knowing. Drawing on Augustine, according to Bonaventure, our memory, intellect and will have imprinted within them 'unchanging, uncreated light' which is God. We see that Bonaventure's theory of illumination is taken from Augustine. Bonaventure explains that we gain true understanding of wisdom and the highest goodness from an 'illumination' which is already imprinted with the light of God. Bonaventure describes a 'light' inscribed in our mind is similar to divine light as "we rise from the soul to consider the reality of the divine Being". LaNave illustrates in these insights in following way; "... memory contains within itself simple forms that must be infused from above (Itin.3.2); the intellect can know with certitude only by means of an unchanging, uncreated light (Itin. 3.3); and the will can judge one thing as better than another only with an implicit appeal to the notion of the highest good, which is impressed on the soul (Itin.3.4). This is again suggestive of the Trinitarian appropriations, with the will pointing to the highest goodness, the intellect to the highest wisdom, and the memory to the highest being." Bonaventure, *The Mind's Road to God*, trans George Boas (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953); Sister Maria Theotokos Adams, "Bonaventure Pondering with Augustine: De Civitate Dei 11.2 and the Making of the Itinerarium Mentis in Deum," *Traditio* 75 (2020): 253–288; Gregory F. LaNave, "Knowing God through and in All Things: A Proposal for Reading Bonaventure's "Itinerarium mentis in Deum,"

Weil, and many mystical writers, Maritain thought in mystical knowledge there was an “abolition of natural intellection,” as the intellect was ‘elevated’ to a higher spiritual space. He writes:

There is no question of an intellectual elevation above the intelligible, of rising by metaphysics ... to the abolition of natural intellection in a super-intelligibility of angelic ecstasies ... Here the soul finds pastures and feeds upon its God ... Thus delivered from the sensible world and the intellectual, alike, the soul enters into the mysterious obscurity of holy ignorance, and renouncing all the gifts of science, loses itself in him who can neither be seen nor seized; ... united to the unknown ... by reason of its renouncement of all science; finally drawing from this absolute ignorance a comprehension which the understanding could never have won [pp. i6-i8].⁹³

Furthermore, like Weil, Maritain’s aesthetic philosophy was linked to the divine. Maritain understood that the arts, through parables and hyperboles, were able to express something of the divine or transcendent a lot more easily than the language of metaphysics and theology. He illustrates this below through his descriptions of the artist Léon Bloy:

... he did not use human language, as do metaphysicians and theologians ... to try to express ... whatever we are able to know of transcendent reality ... he used it to try to evoke that which in this reality goes beyond the mode of our concepts, and remains unknown to us ... [H]is words tended less to state truths directly than to procure ... that feeling of mystery and of its actual presence. As he used reason and intellectual speculation according to a mode more experimental than demonstrative, to express reality in the very darkness that joins it to this feeling, the writers among whom Léon Bloy can suitably be classed necessarily make use of the parables and hyperboles to which mystical expression.⁹⁴

In *Education at the Crossroads*, Maritain outlines his views and critique of modern education.⁹⁵

He argues that education should be dedicated to the teaching of wisdom.⁹⁶ He understood, like

Aquinas, that humans were “endowed with reason whose supreme dignity is in the intellect.”⁹⁷

Franciscan Studies no. 67 (2009), 278; Andreas Speer, “The Certainty and Scope of Knowledge: Bonaventure’s Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 3 (1993): 35–61.

⁹³ Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 16–18.

⁹⁴ Jacques Maritain, quoted in Leon Bloy, *The Pilgrim of the Absolute*, ed. Raïssa Maritain, trans. John Coleman and Harry Lorin Binsse (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1947; Tacoma, WA: Cluny Media, 2017) xxiii–xxiv: See also Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art, and Poetry* (New York: New American Library, 1953).

⁹⁵ Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943).

⁹⁶ Jacques Maritain, *The Education of Man: Educational Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1962), 102, 105, 136.

⁹⁷ Jacques, *The Education of Man: Educational Philosophy*, 7.

Maritain advocates for the teaching of metaphysics and philosophy in high school and university.⁹⁸ He claims that teaching of the liberal arts endowed students with the development of the mind for “freedom and autonomy”.⁹⁹ Although he understood that the mystical experience was ultimately dependent on God, nevertheless, he claims that we can prepare for this experience through the development of the mind, and through education. Maritain asserts that family and the wider community (e.g., the church) can likewise help in informing and developing the will, towards the good and God.

Maritain maintains that progressive education through the works of John Dewey and Jean Piaget had some merit in developing the mental faculties of students.¹⁰⁰ However, he argues that pragmatism, for example, left a spiritual vacuum as questions about wisdom and truth were avoided.¹⁰¹ Maritain considers Dewey’s emphasis on a student’s ‘ego,’ likes and dislikes as detrimental to their growth as a person.¹⁰² Like Weil, Maritain thought the education system put too much emphasis on developing students’ impulses, ambitions and ‘ego.’ Instead, what schools should focus on is moving students towards the development of their soul and spirituality, what he termed their deep ‘personhood.’¹⁰³

Catholic scholars have drawn on Maritain’s main premise that education should be directed towards spirituality.¹⁰⁴ Mario De Souza, for example, explores his concepts as forming the heart of Catholic teaching and religious education.¹⁰⁵ What is less clear in both Maritain and

⁹⁸ David Carr, et al., “Return to the Crossroads: Maritain Fifty Years on,” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 43, no. 2 (1995): 162-78, doi:10.2307/3121936.

⁹⁹ Jacques, *Education at the Crossroads*, 12; See also, Maritain, *The Education of Man: Educational Philosophy*, 165.

¹⁰⁰ Mario O. D’Souza, “Maritain’s Philosophy of Education and Christian Religious Education,” *Catholic Education (Dayton, Ohio)* 4, no. 3 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.0403082013>.

¹⁰¹ Carr, “Return to the Crossroads: Maritain Fifty Years on,” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 43, no. 2 (1995):162-78, doi:10.2307/3121936.

¹⁰² Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*; D’Souza, “Maritain’s Philosophy of Education and Christian Religious Education.”

¹⁰³ Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads*; Sean Steele, “Jacques Maritain and Education,” Web-lecture for student-teachers, Jan. 1. 2015, <https://youtu.be/4rhZ1hnLZKQ>.

¹⁰⁴ See for example: Anthony Richard Haynes, “Jacques Maritain on the Mystic-Poet,” *New Blackfriars* 102, no. 1098 (2021): 239–56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12518>; D’Souza, “Maritain’s Philosophy of Education and Christian Religious Education.”; David Carr et al. “Return to the Crossroads: Maritain Fifty Years on”

¹⁰⁵ D’Souza, “Maritain’s Philosophy of Education and Christian Religious Education.”

De Souza's work, however, is how we *link* the teaching of the 'mind' (which we can interpret as teaching metaphysics, religious education and/or philosophy) in a way that is conducive for contemplation. In other words, how do we connect the mind to the soul's development and spirituality? Furthermore, while religious education might be considered a type of metaphysics or theology (referred to by Maritain), the teaching of philosophy, which is in essence for the development of the mind and Maritain encouraged, has not generally had a prominent role within Catholic schools, nor is it part of the training of pre-service teachers, at least not in Australia. As David Carr et al., explain:

It is difficult to suppose that in the present day conditions and circumstances, curriculum planners would be much taken by Maritain's views – particularly, for example, by his advocacy of substantial doses of logic in lower secondary and philosophy in upper secondary schooling.¹⁰⁶

This quote demonstrates that despite Maritain's views on the importance of philosophy in schools, this would be a challenge for educators.¹⁰⁷ What is important to note, however, is that these scholars do not develop this claim, nor do they support Maritain's view that philosophy should be taught. Perhaps this speaks to the tensions between philosophy and theology that have existed throughout history and are evident in academia today. Nevertheless, I think this is problematic for education. While the connection of the mind and soul and the works of grace (as discussed in Chapter 6) are complex issues, my observations are that these issues need further discussion and development in terms of their application to the classroom.

As Maritain and Aquinas advocated, the mind and intellect are essential faculties in our understanding of God and the notion of the soul. I would propose, like Maritain, that philosophy is a subject best suited to this task of developing wisdom, the development of the

¹⁰⁶ David Carr et al., "Return to the Crossroads: Maritain Fifty Years on," 171–172.

¹⁰⁷ David Carr et al., "Return to the Crossroads: Maritain Fifty Years on."

soul and personhood. It, therefore, deserves serious consideration in schools and universities.

IV. Resistance to philosophy and reason

This chapter rests on the assumption that to cultivate epistemic humility and a wider perspective of the world, we need to nurture the mind toward the aims of the contemplative classroom and the broader aims of education. While on the surface the development of the mind may sound like a feasible goal within an educational context, on closer examination, however, this may be a great challenge.

As many philosophers know, philosophy (and reasoning), broadly speaking, are not given priority or importance in society at large. Many examples that support this view. Firstly, the accusation of Socrates in ‘corrupting the mind of the youth’ shows testimony that the art and skill of encouraging, challenging and provoking people ‘to think’ is not always welcomed or rewarded.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, tensions between philosophy (reason) and theology have existed throughout history, pointing to the distrust of ‘reason’ by at least some religious writers and adherents. Thirdly, despite studies that suggest teaching philosophy results in the development of critical thinking skills and better grades, it remains largely absent from many school curriculums; and is increasingly receiving less funding in many universities worldwide.¹⁰⁹ As Bertrand Russell writes,

Man is a rational animal – so at least I have been told. Throughout a long life, I have looked diligently for evidence in favor of this statement, but so far I have not had the good fortune to come across it ... though I have searched in many countries spread over many continents.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ We see this in the lives of courageous people speaking out against the status quo and voicing their thinking. These people often receive criticism and even punishment—for example, various movements and the experiences of well-known figures. For instance, the early church martyrs, the deemed heretics in the 11th century, the woman’s movement which began this century, and the experiences of well-known figures such as Kierkegaard, Martin Luther, and Gandhi (to name a few). Also, the experience of many whistle-blowers today who speak out against unethical behaviours within organisations.

¹⁰⁹ For example, see: Philip Cam, “Dewey Lipman & the Tradition of Reflective Education,” *Philosophy in Schools NSW: Thinking Together*, accessed Dec. 8, 2021, https://web2.northsydgi-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/pinsnsw/?page_id=88; Stephen Law, “Blog: Why Study Philosophy at University,” *Journal Cambridge*, published Feb. 2, 2013, <http://blog.journals.cambridge.org/2013/02/13/why-study-philosophy/>.

¹¹⁰ Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular Essays* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950), 71.

Some of the examples presented would support Russell's observation and seem to suggest that despite our outward claims in favour of reason (including reasonable judgements and actions), much of what is evident is ambivalent and even contradictory towards reason. When looking at the state of the world and the 'reasonable and just actions' of many, we may agree with Russell's strong but poignant claims.

The contemporary works of Daniel Kahneman also call into question the reliability and certainty of our knowledge claims. Kahneman suggests that they can be inaccurate despite our deeply held confidence in our beliefs. Kahneman discusses in some depth the confirmation bias on behaviour. His observation is that despite our beliefs and their cohesive feelings of correctness, in many cases, they turn out to be wrong. Kahneman writes,

Most of us are healthy most of the time, and most of our judgements and actions are appropriate most of the time. As we navigate our lives, we normally allow ourselves to be guided by impressions and feelings, and the confidence we have in our intuitive beliefs and preferences is usually justified. But not always. We are often confident even when we are wrong, and an objective observer is more likely to detect our errors than we are.¹¹¹

Kahneman favours critical thinking skills taught well to counteract our confirmation bias and move beyond the factors that lead us towards flawed thinking.¹¹² I would agree with Kahneman's views and, like many philosophers, have sought to advocate for critical thinking.

What is interesting and relevant for education then is Maritain's concern about developing students' minds and reasoning. His understanding of the 'types of reasoning' and how mystical knowledge is distinct from empirical knowledge are insightful and relevant for the contemplative classroom. Maritain's discussion on moving away from the ego and worldly

¹¹¹ Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Random House, 2011), 24. Kahneman distinguishes two levels of thinking called Type 1 and Type 2. In Type 1 thinking, there are automatic, quick, effortless, and unconscious associations. Perception, impressions, feelings, and *intuition*, he claims, are in this category. Type 2 is thinking that is controlled, conscious, and logical. Kahneman argues that much of our thinking is a mixture of both. Type 2 usually adopts impressions and suggestions from Type 1, which are then synthesised and turned into beliefs that are not always justified, see, Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 24–25.

¹¹² Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.

ambition toward personhood (spirituality) also speaks to the theme of epistemic humility. Moreover, like Weil, Maritain draws on the importance of the arts and aesthetic experience in developing a broader perspective of reality that can enable an encounter with the divine. All important in informing a contemplative approach to teaching and learning.

V. Holistic approach to education, human flourishing, and wisdom

Within a contemplative framework, we want to move beyond superficial understandings toward deep thinking and reflection. This deep reflection is not only towards academic pursuits but also a mode of thinking that engages the interior to allow greater awareness of one's emotions, intuition, senses, and thoughts.

As Martin Heidegger warns us in *Being and Time*, the question concerning Being has been ignored in modern times, and we need to reclaim it.¹¹³ He proposes engagement in an ontology that seriously addresses the meaning of "being." In other words, we must pay more attention to understanding our human nature or essence.¹¹⁴ Science and technology, he states, cannot help us in this task.¹¹⁵ Therefore, to respond to Heidegger's imperative means we need to attend to the 'inner lives' of our students so that learning becomes engaging and personally meaningful. As educator Parker Palmer notes in *The Courage to Teach*, the interior life of students is education's critical and challenging task. He states:

¹¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 149.

¹¹⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

¹¹⁵ Heidegger states that modern society is characterised by a type of thinking driven by results and utility, calculative thinking. Heidegger understood calculative thinking as including analysis and logic suited to scientific investigation and research, rather than exploring the subjective self. Heidegger describes calculative thinking as leading to a pervading 'frantic quality, a restlessness' that results in an 'inattentiveness and existential homelessness.' He states, "In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence." Calculative thinking is 'fragmented,' going from one thing to the other, described as "a growing thoughtlessness," causing man to be "in flight from thinking." A thinking that never stops to "recollect" or think about the "essence of things" points to what he describes as *mediative thinking*. On the other hand, Meditative thinking is more open-ended, spontaneous, and conducive to an understanding of a person's 'essence' or subjective experiences. Meditative thinking attempts to address and incorporate the question and nature of being, which he claims are largely ignored in modern culture. See: Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, 6, 211, 240; David R Cerbone, *Heidegger* (London: Continuum, 2008),164165; Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 332; Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966b), 45; Raymond A. Younis, "On Thinking (and Measurement)" (Conference paper, Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia Conference, 43, on 'Measuring Up in Education', Melbourne, Australia, December 2013),1; Younis, "On Thinking (and Measurement)," 3.

... To educate is to guide students on an inner journey towards a more truthful way of seeing and being in the world. How can schools perform their mission without encouraging the guides to scout out that inner terrain?¹¹⁶

Heidegger and Palmer's observations also point to *Bildung*'s educational aims, which seek to teach toward personal meaning and understanding. *Bildung* argues that education must guide students toward their 'inner terrain.' *Bildung* seeks ways to make learning more meaningful for students. As Solveig M. Reindal notes, *Bildung* is "what we are left with after we have forgotten what we have learned."¹¹⁷ The aim for this integration of learning points to the broader holistic goals of education. This theme is explored within the philosophy of education literature examined in Chapter 4. The philosophers investigated; all advocated that holistic learning is achieved when we work towards teaching the attainment of *wisdom*. Then, the question of *how* we do this becomes important for a holistic approach to education, which many institutions acknowledge is important.¹¹⁸

Philosophy, as we have seen through the writings of the various philosophers (especially the existentialists), not only helps in developing the mind toward understanding the world better, but also helps us construct personal meaning. This has been the call of philosophy since Socrates – to provide a way to wisdom and, therefore holistic education. As Pierre Hadot states in his work, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*: what philosophy can offer us is an exploration of our whole being. He states:

¹¹⁶ Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997) inside book cover.

¹¹⁷ Solveig M. Reindal defines *Bildung* in the following ways, "The UHR committee holds that it is not possible to add *Bildung* to the curriculum as if it were a prescribed bit of knowledge or a learning goal. This argument we based on what has already been said, about *Bildung* as internalized knowledge and competence, "what we are left with after we have forgotten what we have learned" (UHR 2011, pp. 33–34, my translation). See: Solveig M. Reindal, "Bildung, the Bologna Process and Kierkegaard's Concept of Subjective Thinking," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32,no.5(2013):533–49. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-012-9344-1>.

¹¹⁸ Most educational institutions are often in the dark about achieving this task, which is not easily measurable but remains a vital process. Philosophers of education traditionally explore these questions and issues. However, the philosophy of education courses has become obsolete in many universities and pre-service teacher training. Policymakers have generally speaking ignored the approach of these philosophers.

Philosophy thus took on the form of an exercise of thought, will, and the totality of one's being, the goal of which was to achieve a state practically inaccessible to mankind: wisdom.¹¹⁹

Moreover, as mentioned earlier and discussed in Chapter 4, it is important to note that for the philosophers of antiquity, the idea of wisdom and personal meaning was connected to a *flourishing life*. This was a happy life, lived well. Furthermore, we also examined Aristotle's elucidations on the importance of contemplation. Aristotle understood the significance of contemplation in living the good and flourishing life. To wonder and 'deliberate' on what is happiness, virtue and the 'meaning of all things,' for Aristotle, was an activity that led to a meaningful and flourishing life. These are essential themes for holistic learning and the contemplative classroom framework.

7.4 From 'critical thinking' to theoria. Contemplative and meditative thinking: Sean Steel, Josef Pieper and Martin Heidegger

While this chapter has focused on developing epistemic humility through the dialectic, what becomes clear is the need for further clarity on what we might mean by 'reason' and 'thinking' for a contemplative framework. Furthermore, this chapter needs some clarification on the term 'critical thinking' used in a modern context and how this might differ from the understanding of thinking we adopt for contemplative teaching and learning. The following will shed further light on this question. As Josef Pieper argues,

To philosophise means to reflect on the totality of that which is encountered with regard to its ultimate meaning, and this act of philosophising, so construed, is a meaningful, even necessary activity from which the spiritually existing person can absolutely not desist.¹²⁰

Hadot, Pieper, Sean Steel, Weil, and Maritain (among many others, e.g., Kierkegaard, Augustine) all understood that philosophy was not only crucial in the training of the mind or

¹¹⁹ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 265.

¹²⁰ Pieper, "A Plea for Philosophy," 84, quoted in Sean Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education: Historical Sources and Contemplative Practices* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2014), 227.

reason but also in other aspects of our being, for example, our spirit, soul, imagination, will and intuition. Hadot describes this holistic approach when he states, "... teaching and training of philosophy were intended not simply to develop the intelligence of discipline, but to inform all aspects of his being – intellect, imagination, sensibility and will."¹²¹ Philosophy was understood as a discourse about life in its 'totality.' Pieper, likewise, suggests that philosophy "is interested in the world as a totality and in wisdom in its entirety."¹²²

The insights above lend themselves to viewing philosophy as not just an academic subject to teach 'information' or 'facts' – but rather to foster the whole person's development, which includes the soul. This broader perspective of philosophy can also enable teaching and learning to incorporate wonder and awe, which, as posited, can lead students to an awareness of the mystery.

However, it is essential to note that this holistic approach to philosophy is contested and not always reflected in the teaching of this subject. We see, for example, when philosophy is introduced in some schools, it often does not incorporate this holistic view, nor is philosophy taught within a contemplative mindset. Sean Steel describes this well in the following:

In P4C literature, philosophy is characterised as 'thinking about thinking,' or metacognition. Although philosophy certainly involves 'thinking about thinking,' philosophy is not simply metacognition. Rather, philosophy, as the love of wisdom, has knowledge of 'reality as such' as its object. Hence, true philosophy concerns not only thoughts – which are certainly *part* of what is real, for we really *do* think – but everything that is given, within as well as without. Although wisdom's pursuit requires that we attend to what we think, as 'reflection on reality as such,' philosophy is broader than merely thinking about our thinking; it demands a wider 'openness for the whole.'¹²³

¹²¹ Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, 21.

¹²² Pieper states: "Philosophy betrays itself at the very moment it begins to construe itself as an academic subject. The philosophising person is not characterised by the fact that he is interested in philosophy as a "subject"; he is interested in the world as a totality and in wisdom in its entirety." Pieper, "A Plea for Philosophy," quoted in Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*.

¹²³ Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 84.

Furthermore, Steel and Pieper argue that critical thinking and philosophy are more than just developing metacognition and thinking skills, which is often understood within modern approaches; *but rather a connection to a broader perspective and reality that can be more than just our own thoughts.*¹²⁴ This wider perspective, or lens, is inclusive and open to all ways of knowing and experience. As I have contended throughout the thesis – this is the call to contemplation. Steel continues to argue that ‘true’ philosophy engages in the process of contemplation or *theoria*,¹²⁵ whereas critical analysis requires a type of mental labour. On the other hand, *theoria* is described as a type of leisure, a ‘seeing’ or ‘beholding’, “an activity of leisure or *scholē* in as much as *theoria* is a simple beholding and enjoyment of what is seen.”¹²⁶ Incidentally, Steel’s descriptions of *theoria* are similar to the etymology of the word ‘contemplation,’ which is described as the “act of looking at, ... *contemplari* to gaze attentively, observe; consider, contemplate.”¹²⁷

Moreover, Pieper also understood *theoria* as the goal of philosophy in its pursuit of wisdom. However, Pieper argues that we come to this process by listening in silence. Understanding philosophical truths are therefore known not just through reasoning skills but also in silence.

Pieper states:

Theoria [that is, the goal and activity of philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom] aims at the unqualified cognition of reality, at truth and nothing else ... But then: *to perceive means to listen in silence* ... [O]nly in silence is hearing possible. Moreover, the stronger the determination prevails to hear all there is, the more profound and more complete the silence must be. Consequently, philosophy (as contemplation of reality as such and as the highest possible actualisation of *theoria*) means: to listen so perfectly

¹²⁴ Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 212.

¹²⁵ Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 212. Steel describes *theoria* in the following ways, “...through contemplative practice is the precise activity of our highest happiness (*eudaimonia*); according to Anaxagoras, contemplative practice (*theoria*) is what we were born for; in Plato’s *Symposium*, Diotima remarks that “it is in contemplating (*theomenoi*) the Beautiful Itself (*auto to kalon*)” that “human life is to be lived,” for only “when a human being looks (*blepontos*) there and contemplates (*theomenou*) that with that by which one must contemplate it, and be with it” that true virtue is begotten in him, making him “dear to god” (*theophilei*), and “if any other among men is immortal (*athanato*), he is too.” Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 247.

¹²⁶ Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 212.

¹²⁷ “Contemplation,” *Etymonline.Com*, accessed 12 October 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=Contemplation>. This is closely linked to my definition of contemplation discussed in Chapter 5. Contemplation has been defined in the thesis as a process that draws on all of one’s faculties; the senses, thinking, feeling and imagination in a way which generally leads to self-integration. Contemplation tends to be attributed to a much slower pace in thinking and reflection.

and intensely that such receptive silence is not disturbed and interrupted by anything, not even by a question.¹²⁸

For Pieper, then, like Weil, philosophy involves a contemplative exercise that requires receptivity and openness. In this contemplative process, silence penetrates “one’s innermost being.”¹²⁹ *It is here that this ‘wider perspective,’ that Steel, Hadot and Weil alluded to earlier, that philosophy begins to make sense. This ‘broader reality’ which includes and moves beyond thinking, also includes silence.* The disposition of receptivity, openness and waiting as recalled is also captured by Weil. Pieper describes the attention to silence in the following way:

[I]t is not so much a question of doing as it is one of receptivity, of being willing to let something befall oneself. What is meant is an extreme – a seismographic, as it were – ability to be attentive, which does not require exertion so much as it does a silence that penetrates one’s innermost being and that cannot be induced by any activity, no matter how disciplined, but that can very well be disrupted by it.¹³⁰

Heidegger’s meditative thinking

As we shall see in what follows, much of the unpacking of the dialectic and thinking so far can be linked to Heidegger’s ‘meditative thinking.’ I suggest that Heidegger’s notion of meditative thinking provides a tool or language to discuss an approach to ‘thinking’ best suited to a contemplative classroom. Heidegger draws out two distinctions in thinking; one he termed ‘mediative thinking,’ the second, ‘calculative thinking.’

Heidegger states there is a type of thinking driven by results and utility – calculative thinking, that characterises modern society.¹³¹ Heidegger understood calculative thinking as analysis and logic suited to scientific investigation and research.¹³² Heidegger describes the effects of calculative thinking as leading to a “frantic quality, a restlessness” that results in an

¹²⁸ Josef Pieper, *In Defense of Philosophy: Classical Wisdom Stands up to Modern Challenges* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 47.

¹²⁹ Pieper, “On the Platonic Idea of Philosophy,” 169, quoted in Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 225–226.

¹³⁰ Pieper, “On the Platonic Idea of Philosophy,” 169, quoted in Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 225–226.

¹³¹ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*

¹³² Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*

“inattentiveness and existential homelessness.”¹³³ He states, “In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence.”¹³⁴ Calculative thinking, he suggests, is ‘fragmented’. It is a thinking that moves from one thing to the other, described as “a growing thoughtlessness,” causing a man to be “in flight from thinking.”¹³⁵ A thinking that never stops to “recollect” or think about the “essence of things,” which points to ‘mediative thinking’.¹³⁶

On the other hand, for Heidegger, meditative thinking is more open-ended and spontaneous.¹³⁷ It is thinking conducive to understanding a person’s ‘essence’ or subjective experiences.¹³⁸ Meditative thinking attempts to address and incorporate the question and nature of being, which he claims is largely ignored in modern culture.¹³⁹ Meditative thinking is best exemplified in the arts and poetry.

Mediative thinking is particularly significant for our purposes in this thesis. This approach addresses holistic learning and the aims of the contemplative classroom. It is essential to highlight the importance of Heidegger’s epistemology and understanding of thinking for this chapter and thesis. As we have seen, much of the discussed notion of ‘thinking’ reflects strong elements of Heidegger’s meditative thinking.

¹³³David R. Cerbone, *Heidegger* (London: Continuum, 2008), 164–165; Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 332.

¹³⁴ Cerbone, *Heidegger*, 164–165; and Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 332.

¹³⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966b), 45; Younis, “On Thinking (and Measurement),” 1.

¹³⁶ Younis, “On Thinking (and Measurement),” 3.

¹³⁷ Younis, “On Thinking (and Measurement),” 3.

¹³⁸ Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*

¹³⁹ Heidegger’s critique on the pervasiveness of calculative thinking (and science) is unequivocal. For example, Heidegger states, “Whence do the sciences – which necessarily are always in the dark about the origins of their own nature-derive the authority to pronounce such verdicts? Whence do the sciences derive the right to decide what man’s place is and to offer themselves as the standard that justifies such decisions?” Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* 43.

7.5 *The challenges posed by technology and neoliberalism on the attainment of contemplation and theoria*

In our current school environment, ‘the demands for constant activity, the habit of electronic stimulation, and the production orientation of modern society make it very difficult to keep the contemplative alive.’¹⁴⁰

Pieper and Steel’s proposal that philosophy requires a more holistic approach beyond the narrow understanding of critical thinking is faced with some challenges. The focus on technology, measurable assessments, and outcomes within a neoliberal framework with crowded curriculums makes this approach difficult to implement.¹⁴¹ Steel also describes how the focus on technology erodes our ability for genuine contemplation and *theoria*, and happiness. Drawing on Pieper, he argues that technology removes the “theoretical character of philosophy” and makes us focus on the “practical and functional.” He states that what we behold and focus on is the reality of the “It” (using Buber’s terms), which we constructed and master, rather than the “I-Thou” relation. Ultimately, this modern preoccupation is detrimental to contemplation and our attainment of *eudaimonia*.¹⁴² He states:

As Pieper remarks, ‘The suicide of philosophy is this – once the world begins to be looked upon merely as the raw material of human activity, it is only a step to the abolition of the theoretical character of philosophy.’ When offered as a function available only to ‘users,’ the promise of technological transcendence serves as a deformation of consciousness and marks the destruction of *theoria*. It distorts our sense of what it means to engage in the contemplative life by deluding us into believing that our ‘I-It’ experience of computer use might be a genuine replacement for enjoyment of the ‘I-Thou’ relation that arises only where use is *not* present; in diverting us from genuine theorising – an activity *not* arising in the atmosphere of use (*uti*) but in the leisure (*scholē*) of simple enjoyment (*frui*) – our faith in technology cuts us off from that highest activity of the best part of ourselves in relation to its most perfect object. As we have seen, Aristotle calls this activity ‘happiness’ (*eudaimonia*); and this happiness is identical with *theoria* as the true mode of our ‘immortalisation.’¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 244.

¹⁴¹ Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*.

¹⁴² Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 240–241. Many have critiqued the influences of technology on education and in attainment of *eudaimonia*. For example, see Edward H. Spence, “Is Technology Good for Us? A Eudemonic Meta-Model for Evaluating the Contributive Capability of Technologies for a Good Life,” *Nanoethics* 5, no. 3 (2011): 335–43, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11569-011-0134-y>.

¹⁴³ Steel, *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Happiness in Education*, 240–241.

Conclusion

This chapter has proposed that to entice students to an awareness of the ‘greater mystery’ and transcendence, we need to teach epistemic humility. The elucidation of philosophers such as Socrates helped inform how we might achieve this and develop what I have termed a contemplative mindset. This, I have argued, can be done through the teaching of philosophy. I have examined the importance of humility (and virtue) toward human flourishing and contemplative learning. Firstly, by discussing the importance of Socratic ignorance and Socrates’ understanding of humility, virtue, and wisdom. Secondly, I examined the connections of humility to the broader philosophical and religious literature. This domain points to its importance concerning awe, wonder, and the development of religious virtue. Thirdly, I included some empirical findings that support the observations of philosophers and theologians on the effects of humility. Researchers have also noted that the disposition of humility led people towards more ethical behaviour, and most people who displayed traits of humility showed capabilities of also ‘seeing the wider perspective.’

Philosophy has within it a range of thinkers, some of whom are mentioned, that employ the use of the dialectic effectively and from a broader perspective. For this to be achieved, a contemplative mindset and context need to be created that allow and encourage silence and, as Weil suggests, slow thinking. A contemplative attitude also points to the importance of *allowing students more experiences of silence within the classroom* to reflect and think more deeply about questions, prompts, and provocations. In addition, it is an approach that advocates for the arts and humanities.

Through the works of Weil and Maritain, I developed the notion that developing epistemic humility through the dialectic can lead to an awareness of mystery. Weil’s discussion of

contradictions and provocations with her students included extensive intellectual ‘rigour’ in extending their thinking skills. Weil shows us how this rigour, if we persist, can lead to students reaching an impasse in thought, potentially allowing students to encounter the ‘pervasive mystery’ in reality. Understanding how we can reach the limits of our knowledge also allows us to develop a diminishing of our egos and self-preoccupation that can facilitate humility.

The practice of silence within contemplative practices need not preclude the dialectic. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, Socrates did not dismiss silence but embraced it as part of his reflective process. Furthermore, Chapter 2 demonstrated the positive benefits of silence within learning. This chapter showed how the dialectical method, as Socrates taught (and provocations as Weil describes this method), can help students develop thinking skills and potentially lead them towards awareness of the limitation of knowledge and understanding. This process can help students widen their perspectives on the world, facilitating the disposition of humility, awe and wonder, and awareness, and encountering the broader mystery and the divine.

I also highlighted some obvious problems in this proposed model. The most apparent would be that we cannot always be sure that engaging in the dialectic through provocations and students engaging in silence through the arts (e.g., sacred music or silent reading) will necessarily lead to an encounter with the mystery or a recognition of the Socratic concept of ignorance and humility. In addressing this problem, I focused on appealing to students’ *reasoning, curiosity, and wonder* about the world. The provocations in this chapter from Weil (and others) encourage students to consider a ‘wider perspective’ beyond their immediate experiences and what reason and logic can tell us. The provocations in this chapter from Weil (and others) encourage students to consider a ‘wider perspective’ beyond their immediate experiences and what reason and logic can tell us. This approach may facilitate an awareness of the broader mystery.

I have also briefly revisited some primary themes of holistic learning and teaching towards flourishing and wisdom discussed in other chapters. As philosophers of education have advocated, there are ‘relevant questions’ to lead students toward thinking about the more important and meaningful questions.¹⁴⁴ We see this exemplified in the works and lives of many religious philosophers, such as Weil, Augustine, Søren Kierkegaard, Marcel Jaspers, Jacques Maritain, and Josef Pieper (among others). These philosophers relied on the Socratic method and philosophy to stimulate thinking, leading to their religious or spiritual experiences.¹⁴⁵ *Philosophy (and reason) offered the tools for thinking* about personal meaning, God, and morality, even if ultimately, most of these philosophers thought that reason and philosophy were limiting in fully comprehending the broader ‘mystery’ and God and sought to transcend reason.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, philosophy and reason provided a conceptual framework for exploring these issues.

While this chapter has focused on developing a contemplative mindset, the next chapter will discuss the importance of ethics and virtue for a contemplative model. Chapter 8 will then concentrate on the need for ‘attentive listening’ to the suffering of the other that can provide a space for ‘presence. ‘This is particularly important, given the distractions and focus on technological devices in the modern culture that have diminished our capacities to develop the skills and disposition of deep listening and ‘presence’ with the other. These ideas will be explored mainly through Weil’s writing (and others).

For Weil, listening attentively to ‘the other’ was mainly about the poor and marginalised. I will suggest that while contemplative silence and deep reflection are essential for learning and the soul, listening attentively to others is also crucial and often underrated in educational settings.

¹⁴⁴ Laoulach, “Should Philosophy be the tool for Inquiry-Based learning in Religious Education,”11–12.

¹⁴⁵ Laoulach, “Should Philosophy be the tool for Inquiry-Based learning in Religious Education,”11–12.

¹⁴⁶ Laoulach, “Should Philosophy be the tool for Inquiry-Based learning in Religious Education,”11–12.

This attentive listening is an example of *love made visible in the world* that seeks to address the *vita contemplativa* dimensions of Christian faith and holistic education.

Chapter 8 – Ethics – Attentive listening: Simone Weil

In Chapter 7, I extended Caranfa’s model by demonstrating what the dialectic might look like in the contemplative classroom. I argued that in teaching philosophy through thinkers such as Socrates, Jacques Maritain and Simone Weil and engaging in literature, we are better placed to facilitate deep reflection, inquiry and development of a contemplative mindset in the classroom.

Within a contemplative classroom environment, we want not only to encourage an inquisitive questioning but also to demonstrate a genuine sense of care. This notion of care is vital in creating a positive learning environment in the classroom and is particularly important for contemplative pedagogy. Listening attentively and discerningly to the suffering of the other is essential in addressing and understanding their needs. This approach would engender a more holistic inclusion for teaching and learning and also contribute to discussions on ethical practice.

In extending Caranfa’s model from a focus on silence and aesthetic experiences, as discussed previously, I will show how by drawing on Weil’s writings, we can develop and cultivate care through what I will term *contemplative listening*. This is a way of listening that draws on our whole being and attempts to facilitate positive ethical responses in a holistic approach to education.¹

Weil weaves her notion of attention into the act of ‘loving the other.’ The act of ‘attentiveness’ in one’s presence with the other, the ability to be still and attentive according to Weil, is an act of caring and love. This approach is also echoed by Ned Noddings’ work on Weil’s attention.² Weil describes attentiveness as an experience that involves, metaphorically

¹ This holistic approach was defined and discussed in Chapters 1 and 5.

² For example, see: Nel Noddings, *The Maternal Factor: Two Paths to Morality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

speaking, an ‘emptying of the soul’ to make a ‘space for the other.’ The aspect of attention embodies an ethical component and is consistent with Weil’s political work and theology.³ It is a deep attentive listening to the poor and oppressed that Kazuaki Yoda describes as “...an attentive silence in which this faint and inept cry can make itself heard.”⁴ These descriptions of *attentiveness to the other* are, in essence, moments of silence and stillness. Weil acknowledges that while their cultivation is not easy, they remain a powerful way of relating. Central to the aims and purpose of Christian teachings is ‘care for others,’ especially those who are marginalised and suffering. Weil sets up a sound conceptual framework that facilitates this notion of deep care for the other through her emphasis on attention. The purpose of attention is not only to listen but also to facilitate deep discernment regarding the needs of the other. Weil contextualises the importance of deep listening within a Christian framework.⁵ The disposition of attentive listening points to the ethics within Christian teaching and fulfils the *vita activa* aspect of faith, which is also significant for a contemplative pedagogy. This discussion also moves into the realm of virtue epistemology.⁶

Weil’s central premise that attentive listening is an essential component of care and ethical conduct is also supported by many scholars. However, Weil’s approach to attentive listening has some distinctive features. Firstly, Weil believed that the purpose of attention is to facilitate

³ As demonstrated in Chapter 5, Weil expresses a deep commitment to her Christian faith.

⁴ Yoda, “Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2014),188.

⁵ Weil’s life of deep commitment to the poor and oppressed had a sacrificial quality that emulated the life of Jesus depicted in the Gospels. Weil’s ‘love for the other’ was lived out even to the extent as it was a detriment to herself. Starving herself and working in the field and factories emerged from her deep solidarity with the poor and marginalised. For example, Simone Weil, “*Reflections on the Causes of Liberty and Social Oppression*,” *Oppression and Liberty* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973).

⁶ According to John Turri, Mark Alfani and John Creco, virtue epistemology is defined in the following way, “Contemporary virtue epistemology (hereafter ‘VE’) is a diverse collection of approaches to epistemology. At least two central tendencies are discernible among the approaches. First, they view epistemology as a normative discipline. Second, they view intellectual agents and communities as the primary focus of epistemic evaluation, with a focus on the intellectual virtues and vices embodied in and expressed by these agents and communities. This entry introduces many of the most important results of the contemporary VE research program. These include novel attempts to resolve longstanding disputes, solve perennial problems, grapple with novel challenges, and expand epistemology’s horizons. In the process, it reveals the diversity within VE. Beyond sharing the two unifying commitments mentioned above, its practitioners diverge over the nature of intellectual virtues, which questions to ask, and which methods to use.” See, John Turri et al., “Virtue Epistemology”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/epistemology-virtue/>.

active listening that enables deep discernment regarding the needs of the other. Secondly, Weil proposed that the capacity for authentic discernment in listening entails a detachment from the individual ego and its preoccupations. This allows the needed space for the other to enter our presence in a space that cultivates deep listening. Thirdly, Weil contextualises the importance of deep attentive presence and listening within a broader spiritual/religious context. Weil presents a synthesis between this capacity for attentive listening in silence and engaging in social action for change.

Attentive listening does rely on another component not developed by Weil (or Caranfa) but significant for listening: empathy. Edith Stein (and others) will be explored to extend the understanding of listening by including some elucidations on the importance of empathy. Empathy is significant for demonstrating care that can complement our understanding of attentive listening (that indicates care). This has positive implications for the classroom. In support of Weil's thesis, I will also discuss how Michelle Walker, Kazuaki Yoda and Nel Noddings (among others) draw on Weil's notion of attentive listening to demonstrating care towards the other. I will show Weil's writing points to the *vita activa* dimensions of the Christian faith. Some of the literature on listening and empathy will be revisited briefly to highlight Weil's distinctive contributions.

The explanations in this chapter will help develop a picture of what care 'might look like' in the contemplative classroom. Care as an ethical response is an essential dimension of any educational framework and is especially critical for a contemplative pedagogy that seeks to cultivate the development of the whole person. The disposition of deep listening and discernment through attention provides a practical approach for student and teacher interactions within the classroom.⁷

⁷ It is important to note that while the act of listening might be identified as a 'skill,' Weil seems to imply that the act of listening was more a disposition than a 'skill.' The word skill tends to have connotations attributed to production for the

8.1. *Weil's attentive listening as care*

Like all teachers, Weil understood the importance of attentive listening for learning. She argues that attention towards even unfavourable subjects instils attitudes and skills that she terms the “gymnastics of attention” that enable the students’ overall learning.⁸ Weil’s insights further propose that attention could also prepare students for the higher forms of attention, which is an engagement with the Platonic notions of beauty and prayer.⁹ However, as will become apparent in this chapter, Weil’s broad notion of ‘attention’ also incorporated a dimension of care for the other. Weil proposes that the same attention we develop in our solitude should also be cultivated towards the presence of the human person. She writes:

Solitude. Where does its value lie? For in solitude, we are in the presence of mere matter (even the sky, the moon, trees in blossom), things of less value (perhaps) than a human spirit. Its value lies in the greater possibility of attention. If we could be attentive to the same degree in the presence of a human being...¹⁰

The love of our neighbour in all its fullness simply means being able to say to him: “What are you going through?”. It is a recognition that the sufferer exists...as a man...exactly like us, who was one day stamped with a special mark by affliction. For this reason, it is enough, but indispensable, to know how to look at him in a certain way. *This way of looking is first of all attentive...*¹¹

Asking one who is suffering, “What are you going through?” might seem like a straightforward task; however, as Weil points out, this inquiry into the state of someone’s suffering is a complex and nuanced process.¹² Deep listening requires more than just physical presence and audible skills, but a person’s ‘full attentive presence.’ These descriptions of attentiveness to the other

workplace which would have unlikely been the intended aim for Weil. Throughout her writings we can see that Weil understood the goal of attentive listening as an intuitive response towards the ‘other’ that was connected to her religious faith, and not something deemed significant for a workplace context.

⁸ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harp Perennial Classics, 2000), 57; Simone Weil, *Grace, and Gravity* (London; Routledge and Kegan, 1952), 108–109. These themes were examined in Chapter 5.

⁹ Angelo Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and the Gifts of Beauty, Love, and Silence,” *Educational Theory* 60, no. 5 (2010):580, doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.2010. 00377.x. Weil claims in *Gravity and Grace* that the highest form of attention informed by the Christian faith is prayer. She states, “Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love.” Weil, *Grace, and Gravity*, 117.

¹⁰ Simone Weil, *Grace, and Gravity*, 121.

¹¹ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 64–65. (Emphasis added).

¹² Most therapists and counsellors would appreciate Weil’s observation. An important part of the training in this field of work is to develop and constantly refine active listening skills.

are in essence, moments of silence and stillness.¹³ Furthermore, Weil acknowledges that while this orientation and disposition of deep attentive listening and discernment is a challenge, she maintains it is a powerful way of relating to the other. Weil states, "...The capacity to give one's attention to a sufferer is a very rare and difficult thing; it is almost a miracle; it is a miracle..."¹⁴

Ego detachments – letting go of the self to make space for attention and love

The soul empties itself of its own contents in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all its truth. Only he who is capable of attention can do this.¹⁵

Weil proposes that the act of 'attentive presence' with the other requires the ability to be still and attentive and involves an 'emptying of the soul' to make 'space for the other', so to speak.¹⁶ This process, as formerly examined, is termed by Weil "decreation" This includes stripping away of what is commonly termed the 'ego' or subject self.¹⁷ Weil describes this process as an "attentive silence in which the heart empties itself of all attachments..."¹⁸ Weil claims that detachment from our egocentricity enables us to move towards good and loving acts. She proposed that to respond effectively to the needs of those afflicted, we must develop and cultivate 'complete attention.' Stuart Jesson describes this aptly in the following way:

¹³ This attentive listening calls on a deep capability of discernment to the suffering of the individual. Rebecca Rozelle and Lucian Stone describe this concept of attention as a particular way of relating, an 'orientation which can develop a capacity of discernment on various levels.' See A. Rebecca Rozelle-Stone and Lucian Stone, *Simone Weil and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹³Rebecca Rozelle-Stone and Benjamin P. Davis, "Simone Weil," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/simone-weil/>

¹⁴ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 64.

¹⁵ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 64–65.

¹⁶ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 65.

¹⁷ Weil claims that our problems and illusionary self continuously escape "the void" and attempt to fill it. The "the void" (le vide) is Part of our human nature, which according to Weil, we experience as "...insatiable hunger, lack of equilibrium, or vacuum...". Humans continuously try and escape this void through various 'fillers.' Part of these fillers or illusions is that humans think they are God, which causes misery. Weil writes, "... man's misery consists in the fact that he is not God. He is continually forgetting this." According to Weil, this false "I" has an 'imaginary divinity.' She claims we need to strip ourselves of this imaginary "I", which involves a process that she called decreation (discussed in Chapter 5). Weil asserts that we humiliate ourselves when we attach to the false gods of power, prestige and pride. See, A. Rebecca Rozelle-Stone, and Lucian Stone. *Simone Weil and Theology*, 70, 77.

¹⁸ Simone Weil, "The Father's Silence," in *The Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George A. Panichas (New York: David McKay, 1977), 438. In *Gravity and Grace*, Weil figuratively discusses what she terms the "destruction of the I" or the ego. This is examined in Chapter 5.

Weil's central problem is of how to articulate spiritual reality in such a way as to encourage undivided attention, which is the only ground for the hope that honest, compassionate thought about suffering might be possible.¹⁹

Rebecca Stone and Lucian Stone drawing on Weil's observations, claim that the notion of attention and moving beyond ego preoccupations has moral implications.²⁰ They referred to the findings of psychologists such as Andrew Mc Ghie and Abigail Lipson, who propose that the antithesis of attention towards the other is self-absorption.²¹ They suggest that patients diagnosed as neurotic (and self-absorbed) tended to show extreme self-obsession characteristics. The neurotic and self-absorbed find it challenging to attend adequately to the needs of others which they argue results in their moral decline.

8.2 Michelle Walker on Weil

When Weil writes that '[a]ttention is the rarest and purest form of generosity, she confirms the ethical orientation of the attentive relation. Attention, for Weil, is what counters the weight of the ego-subject. She speaks of attention which is so full that the "I" disappears' (Weil 1995; 118). Attention is heightened in the state she describes as waiting – the habitual form of empty attention that leads, in certain cases, to contemplation and the abandonment of the self.²²

Michelle Boulous Walker similarly examines the ethical component of Weil's attention.²³

Walker refers to Weil in describing the act of detachment from the ego in the following way:

"...empty or abandoned the heavy self, in preparation for an encounter with the other."²⁴

¹⁹ Stuart Jesson, "Simone Weil: Suffering, Attention and Compassionate Thought," *Studies in Christian Ethics, Studies in Christian Ethics* 27, no.2 (2014),185.

²⁰ Rozelle-Stone, A. Rebecca, and Lucian Stone, *Simone Weil and Theology*, 135.

²¹ Rozelle-Stone, A. Rebecca, and Lucian Stone, *Simone Weil and Theology*, 135. It is interesting to note that some scholars claim that mindfulness practice can generate compassion and empathy that leads to more ethical responses over time. See for example: Kabat-Zinn, Jon. "Meditation Is Not for the Faint-Hearted." *Mindfulness* 5, no. 3 (2014):341–44. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-014-0307-1>; Hilary Conklin, "Compassion and Mindfulness in Research Among Colleagues." *Teaching Education* (Columbia, S.C.) 20, no. 2 (2009): 111–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210802521269>; Lynette M Monteiro, Jane F. Compson, and Frank. Musten. *Practitioner's Guide to Ethics and Mindfulness-Based Interventions* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64924-5>. The implications of these studies have raised some interesting contentions within the literature that are not easily resolved and not in the scope of this proposal to further examine.

²² Michelle Boulous Walker, *Slow Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018),180.

²³ Walker *Slow Philosophy*, 180.

²⁴ Walker, *Slow Philosophy*, 180. Likewise, Walker states; "I have to deprive all that I call "I" in light of my attention and turn it to that which cannot be conceived (Weil 1995;118)." Walker claims, "Attention flows from the heavy self towards the other." Walker, *Slow Philosophy*, 180.

Walker suggests that Weil's attention is linked to the works of grace that contrast with what she described as the 'gravity' of self-absorption and self-centeredness. She defines gravity as "the descending movement...it forges the self and continues to offer it an egoist weight."²⁵ Walker argues that in contrast, Weil understood grace as a falling away of the 'heavy self' or ego. She argues that this is made possible through the act of grace, attention, detachment, and contemplation.²⁶

Weil's work in attention has accompanied me in a silent way throughout the writings of this book. Much of what she works towards can be thought of in terms of the attentive patience that opens us to the other. In this, it shares something with the slow reading I have developed here.²⁷

Weil's higher quality of attention partakes of the slowness that I have been referring to as slow reading – it involves waiting and receiving.²⁸

Walker understands that Weil's 'slow' and contemplative approach was conducive to a more open way of relating that could facilitate positive ethical responses. For example, we need to read with an attitude of openness to receive what the other might be saying. Walker's interpretation of Weil's work reminds us of the importance of attention, slow reading and thinking, which, as I have noted in previous chapters, is much needed today. Moreover, Walker explores Weil's contemplative dispositions of 'waiting and receiving', which she claims 'accompanied her in a silent way' throughout the writings of her book, *Slow Philosophy*.²⁹ As Walker suggests, Weil advocated a slow approach to developing deep understanding and insights.

Weil proposes that we must *wait* for insights and ideas to be *revealed*. She argued that by adopting a contemplative and unhurried attitude – we can gain deep knowledge and understanding. This notion is more like an intuitive sense of knowing, something that may

²⁵ Walker, *Slow Philosophy*, 180.

²⁶ Walker, *Slow Philosophy*, 180–182.

²⁷ Walker, *Slow Philosophy*, 180.

²⁸ Walker, *Slow Philosophy*, 181.

²⁹ Walker, *Slow Philosophy*, 181.

come spontaneously, and for Weil, this ‘waiting’ as in the title of her book suggests, is “Waiting for God.”³⁰The religious influences in Weil’s work are omitted by Walker and could be further developed to gain a more in-depth understanding of her notion of contemplation, ego detachment and grace.³¹ For Weil, these concepts were connected to a wider context of the transcendence. Weil’s experience of grace, for example (which she claims comes unexpectedly), is more than just a letting of the individual ego, as Walker describes, but also involves an expansion of the self into a ‘larger reality’ that is connected to the sacred.³²

More importantly, Walker gives a descriptive account of Weil’s contemplative approach of attentiveness and shows how valuable it is to show care for the other. As she mentions earlier, when our ego concerns are dissolved through the acts of grace, we are more disposed to being attentive towards the other. Additionally, Walker understands that Weil’s ‘slow’ approach and ‘attentiveness’ could work towards facilitating positive ethical responses. In listening attentively, we are better placed to attend to the needs of the other and demonstrate care. These

³⁰ Walker, *Slow Philosophy*, 180. The limitations of Walker’s interpretation of Weil are in her failure to highlight the religious influences. While she rightly identifies and describes Weil’s notion of attention as shedding the ego and including a more receptive and ethical way of relating, she fails to highlight the religious context in which Weil understood these concepts. For example, Walker cites Weil, stating, “I have to deprive all that I call ‘I’ in light of my attention and turn it to that which cannot be conceived (Weil 1995;118). Walker, *Slow Philosophy*,181. The reference to “that which cannot be conceived” is about her religious faith and explicit in the title of her work, *Waiting for God*. As exemplified in Chapter 5, Weil was a Christian Platonist. Weil’s notion of the “I”, the process of decreation and “that which cannot be conceived” concern Weil’s relationship to the divine. Walker does not mention this dimension of Weil’s work.

³¹Furthermore, in *Gravity and Grace*, chapters titled “The Self and Decreation,” Weil explored the process of shedding the “I” and ego for spiritual purposes, which exemplify her relationship to the divine. For example, Weil states, “We possess nothing in the world – a mere chance can strip us of everything, except to say ‘I’. That is what we have to give to God in other words, to destroy....” Weil, *Grace, and Gravity* (Routledge: London, 2002), 26, 21–25. Likewise, Weil states, “In so far as I become nothing, God loves himself through me.” Weil, *Grace, and Gravity*, 34. Many other references support this claim. Weil states, for example, “The whole effort of the mystic has always been to become such that there is no part left in their soul to say I”. George A. Panichas, ed., *The Simone Weil Reader* (New York: David McKay, 1977), 318.

³² The notion of grace has a wide usage within religious and theological literature and is generally understood to pertain to an intervention of God’s presence within the world. This was the understanding Weil expressed in her writing that Walker fails to acknowledge. As Maier points out, “Weil’s...grace lifts us up toward God and encourages us to love the Other.”³² See, Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 173; Craig T. Maier, “Attentive Waiting in an Uprooted Age: Simone Weil’s Response in an Age of Precarity.” *The Review of Communication* 13, no. 3 (2013): 234, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2013.843715>. Moreover, Weil understood grace as a divine presence that unexpectedly emerges in a person’s life. For example, in *Gravity and Grace*, Weil explicitly refers to grace as a “gift from heaven.” She writes: “With all things, it is always what comes to us from outside, freely and by surprise as a gift from heaven, without our having to sought it, that brings us pure joy. In the same way good can only come from the outside ourselves, never from our own effort.” Weil, *Grace, and Gravity*, 46, 121. For further examples of the religious influences in Weil’s writings see Chapter 5.

While Walker does not refer to the religious dimensions of contemplation in Weil’s approach, she explores these dispositions within a secular context. For example, Pierre Hadot’s understanding of attention is explored by Walker understood as that disposition necessary for inner transformation. Pierre Hadot claims, “Little by little, [attentive waiting] make[s] possible the indispensable metamorphosis of our inner self.” See Walker, *Slow Philosophy*, 181.

dispositions are pertinent for a contemplative pedagogy that seeks to encourage an ethical response. Likewise, as we shall see in what follows, Kazuaki Yoda understood the importance of Weil's attention as care and love for the other. Yoda argues that this has positive implications for education.

8.3 Kazuaki Yoda on Weil: the purpose of education is attention and love.

By saying *the sole* purpose of education is attention, Weil seemed to point to the development of attention as the essence of education. In addition, she claimed that attention is the essence of love.³³

Yoda's elucidations of Weil's writings on attention point to an ethical response which he incorporates into the classroom context. However, unlike Walker, Yoda highlights Weil's religious influences. He argues that attention is about a love for the other and God. As mentioned, Yoda describes Weil's attentive listening towards the poor and oppressed as "...an attentive silence in which this faint and inept cry can make itself heard."³⁴

Justice means seeing other people's reality in affliction as themselves and recognising that *we are no different than they are. Because we share the condition of human misery, the suffering of others is also ours.*³⁵

Yoda portrays Weil's notion of justice and love as a 'particular kind of seeing' that considers the suffering of others who are as equally vulnerable as ourselves. Those who suffer are subjected to what Weil describes as the 'force' of circumstances.³⁶ This notion is drawn from Weil's interpretation of the *Iliad*.³⁷ Although this interpretation is contested amongst scholars, Weil depicts the characters within this story (strong, wealthy, weak) as *all* subjected at some point in their lives to the experience of suffering. The unfavourable circumstances of life that Weil describes as *force* (and 'gravity') can visit any of us at any time, poor or wealthy.³⁸ The

³³ Yoda, "Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014), 187.

³⁴ Yoda, "Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?" 188.

³⁵ Yoda, "Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?" 188. Emphasis added.

³⁶ Simone Weil, "The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force," trans. Mary McCarthy in *The Chicago Review* 18, no. 2 (1965):5–30; Weil, *Gravity and Grace*.

³⁷ Simone Weil, "The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force," 5–30.

³⁸ Weil, "The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force."

experience of the Covid pandemic illustrates this point. The influence of the *force* means all people are equally vulnerable to suffering.³⁹ We connect with a sense of shared humanity by acknowledging human fragility and vulnerabilities amongst life's circumstances and *force*. It from this awareness that we can potentially more easily empathise with the suffering of the other. Weil writes:

He who does not realise to what extent shifting fortune and necessity hold in subjection every human spirit, cannot regard as fellow-creatures nor love as he loves himself...⁴⁰

In becoming aware of the components of our common humanity in the way described by Weil, Yoda asserts we can relate to others in a manner conducive to a more positive ethical response. From this awareness, he argues, people are viewed in their dignity and separate self, not objects for our purposes. Yoda claims:

Weil claims force makes us morally blind, and under its influence, we cannot stop following the logic of force and exerting power over others, disregarding their reality. We see others only as a means to satisfy of our ends. By refusing the logic of force, we see others as they are.⁴¹

Yoda equates the instrumental approach to education today as “subscribing to the logic of force.”⁴² He claims this educational framework encourages a more utilitarian approach in relationships where people are not seen as unique persons but through the lens of gain and use.⁴³ Yoda seeks to offer Weil's thesis as antithesis to the modern approach to education today. He claims Weil's reflections reject the logic of force by paying attention to the suffering of the

³⁹ These observations point to a notion of universal suffering. That is, despite one's current circumstances, the wheel of fate may move towards loss and suffering at some point. The fact of death attests to this claim. These observations have been made by many such as Siddhartha Gautama, founder of Buddhism. He highlighted that life is an unending process of changes that inevitably leads to loss (and eventual death), a reality we must accept and bring to consciousness if we move towards enlightenment. Weil taught Buddhist texts and would therefore have been familiar with Buddhism, which probably influenced her writings.

⁴⁰ Weil, “*The Iliad, or the Poem of Force*,” 28.

⁴¹ Yoda, “Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?” 43.

⁴² Yoda, “Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?” 188.

⁴³ Yoda, “Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught,” 188. There is reminiscence here of Kant's ethical categorical imperatives regarding individual dignity that opposes using people used as a means to an end. For example, see: Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Herbert J. Paton (London: Routledge, 2005), 27–30.

other.⁴⁴ He seems to imply that it is in this way we teach our students *how* to love. Furthermore, Yoda rightly claims (as we saw in Chapter 5) that Weil understood humility as a virtue.⁴⁵ Virtue for Weil leads one to a sense of vulnerability that can open us up to the suffering of the other. Yoda proposes then that Weil's notion of love is about not only ourselves, God, truth, but also towards others; in this sense, 'attention' is a form of love.⁴⁶ Yoda writes:

Attention is the disposition of the subject that is open and available to the reality of other people, ourselves, objects (natural and artificial), customs and traditions, ideas, and words such as good, truth, beauty, and God. Attention is also synonymous with love. As the disposition takes various objects, love is also inclusively discussed. The purpose of education, then, is to learn to love.⁴⁷

Moreover, Yoda proposes teaching this ethical dimension of care from Weil's writing should be through contemplative practices. These include the cultivation of 'proper reading,' confronting contradictions, the practice of attention and openness to the divine.⁴⁸ Themes I discussed in Chapters 5 and 7. Yoda claims the development of contemplative practices can enable and help us to "teach love." He writes:

Love can be taught, and it should be the sole purpose of education because education by nature is teaching and learning to love. By the word "love," I mean attention, and its two most important aspects have been examined: moral and religious or spiritual...⁴⁹

Yoda, like Walker, refers to Weil's attentive love for the other as pointing to a capacity for deep empathy. While his understanding of Weil's empathy is not in question, he could further highlight how her approach might be distinctive within the literature on empathy and compassion. Furthermore, like Caranfa's and Weil's thesis, Yoda discusses some ambitious

⁴⁴ Yoda, "Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?"106.

⁴⁵ I discussed Weil's notion of humility in Chapters 5 and 7.

⁴⁶ Yoda seeks to change the focus of the question in Plato's *Meno*, Can virtue be taught? to—Can love be taught? He argues that the purpose of education, in a general sense, is to teach love. This includes love of the world, art, nature, other people, and God. See, Yoda, "Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught," 192.

⁴⁷ Yoda, "Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?" 32. Yoda also states; "First, focusing on the moral aspect of attention, I argued that the purpose of education involves the nurturance of justice. Justice for Weil is different from the enforcement of rights, but it is synonymous with love" Yoda, "Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?"188.

⁴⁸ These themes were discussed in Chapters 5 and 7.

⁴⁹ Yoda, "Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?"191. Weil's notion of attentive reading is examined in Chapter 7.

educational aims that maybe too idealistic and not appeal to a modern classroom setting. While it might seem like a worthwhile vision, the notion that we can teach love (human and divine) is a highly ambitious goal. Yet, what Yoda fails to mention is the importance of the modelling of this approach by the educator. So, it is not so much a case of ‘teaching’ these methods, but more importantly, modelling it to students, which is probably more critical. Anecdotal observations tell us that for the most part, many of us learn the essential lessons of life (e.g., values and morals) from our parents, teachers, and mentors, primarily not by what they have said or taught (this may be partially influential) but by who they were as individuals, this is often reflected in their actions and how they lived. The issue of teacher training in this contemplative model therefore becomes significant.

Nevertheless, Yoda’s work on Weil’s concepts of attention equating love in the broader sense is well developed and proposes a positive framework that can inform a contemplative classroom. Yoda offers some practical tools for the classroom to achieve his vision of education. The use of literature, for example, he suggests, is essential in raising awareness of different perspectives and engaging in contradictions that can help develop a broader perspective and detach from self-centeredness to facilitate love. This was Yoda’s understanding of contemplation which he claimed was critical in teaching love.⁵⁰

Other scholars on Weil

The broader literature on Weil by educationists, particularly philosophers of education, is immense.⁵¹ Many have discovered in her work pertinent and genuine insights for education,

⁵⁰ Yoda, “Simone Weil on Attention and Education: Can Love Be Taught?”191.

⁵¹ For example: Aislinn O’Donnell, “Contemplative Pedagogy and Mindfulness: Developing Creative Attention in an Age of Distraction: Contemplative Pedagogy and Mindfulness,” *Journal of philosophy of education* 49, no. 2 (2015): 187–202; Daniel P. Liston, “Critical Pedagogy and Attentive Love,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 27, no. 5 (2007): 387–392; Peter Roberts, “Attention, Asceticism, and Grace: Simone Weil and Higher Education,” *Arts and humanities in higher education* 10, no. 3 (2011): 315–328; John T. Ozolins (Ed.) *Education in an age of lies and fake news: Regaining a love of truth* (pp. 62-76) (New York: Routledge, 2022).

focusing mainly on the importance she places on *attention* to learning. Some scholars include Daniel P Liston, Peter Roberts, and Aislinn O'Donnell, to name a few examples.

Aislinn O'Donnell identifies Weil's work on attention as a positive difference in contrast to the mindfulness movement in schools today.⁵² He argues that mindfulness is limited in its failure to provide ethical and philosophical investigations. Mindfulness also fails to critique the cause of people's suffering, which he claims is due to capitalism, only addressing their symptoms (stress and anxiety).

The shortcomings of mindfulness, O'Donnell suggests, are discussed in Weil's work. Weil, in contrast, offers a more holistic contribution to contemplation through her ethics. This is demonstrated in her emphasis on the 'other' and self-renunciation. O'Donnell's analysis highlights the importance of Weil's insights on self-renunciation. These observations might highlight some significant implications in counteracting a modern culture that some have observed is increasingly 'individualistic and self-focused.'⁵³ O'Donnell states:

...difficulty with framing mindfulness in schools in terms of stress reduction is that it fails to capture the pedagogical and broader experiential potentials of the practice. What Simone Weil's philosophy of attention shares with approaches to teaching mindfulness is the paradoxical sense that de-centring the self through different practices of attention can invite a richer sense of one's own experience, a deeper knowledge of the world, and compassion for others.⁵⁴

Daniel Liston also identified the significance of Weil's ethics and focus on compassion. In attempting to think about critical pedagogies in teaching and learning, Liston, in *Critical*

⁵² Aislinn O'Donnell argues that mindfulness is a negative by-product of capitalism, a very profitable 'commodity' drawn from the self-help industry. O'Donnell claims that mindfulness offers coping strategies in a society overloaded with information, stimulus, and what he describes as attention deficit disorder.' See, Aislinn O'Donnell. Contemplative pedagogy and mindfulness: Developing creative attention in an age of distraction. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 49, no.2 (2015),187–202.

⁵³ For example, see: Aline Vater, Steffen Moritz, and Stefan Roepke. "Does a Narcissism Epidemic Exist in Modern Western Societies? Comparing Narcissism and Self-Esteem in East and West Germany." *PloS one* 13, no. 1 (2018): e0188287–e0188287. Olivia Remes, 2016. "Why Are We Becoming So Narcissistic? Here's The Science". *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/why-are-we-becoming-so-narcissistic-heres-the-science-55773>.

⁵⁴ O'Donnell, "Contemplative Pedagogy and Mindfulness: Developing Creative Attention in an Age of Distraction: Contemplative Pedagogy and Mindfulness."

Pedagogy and Attentive Love, focuses on Weil's theme of 'attentive love.' He proposes that while this is fraught with challenges and difficulties, it remains one of the most essential foundations in educational practice.⁵⁵

In *Attention, Asceticism, and Grace: Simone Weil and Higher Education*, as the title suggests, Peter Roberts discusses some of the key concepts in Weil's philosophy – gravity, grace, decreation, and attention, and evaluates their importance for the arts and humanities in higher education. Roberts suggests that many of Weil's concepts and understanding of education, (such as waiting for answers, attention, the importance of humility and understanding of grace), contradict the current culture within higher education and are ironically what is needed to reform it.⁵⁶

Furthermore, Roberts' recent work, *Education, attention and transformation: Death and decreation in Tolstoy and Weil*, make some comparisons between Weil's notion of attention to *gravity* and *grace* to Tolstoy's depiction of Ivan Ilyich's struggle with death and ultimate transformation. Roberts highlights that Ivan's struggles with death through his experiences of alienation and despair, can be captured in Weil's notion of gravity. Moreover, Ivan's eventual acceptance of death occurs when he can pay closer 'attention' to the deeper meanings of his life and move in Weil's terms, from gravity (the life situations that burden us) towards grace. Roberts describes this as Ivan's "...life from the gravity of unreflective superficiality and selfishness to the unbounded love and light granted by grace."⁵⁷

Roberts' work is significant in recognising Weil's observations of the process of suffering (due to gravity) and the way through it, which is grace. These are helpful signposts for educators that explore crucial existential themes that are often missing in educational literature.

⁵⁵ Liston, "Critical Pedagogy and Attentive Love." 387–392.

⁵⁶ Roberts, "Attention, Asceticism, and Grace: Simone Weil and Higher Education."

⁵⁷ Peter Roberts, "Education, Attention and Transformation." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 40, no. 6 (2021): 595–608.

8.4. *Weil's writing and the literature on listening and empathy.*

Literature on empathy and listening

Weil's descriptions of attentive listening resemble the act of what many of us might recognise as empathy and or compassion (which will be discussed further on). While exploring these concepts in-depth is not in the scope here, I will touch briefly on some of the literature on empathy and listening to highlight Weil's unique understanding of listening and empathy. I will conclude with reflections on how these insights might be relevant to the contemplative classroom.

Much of Weil's claims imply an assumption that humans can cultivate care through attentive listening, which leads to a discernment regarding the needs of the person suffering. This approach seems to imply drawing on the faculty of empathy. I will define empathy broadly as 'an attempt to put yourself in someone else's shoes' or try to understand another person's experiences. However, the value of empathy in demonstrating adequate care is contested within the literature. Some argue that empathy is limited and may not be the best approach for an ethical response.⁵⁸ Paul Bloom and Jesse Prinz, for example, propose that empathy can lead to bias in moral reasoning as we tend to feel only empathy toward people like us.⁵⁹ Prinz points out that empathy, among other things, can lead to nepotism. Prinz states: "Perhaps it is *morally good* to treat loved ones preferentially. But empathy pushes partiality into prejudice. It is fine

⁵⁸See for example: Daryl Cameron, Michael Inzlicht and William A. Cunningham, "Does Empathy Have Limits?", *The Conversation*, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/does-empathy-have-limits-72637>; Daniel Västfjäll, et al., "Commentary: Empathy and Its Discontents," *Frontiers in Psychology* 8, no. 542. (2017):1–3, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00542>; Steven L Neuberg et al., "Does Empathy Lead to Anything More Than Superficial Helping? Comment on Batson et al.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73, no. 3 (1997): 510–16, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.73.3.510>.

⁵⁹Paul Bloom, *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion* (New York: Harper Collins, 2016); Paul Bloom, "Empathy and Its Discontents," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 21, no. 1 (2017) 24–31. Bloom also states that empathy can be used for harmful purposes such as manipulating and exploiting people. See also: Jess Prinz, "Against Empathy," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 49, no.1 (2011), 229, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-6962.2011.00069.x>.

to be a good friend, but empathetic bias can promote nepotism, negligence, and moral myopia.”⁶⁰

Bloom argues that compassion is more important than empathy.⁶¹ Compassion allows us to care for people without necessarily *feeling empathy*. He cites studies suggesting that people are better at helping others when they are not necessarily feeling empathy.⁶² Bloom seems to imply that to be compassionate is to remove yourself from emotions such as that shown through the act of empathy. For the emotion experienced in the empathetic act is not always the most effective in helping another person. If we take the observations of David Hume that our thinking is affected by our emotions, it would be difficult to accept Bloom's definitive stance here.⁶³ Furthermore, not all agree with Bloom on compassion. Martha Nussbaum, for example, defines compassion as “an emotion directed at another person's suffering or lack of wellbeing.”⁶⁴ She continues to argue that compassion is a positive and affective way of educating people about domestic and international human relations.⁶⁵

However, the studies of Daniel Västfjäll, Arvid Erlandsson, et al., show that both empathy and compassion are fraught with the same biases.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, these researchers agree with Bloom that we should draw on moral principles and consider a cost-benefit analysis when helping people, rather than relying solely on empathy or compassion when making moral decisions.

⁶⁰ For example, Prinz, “Against Empathy,” 229. Prinz continues to state the following on empathy, “Practically speaking, the emphasis on empathy may be an invitation to bias. Concern may be less prone to bias, but its elicitation often depends on prior judgments about whether some moral violation has occurred. From a practical perspective, we might be best off cultivating a sense of outrage for injustice wherever it occurs and a sense of joy in helping the needy wherever they may be. The assumption that empathy is essential for these ends may be mistaken, and efforts to expand our moral horizons by empathetic induction may make us more vulnerable to errors of allocation. Jess Prinz, “Against Empathy,” 231.

⁶¹ Empathy might allow us to understand other people's feelings and plights, but compassion includes our kind actions toward others.

⁶² According to neurological research, Bloom states that empathy and compassion show up in different parts of the brain.

⁶³ David Hume. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Lewis Amherst Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 3:320–328.

⁶⁴ Martha Nussbaum, “Compassion and Terror,” *Daedalus* 132.1 (Winter 2003), 15.

⁶⁵ Nussbaum, “Compassion and Terror,” 15.

⁶⁶ Daniel Västfjäll, et al., “Commentary: Empathy and Its Discontents.”

Drawing on cost–benefit analysis and moral principles when helping others relies on our capacity for adequate moral reasoning. On the surface this may not seem like the most intuitive approach. It lacks the consideration of spontaneity which is sometimes required when demonstrating care. Furthermore, as outlined in previous chapters, epistemological problems such as the limitations of reasoning and knowledge for providing certainty pose some constraints on this approach. Our reasoning may be prone to biases. This was the view of researchers such as Daryl Cameron, Michael Inzlicht and William A. Cunningham, who suggest that human reasoning has flaws in moral thinking.⁶⁷ They propose that we cannot guarantee that our biases do not emerge in attempting to apply utilitarian reasoning to moral actions. They concluded that while empathy does have some limitations, it remains a positive way of showing care.⁶⁸ Rather than focus on the perils of empathy, these scholars propose that we should examine the underlying *assumptions and values*, that is, the *reasoning processes* that underlie empathy (and its alternative responses).

In our view, it is these flaws in human reasoning that are the real culprits here, not empathy, which is a mere output of these more complex computations. Our real focus should be on how people balance competing costs and benefits when deciding whether to feel empathy. Such an analysis makes being against empathy seem superficial. Arguments against empathy rely on an outdated dualism between biased emotion and objective reason. But the science of empathy suggests that what may matter more is our *own values and choices*. Empathy may be limited sometimes, but only if you want it to be that way.⁶⁹

It would be hard to imagine that Weil would favour a cost-benefit approach towards ethics or sympathise with some of the limitations of empathy, such as nepotism. Weil’s writing suggests that attentive listening is not only directed to those within our circle of friends and family but also to the broader community. Influenced by her Christian belief, Weil understood the

⁶⁷ Cameron et al., “Does Empathy Have Limits?”

⁶⁸ Cameron et al., “Does Empathy Have Limits?”

⁶⁹ Daryl Cameron, et al., “Does Empathy Have Limits?” para. 34–35. (Emphasis added).

importance of attending discerningly to the needs of the poor and suffering in our community. As I will discuss further, this was demonstrated in her writings and personal life.

I. Empathy – Edith Stein’s elucidations extend Weil’s attentive listening.

The in-depth phenomenological descriptions of empathy discussed by Edith Stein could further develop Weil’s understanding of attentive listening (and care) or what Stuart Jesson describes as ‘undivided attention.’⁷⁰ In her work, *On the Problem of Empathy*, Stein explores the apprehension of the empathetic act.⁷¹ Stein describes the process of empathy as “Einfühlung,” which means “feeling into.”⁷² Stein claims that when the other person is suffering (which is described below as a primordial experience) we can understand their experience through empathy. Empathy is the non-primordial experience which allows us to stand ‘alongside’ the other, it is a “going with... that is the object of empathy.”⁷³

Now to empathy itself. Here, too we are dealing with an act that is primordial in the sense of being a present experience but non-primordial as regards its substance (when we regard the empathic act in its own right and do not take into consideration the “going with” the act that is the object of empathy, And this substance is an experience that can, again, come in many different forms, as memory, expectation or imagination. When it suddenly appears before me it faces me as an object (for instance, the sadness I “read” in the other’s face). But when I inquire into its implied tendencies (when I try to bring the other’s mood to clear givenness to myself), the experience is no longer an object for me, but has pulled myself into it. I am now no longer turned towards the experience, but instead I am turned towards the object of the experience. I am at the subject of the original experience, at the subject’s place, and only after having fulfilled a clarification of the experience does it appear to me as an object again.⁷⁴

Our capacity to feel with the other, to sense their suffering, Stein claims, can be understood through our perceptual-imaginative feelings or memory. From this, we can understand the

⁷⁰ Jesson, “Simone Weil: Suffering, Attention and Compassionate Thought,” 185.

⁷¹ Edith Stein, *On the problem of empathy*, trans. Stein, W (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1989).

⁷² Fredrik Svenaeus, “The Phenomenology of Empathy: A Steinian Emotional Account,” *Phenomenology and the cognitive sciences* 15, no. 2 (2016), 228.

⁷³ Edith Stein, *Zum Problem Der Einfühlung*, trans. M A. Sondermann Freiburg (Breisgau: Herder, 2010), 18–19.

⁷⁴ Stein, *Zum Problem Der Einfühlung*. 18-19. For the phenomenological analysis of the concept of empathy by Edith Stein and Max Scheler, See: Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013); Michael F. Andrews, “Edith Stein and Max Scheler: Ethics, Empathy, And the Constitution of The Acting Person,” *Quaestiones Disputatae* 3, no. 1 (2012): 33–47, doi:10.5840/qd2012314.

phenomena presented to us in the suffering of the other. We lean into the other's experience by imagining 'what it might be like' for them. While we don't feel the other person's experiences, Stein claims we can be 'feeling alongside' them. Our imaginations and inquiry (reflections) into the person's individual situation can lead to an understanding of what the situation might be like for them. Empathy allows us to move beyond our individual worldview toward that of the other. In understanding the experiences of the other, Stein (like Ricœur) proposes we can do this by understanding spoken words and bodily expressions.⁷⁵ The body, Stein argues, can reveal the experiences of emotions and the person's suffering. Sadness, for example, can be expressed through crying or bodily postures.

Empathy, according to such a phenomenological proposal, is to be understood as a perceptual-imaginative feeling towards and with the other person's experiences made possible by affective bodily schemas and being enhanced by a personal concern for her. To experience empathy does not necessarily or only mean to experience the same type of feeling as the target does; it means feeling alongside the feeling of the target in imagining and explicating a rich understanding of the experiences of the very person one is facing.⁷⁶

However, Stein claims that our understanding of the other's suffering can also be incorrect. She points out some problems that can lead to a misinterpretation of the awareness of the other. Firstly, we can identify too closely with the other, so there is no distinctive "I".⁷⁷ This Stein claims can move into mere solipsism. Secondly, we can infer like John Stuart Mill suggests, that the other person's experiences are identical to ours.⁷⁸ This use of personal analogy may also prove wrong since we project onto the person our own perspectives and values that may

⁷⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre states: "And this empathetic awareness is of some other individual who "is not given as a physical body, but as a sensitive, living body belonging to an T, an T that senses, thinks, feels and wills." The body of this T is not only something that is presented to me, but my body is likewise presented to it as part of its world. "It faces this world and communicates with me" Alasdair MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2007), 5; Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁷⁶ Svenaeus, "The Phenomenology of Empathy: A Steinian Emotional Account," 227.

⁷⁷ MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue*, 78–79.

⁷⁸ MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue*, 78–79.

not relate to the person suffering. Both approaches to empathy Stein claims are fraught with problems.

Were I imprisoned within the boundaries of my individuality; I could not go beyond 'the world as it appears to me'. At least it would be conceivable that the possibility of its independent existence, that could still be given as a possibility, would always be indemonstrable. But this possibility is demonstrated as soon as I cross these boundaries by the help of empathy and obtain the same world's second and third appearance, which are independent of my perception.⁷⁹

Conversely, as recalled, Stein, like Weil, warns of the danger of over-identification with our views and egos. For Stein, rather than merging into the other through empathy, we must see the other as separate from ourselves. One way of correcting our interpretation is constantly reflecting on our values and how others see us. Stein calls this above as moving in our 'reflections from first to second person reflections.'⁸⁰These include reflections on our experiences and that of the object – the suffering person and considering the differences in values and experiences. These introspective reflections Stein claims can help correct bias in our interpretations of other people's experiences or the phenomena as they present themselves to us. Stein acknowledges, however, that while empathy can effectively show care, it also has its limits. Although the tool of imagination can reveal insights into the experiences of the other, it is likewise inherently limited in 'fully' comprehending another person's experiences.⁸¹Stein and Weil offer a mode of thinking about empathy as a way of care that is informative to a contemplative framework. Stein's elucidations on the apprehensions of empathic awareness

⁷⁹ MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue*, 83.

⁸⁰ MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue*, 83. MacIntyre further describes Stein's concept on the processes of empathetic awareness in the following way: "What was perceived by to me in experience was such-and-such', it can always be retorted 'No! What was presented to you in experience also had some characteristics that you failed to notice'. It is also that my acts of perception, like my acts of imagination and of memory, can be objects both of my own first-person awareness and of third-person observation. Indeed, it is as a third-person observer that I can become aware of someone else's grief as occasioned by their remembering some past loss or of someone else's pleasure in seeing a landscape. So that, in giving an account of empathetic acts of awareness of the thoughts and feelings of others, we are bound to move between first-person and third-person reports and to recognize how one and the same concept may find application to one and the same object both from a first-person and from a third-person point of view. And this is something recognized by Stein and not only in what she says about sensations," MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue*, 82.

⁸¹ Svenaeus, "The Phenomenology of Empathy: A Steinian Emotional Account," 240.

show some similarities to Weil. While Weil does not give a phenomenological account of the empathic act nor discuss what the cognitive process of discernment might look like, she focuses on attentive listening as a disposition that allows us to discern the needs of the other to show care wisely. Weil argued that we could show care effectively when we let go of our concerns and ego. As illustrated earlier, Stein also thought that we needed to scrutinise our biases and perceptions when trying to understand the experiences and needs of the other. Both writers understood the importance of caring for the other and not allowing one's personal perceptions/views to impede our understanding of the other's experiences. These observations are reiterated by psychologist and priest Anthony De Mello, who recognises the importance of scrutinising one's own personal perception when listening. He describes this in the following:

When I am listening to you, its infinitely more important for me to listen to me than listen to you...Otherwise I won't be hearing you. Or I will be distorting everything you say. I'll be coming at you from my own conditioning...I'll be reacting to you in all kinds of ways from my own insecurities, from my need to manipulate you, from my desire to succeed...and feelings that I might not be aware of.⁸²

Stein and Weil's analysis can be applied to our treatment of Aboriginal people. While some early English settlers in Australia may have attempted to show care and empathy towards the Aboriginal culture, they mostly failed. Their failure was due to *inadequate discernment* of what this group needed. One could say the settlers were not able to transcend their own bias and views to 'listen' to those of the Aboriginal people. The earlier English settler's perceptions clouded effective empathic listening and compassionate actions, which continues to this day. To this end, both Weil and Stein understood the complexity of the process of showing care and empathy. While listening attentively and empathetically might provide fruitful ethical

⁸² Anthony De Mello, *Awareness: a de Mello Spirituality Conference in His Own Words*, ed. Francis J Stroud (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1990).

responses, they acknowledged that the *helper's perspective could also be riddled with personal agenda and bias*.

We see that Stein's work can effectively extend our understanding of what empathy and attentive listening can look like in the classroom proposed by Weil, Yoda and Walker. According to Stein, to be empathetic is to be 'feeling alongside' the experiences of the other, drawing on our imagination and reflections in attempting to understand the phenomena of their suffering presented to us. This potentially provides a complex and holistic approach to the act of listening, as we attempt to understand another person's experiences with discernment and endeavour to recognise what they might need. These reflections can inform educators in an approach to thinking about ethics within a classroom.⁸³

II. Weil's work and ethical theory

Understanding where Weil's attentive listening fits within the broad literature on ethics is not immediately apparent. While Christian Platonism influenced Weil's metaphysics, her ethics (through the notion of attention) is more akin to *orientation* than a moral stance. In this sense, we can link her ethical approach to feminist ethics. Within feminist literature, Weil's notion of attention has been connected to the ethics of care.⁸⁴ Claude Gendron, for example, claims that

⁸³The importance of this process is further highlighted by Svenaeus in the following way: "The feeling of the empathiser provides the driving force of the empathy process expressing concern for the target that makes the empathiser go along with the experiences of the target in an imaginative understanding of them. As the rudimentary feeling towards made possible by affective schemas develops into an emotion containing judgements about the perceived and imagined state of the target, the empathic understanding will become richer in content. The empathy process is always situated in a situation that influences the directions it will take and to which extent it will become rich and adequate in the sense of being able to understand the predicament of the other person" Svenaeus, "The Phenomenology of Empathy: A Steinian Emotional Account," 243.

⁸⁴For example, see: Sara Ruddick, "On Maternal Thinking," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (2009):305–8. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wsq.0.0181>; Noddings, *The Maternal Factor: Two Paths to Morality*; Sophie Bourgault, "Beyond the Saint and the Red Virgin: Simone Weil as Feminist Theorist of Care," *Frontiers (Boulder)* 35, no. 2 (2014):1–27. <https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.35.2.0001>; Claude Gendron, "Moral Attention: A Comparative Philosophical Study," *Journal of moral education* 45, no. 4 (2016): 373; Luce Irigaray, Heidi Bostic, and Stephen Pluháček, *The Way of Love* (London: Continuum, 2002),162, 164.

Within feminist literature Weil's notion of attention has been linked to the ethics of care. These scholars reject the notion that ethics can be solely understood within conceptual and universal frameworks. For example, Carol Gilligan, argued that Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis and Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development were biased and male oriented, See Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982). Morny Joy argues that the theoretical approach to ethics is removed from how we make moral decisions. See Morny Joy, "Explorations in Otherness: Paul Ricœur and Luce Irigaray," *Études Ricoeuriennes* 4, no. 1 (2013): 71–91. Although not feminists, David Carr, John Haldane, Terence McLaughlin, and Richard Pring also point to this theme in their discussion of Jacques Maritain's perspective on morality. They state, "...morality cannot be effectively established by direct

Weil's "moral attention" allows the awareness of important issues within the ethical life ignored within mainstream ethical theories.⁸⁵ She advocates for what she terms 'moral attention.'⁸⁶ Rebecca Rozelle-Stone and Benjamin P. Davis argue that Weil's focus on habituation (that is, focus on attentive listening and compassion) resembles virtue ethics.⁸⁷ While this may be true, Weil's emphasis on humility differentiates her approach from Aristotle's. Furthermore, the workings of grace that can occur spontaneously do not factor into Aristotle's notion of virtues. Moreover, in essence, attention is orientated towards the good (influenced by Plato) and God, which is both personal and impersonal (transcendent) for Weil.

Many others have also echoed Weil's premise on the importance of listening and empathy for caring. Within the literature of psychology and counselling, for example, it is widely accepted that listening skills are essential in developing empathy and practical interpersonal skills.⁸⁸ Stephen R. Covey's well-known work, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, discusses the importance of deep listening and empathy for effective interpersonal relationships. Covey states:

When I say empathic listening, I mean listening with intent to *understand*. I mean *seeking first* to understand. It is an entirely different paradigm. Empathic (*from empathy*) listening gets inside another person's frame of reference. . . Empathic listening involves much more than registering, reflecting, or even understanding the words that are said. Communications experts estimate, in fact, that only 10 percent of our communication is represented by the words we say. Another 30 percent is

teach requires fostering in circumstances and conditions of pre-rational affection in default of which the explicit rules of cannot be expected to secure much of a hold on the human heart." See, David Carr, et al., "Return to the Crossroads: Maritain Fifty Years on," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 43, no. 2 (1995), 173.

⁸⁵ Gendron, "Moral Attention: A Comparative Philosophical Study," 373.

⁸⁶ Gendron, "Moral Attention: A Comparative Philosophical Study," 373. Gendron draws on other female writers and feminists such as Iris Murdoch, Nel Noddings and Joan Tronto.

⁸⁷ Rebecca Rozelle Stone, and Lucian Stone, "Simone Weil (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)". ed. Edward N. Zalta, *Plato.Stanford. Edu*, 2018, 29. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/simone-weil/>.

⁸⁸For example, see: Jennifer W. Mack, "On listening," *Cancer* 126, no.9, (2020),1828–1831. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.32729>; Richard D Chessick, *The Technique and Practice of Listening in Intensive Psychotherapy* (Northvale, N.J: Jason Aronson, 1989); Marla Morris' explores psychoanalytic descriptions of aesthetics and the importance of listening, see Marla Morris, "Aesthetic Curriculum Concepts." *Counterpoints* 499 (2016):11–54. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45157332>. There is also neurological research pointing to connections in the brain between affective and cognitive parts mediated by empathy. These studies have suggested the importance of empathy and compassion in our cognitive and thinking processes. Howard Gardner, for example, talks about "empathic intelligence", linking empathy to a range of thinking skills such as logic. See, for example, Diane S. Van Cleave, "Contributions of Neuroscience to a New Empathy Epistemology: Implications for Developmental Training," *Advances in Social Work* 17, no. 2 (2017): 369–89.

represented by our sounds, and 60 percent by our body language. In empathic listening, you listen with your ears, but you also, and more importantly, listen with your eyes and with your heart.⁸⁹

Moreover, as examined in Chapter 3, there is a vast literature on the connection between silence, listening and thinking.⁹⁰ Martin Heidegger, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Merleau-Ponty (among others) explored the importance of listening as having a vital epistemic role that helps us think and understand the world.⁹¹ As recalled Heidegger linked listening with understanding, claiming that ‘one cannot understand unless one is listening.’⁹² Listening attentively, therefore, has essential epistemological and moral implications that can be integrated within a contemplative classroom.

⁸⁹ Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 152–154.

Corey continues to explain the depth of response involved in listening empathetically. He states: “You listen for feeling, for meaning. You listen for behavior. You use your right brain as well as your left. You sense you intuit; you feel. Empathic listening is so powerful because it gives you accurate data to work with. Instead of projecting your own autobiography and assuming thought, feelings, motives, and interpretation, you’re dealing with the reality inside another person’s head and heart. You’re listening to understand. You’re focused on receiving the deep communication of another human soul.” Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, 152–154.

⁹⁰ For example, Glenn Gray makes the following claim on the importance of listening to Heidegger. He states: “...thinking that is at once receptive in the sense of listening and attending to what things convey to us and active in the sense that we respond to their call. Only when we are immersed in what it is to be thought can we reveal truly the nature of anything no matter how common place it may be, and only then can we avoid our habitual ways of grasping it as it is for us, i.e., subjectively”. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Glenn J. Gray (New York: Perennial Library, 1976), xiv. See also the following: Brian Kane, “Jean-Luc Nancy and the Listening Subject,” *Contemporary Music Review* 31, no. 5-6 (2012): 439–47; Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Jean Luc Nancy and Mandell Charlotte, *Listening* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2007); Rosalind Pearmain, *The Heart of Listening Attentional Qualities in Psychotherapy* (SPC Series. London: Continuum, 2001); Richard D. Chessick, *The Technique and Practice of Listening in Intensive Psychotherapy* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1989); Shapiro Yakov et al., “Listening beneath the Words: Parallel Processes in Music and Psychotherapy,” *American Journal of Play* 9, no. 2 (2017): 228; Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁹¹ For example, see: Nancy Jean Luc and Mandell Charlotte, *Listening* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2007); Peter Szendy and Nancy Jean-Luc, *Listen A History of Our Ears* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

Many scholars well identify Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the body. He proposed that the world becomes intelligible to us through our bodily orientation and activities. Stefan Kristensen describes this as a form of an ‘embodiment of hearing and listening.’ According to Merleau-Ponty, silence facilitates listening. He states that silence is intertwined and embodied within thought and speech and finds expression within our body. Merleau-Ponty’s observations of silence (within our discourse) and bodily expression are essential for the classroom. These helpful concepts reveal the complex nature of communication expressed within body language. Listening to the individual’s silent pauses and expression within the body can help enhance student relational skills that can enable empathy development. For example, see: Stefan Kristensen, “Figures of Silence: The Intrigues of Desire in Merleau-Ponty and Lyotard,” *Research in Phenomenology* 45, no. 1 (2015): 87-107. doi:10.1163/15691640-12341303. May also says, “Merleau-Ponty’s conception of being is, in fact, sonorous or vibrational, then listening should give us special purchase on—or privileged access to being.” 356. See Amy Cimini, “Vibrating Colors and Silent Bodies. Music, Sound and Silence in Maurice-Merleau-Ponty’s Critique of Dualism,” *Contemporary Music Review* 31, no. 5-6 (2012): 355–356. doi:10.1080/07494467.2012.759411; Angelo Caranfa, “Socrates, Augustine and Paul Gauguin on the Reciprocity between Speech and Silence in Education,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47, no 4 (2013), 578.

⁹² Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, xv; Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 259.

Understanding Weil's work amid the literature on listening and empathy

An awareness of transcendence is the context from which Weil understood attentive listening. Within psychology, theology and philosophy, other scholars have also contextualized the importance of deep attentive presence and listening within a broader spiritual context.⁹³ This is evident in the works of Martin Buber, Paul Ricœur, Emmanuel Levinas, Morny Joy, Julia Kristeva, Tara Brach, and Michael Eigen (among many others).⁹⁴ For example, Tara Brach and Michael Eigen's work emphasises the therapeutic benefits of extending one's awareness and belonging to include a more significant benevolent, loving presence.⁹⁵ Their writings often include references to a 'greater mystery' that accompanies individuals' journey towards transformation.⁹⁶ Martin Buber examines the "I-Thou," relationship that involves a dialogue of deep listening and presence with the other.⁹⁷ When we can be fully present with the other and listen deeply, we see people as human beings with unique qualities and human dignity, not as objects or things we can exploit for our purposes. Buber states through this more profound way of relating (through 'attentive presence') that we recognise something of the transcendent in the other and experience it ourselves through such encounters.⁹⁸

⁹³In a *Way of Being*, by Carl Rogers, the relationship between the client and therapist is imbued with an awareness of the transcendence. Rogers states: "...when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am slightly in an altered state of conscientiousness, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing, Then simply my presence is releasing and helpful to the other" (129). Although Rogers never claimed religiosity nor a belief in a theistic God, his work alludes to religious concepts in negative theology (discussed in early chapters). For example, terms such as the "unknown in me" and "presence." See Carl Rogers, *A Way of Being* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 129.

⁹⁴ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Gregor Smith. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*. trans. Richard A. Cohen. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987); Morny Joy, "Explorations in Otherness: Paul Ricœur and Luce Irigaray," *Études Ricoeuriennes* 4, no. 1 (2013): 71–9; Tara Brach, *Radical acceptance* (New York: Bantam Books, 2003); Michael Eigen, *Flames from the Unconscious Trauma, Madness and Faith* (London: Karnac, 2009); Julia Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

⁹⁵ Tara Brach, *Radical acceptance* (New York: Bantam Books, 2003); Michael Eigen, *Flames from the Unconscious Trauma, Madness and Faith* (London: Karnac, 2009).

⁹⁶ Brach, *Radical acceptance*; Michael Eigen, *Contact with the Depths*.

⁹⁷ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 14–16. In his work, *I and Thou*, Martin Buber, distinguishes two types of relating that he observed in modern culture, which he described as the "It" and "Thou." The It, is a way of relating characterised when we objectify and use people as a means to get something from them, what he describes as viewing them as "things." The "I-Thou," however, involves a dialogue of deep listening and presence with the other. See, Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Gregor Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 14–16.

⁹⁸Buber, *I and Thou*; See also, Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers*, 137. This ability to be fully attentive and present to the other is a theme in Weil's work examined in Chapter 5. This is also a theme developed in some feminist literature which were cited earlier.

Furthermore, listening and hearing are not the same. You may hear sounds, but authentic listening requires more than hearing – as Weil reminds us, it demands *attentiveness*.⁹⁹ This type of skill requires an ability to be *present* and *still*.¹⁰⁰ Weil thought we could not do this effectively unless we let go of our egoistic desires and attachments. Weil seems to imply that this task requires the energy and will of our whole being. For essentially, what Weil seems to be suggesting is *contemplative listening*. This concept is also closely linked to my broad definition of contemplation. This includes a disposition or orientation that draws on all of one’s faculties, the senses, thinking, feeling and imagination in a way that generally leads to self-integration. As Weil suggests, listening attentively is to listen with all of one’s faculties and being (senses, feeling and intuition). In doing so, we are better equipped to develop a capacity for discernment that is important in responding to the needs of the other.

Weil’s unique contributions are in the *quality* of listening. So, it is not just *listening* that is critical, but *how* we listen. *What can add depth and quality to our listening for Weil is detachment*. Weil claims that listening attentively to another’s suffering requires a disposition of openness to the other, which can only be accomplished once we have stripped away our ego concerns.¹⁰¹ This forms the basis of her ethics of attention. The writings of Thich Nhat Hanh

⁹⁹Attentive listening, however, as Weil acknowledged herself, is difficult. We all had experiences when someone was supposed to be listening to us and was preoccupied with their concerns. It seems challenging to learn to let go of self-concerns and preoccupations for most of us. At least, this is what researchers in Chapter 2 had concluded. They claim that becoming present and mindful of the task at hand is lacking in many people today.

¹⁰⁰ When our minds are busy and preoccupied with worries about our concerns, we may not have the necessary internal space to be attentive to others and listen—this is a shared experience. Many people have tried various practices to help with busy and worried thoughts, such as meditation, prayer, and mindfulness. Learning to be aware of our thoughts and feelings, cultivating attentiveness and living in the present moment will be essential for attentive listening. However, Weil suggests that for us to listen effectively, we need to work towards embodying complete practices.

¹⁰¹ The importance of ‘meeting the other’ attentively without the ego’s preferences and agenda is vital for authentic discernment and care. See Chapters 5 and 7 for a more in-depth discussion on this process of decreation. As discussed in Chapter 7, the ideas above are consistent with Weil’s notion of reading. ‘Proper reading’, Weil argues, is about being open to the ‘other’ perspective that pushes us beyond our personal views and ego preoccupations. This detachment can allow us to be receptive to the opinions and ideas of the other. Also, as argued in Chapter 7, in contemplating contradictions in reading, we can be open to the possibility of developing a sense of epistemic humility due to the awareness of the limits of knowledge. This can lead us to recognise the pervasive mystery that opens us up to the divine and the suffering of the other. Simone Weil, “Essay on the Notion of Reading,” *Philosophical Investigations* 13, no. 4 (1990): 297–303. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9205.1990.tb00087.x>.

also have similar insights. Hanh too discusses the importance of deep and compassionate listening that draws on body and mind to relieve another person's suffering. He states:

The practise of mindfulness will help you to love properly . . . the most precious gift you can give to your loved one is your true presence, with mind and body...¹⁰²

However, this is a challenging task and what Weil seems to be implying is a level of contemplative awareness and development needed for attentive listening and care.¹⁰³ Weil's work points to the complex and nuanced task of moving beyond our limited individual perspectives to empathise with the other's experience in a *profound way*. Lisbeth Lipari describes this process pertinently in the following way:

For it is only when we *listen otherwise* to the unknown and unrecognisable face of alterity that we can hear the voice of ethics whispering, drawing us beyond the limitations of our subjective understandings of the world so that we may shed, like a snakeskin, our old views and certainties about the world.¹⁰⁴

8.5. *Attentive listening in the contemplative classroom.*

The notion that attentive listening demonstrates care is captured within the counselling literature and feminist ethics of care but largely missing within educational literature. For this reason, Weil's work is essential for a contemplative classroom. However, there might be some challenges in terms of practical applicability. To what extent we can teach attentive listening to students within a secondary school and university context remains undetermined.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the state of many classrooms today is often busy and noisy. As mentioned in Chapter 1 and 6, many educators today feel the pressures of crowded curriculums, increasing bureaucracy and accountability. Some educators have voiced their concern about these

¹⁰²Thich Nhat Hanh and Melvin McLeod, *You Are Here: Discovering the Magic of the Present Moment* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), 91.

¹⁰³ As noted in Chapter 5, this contemplative approach involves a detachment from the ego and is evident in many religious traditions.

¹⁰⁴Lipari Lisbeth, "Listening Otherwise: The Voice of Ethics," *International Journal of Listening* 23, no. 1 (2009), 57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10904010802591888>.

¹⁰⁵ The importance of listening and empathy is discussed in my work, *Inquiry*. I also develop exercises in 'empathic listening' for students to explore in pairs. However, its efficacy in developing these importance skills or dispositions is yet to be confirmed, see Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 264–265.

pressures impacting on their *quality* time with students. Many of these educators claim that this has impacted negatively on student learning and their overall wellbeing.

While attentive listening and empathy may seem like an obviously much needed disposition, as noted in Chapters 1, 2 and 6, policymakers espousing neoliberal educational approaches would deem skills such as listening and silence as adding little immediate monetary or utilitarian value. These are not ‘skills’ recognised as necessary. For example, these skills (and dispositions) are rarely seen in government policy statements, absent in the teacher's requirements for accreditation and broadly speaking teacher training courses.¹⁰⁶

While Weil does not offer us a ‘technique’ as such or a ‘how to guide’ wrapped within a utilitarian framework, she offers insights into *how teaching and learning might cultivate the disposition of attentive listening*. Weil’s observations can help educators in their interaction and relationships with students. Deep listening and discernment through attention provide an empathetic way of relating to students within the classroom. These elucidations point to the importance of teacher training in this approach so that educators are guided in modelling the disposition of attentive listening and empathy. These can inform and guide our ethical approach within a contemplative context.

I. Nel Noddings on Weil and attention for the classroom.

In *The Maternal Factor*, Noddings herself acknowledges the significance between her notion of caring and Weil’s concept of attention.¹⁰⁷ Noddings emphasises the importance of the carer’s (the teacher’s) receptive attention towards the student. This includes receptivity and openness to the needs of the other and is highlighted in Noddings works that is also reflective of Weil’s attentiveness.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>. It is important to note that while ethics and ethical behaviour are recognised as necessary for good teaching practice, the connection between listening and ethics is not explicitly stated.

¹⁰⁷ Noddings, *The Maternal Factor: Two Paths to Morality*.

Simone Weil discussed this form of attention and its place in moral life. The basic attitude of one exercising receptive attention is captured in the question asked (explicitly and implicitly) by carers: What are you going through?¹⁰⁸

Nel Noddings has written much on the need to focus on caring and happiness in a broad sense within our classrooms and adopts Weil's notion of attention as an approach.¹⁰⁹ In, *Educating moral people: A caring alternative to character education*, she argues that we have moved away from focusing on care.¹¹⁰ Noddings maintains that a model of care is essential for learning and teaching toward happiness. She proposes that this model should be based on open-ended dialogue. This dialogue involves attentive listening between the listener and speaker in the classroom. Noddings describes this as a form of attention. She states.

Dialogue is the most fundamental component of the care model. True dialogue... is open-ended. The participants do not know at the outset what the conclusions will be. Both speak; both listen... The emphasis on dialogue points to the basic phenomenology of caring. A carer must attend to or be engrossed (at least momentarily) in the cared-for, and the cared-for must receive the carer's efforts at caring. This reception, too, is a form of attention.¹¹¹

Effective dialogue within the classroom can also be enhanced by reading well. Yoda makes the link between Noddings notion of dialogue and Weil's ideas on reading.¹¹² As discussed in Chapter 7, Weil understood that 'reading well' can provide the tools to move beyond the limited self-preoccupations to an enlarged view of reality. Weil's insights have been noted by other scholars who also understood the importance of literature as potentially developing moral education.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Noddings, *The Maternal Factor: Two Paths to Morality*, 47.

¹⁰⁹ For example, see: Nel Noddings, *Happiness and Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹¹⁰ Nel Noddings, *Educating moral people: A caring alternative to character education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002).

¹¹¹ Noddings, *Educating moral people: A caring alternative to character education*, 16.

¹¹² Yoda Kazuaki, "An Approach to Simone Weil's Philosophy of Education Through the Notion of Reading," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 36, no. 6 (2017): 663–682. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-017-9576-1>.

¹¹³ For example, Martha Nussbaum, Iris Murdoch, Aiden Hobson and Peter Roberts (among many others) advocated like Weil that good literature can allow us to develop a wider perspective on the world and heighten our understanding of the plight and experiences of other people. Citations are included throughout the thesis such as in Chapters, 5, 6 and 7.

Martha Nussbaum, like Stein, proposed that our imagination can be used to enhance our capacity to develop empathy.¹¹⁴ Through good stories, we are prompted to think and imagine what life could be like for others. Nussbaum thus links the cultivation of imagination to the love of the other and claims this is effective for global citizenship growth.¹¹⁵ Likewise, the effectiveness of stories in cultivating imagination and empathy is also investigated by Noddings. She writes:

Of course, stories may be inspirational, and they may portray heroes. But, more important, stories may help us to understand what happens—why people who are usually good sometimes give way to temptation or even evil, how whole tribes or nations can go wrong, how we are led to betray our friends out of fear, how we try to be good and become confused over what ‘good’ means, how thoroughly dependent on one another we are for our moral goodness. If there is a virtue that we hope to develop through stories, it is sympathy, intelligently guided by moral understanding.¹¹⁶

However, while Weil and Noddings are concerned with the notion of care and attentiveness in the classroom, they have their differences. Noddings, for example, does not agree with the idea that ‘attention’ applied to studies in the school can be equally applied to attentiveness to another person.¹¹⁷ In other words, the attentiveness applied, for example, to mathematics does not necessarily transfer to a disposition of attention to another person. I think this is a fair critique of Weil’s understanding. However, while most models cannot guarantee with certainty educational outcomes, some of the research on mindfulness would support Weil’s insights. Some studies, for example, have suggested that practising mindfulness (which can be linked to Weil’s attentiveness) over time can lead to more compassionate behaviour.¹¹⁸ Secondly, Noddings does not share Weil’s religious understandings of these concepts.

¹¹⁴ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 10–11.

¹¹⁵ Nussbaum, *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education*, 14. See also: Yoda, “An Approach to Simone Weil’s Philosophy of Education Through the Notion of Reading.”

¹¹⁶ Noddings, *Educating moral people: A caring alternative to character education*, 9–10.

¹¹⁷ Noddings, *The Maternal Factor: Two Paths to Morality*, 52–53.

¹¹⁸ For example, see: Conklin, “Compassion and Mindfulness in Research Among Colleagues.”; Lynette M Monteiro et al. *Practitioner’s Guide to Ethics and Mindfulness-Based Interventions*.

8.6 Weil's notion of care and the *vita activa* dimensions of Christian Faith for a contemplative pedagogy.

Weil's theoretical vision of contemplative education through silence, attention, solitude and aesthetics is predominantly religious and Platonic (*via contemplativa*) and, as established in Chapter 5, is well developed in Caranfa's work. While Caranfa alludes to the distinctions between Weil's theoretical and practical or the active life (*vita activa*)¹¹⁹, the latter remains undeveloped in his work. This poses some limitations to his contemplative Christian framework. Her integrated approach between the contemplative and active makes Weil's work appealing to the contemplative classroom. Her writing on attentive listening provides a way that we can practically demonstrate care to not only those in their immediate circle (as Weil explained) but to the broader community. As I will show in what follows, this was the call of the Gospels and the Christian faith.

Weil's notion of compassion towards the suffering is at the heart of the Christian message. The call for a compassionate response to the suffering and the marginalised is evident in the Gospels and the scriptures. Jesus' teaching of love thy neighbour, the messages of compassion in The Beatitudes and the prophetic voices throughout scripture speak to this theme.¹²⁰

The Christian tradition advocates the importance of silence and prayer and the *vita activa* aspects of faith. The teachings on justice towards the marginalised are evident within Church teachings and writings of theologians and political theology.¹²¹ Liberation theology, for

¹¹⁹ Angelo Caranfa, "Contemplative instruction and the gifts of beauty, love and silence," *Educational Theory* 60, no. 5 (2010), 561, 563.

¹²⁰ In the Gospels, Jesus was asked by the Pharisees what is the greatest commandment. He replies, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." Mark: 2:30-3. (NIV).

¹²¹ For example, see: Pope Francis, "Laudato Si" http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si.html; Paul VI. *Gaudium et spes*. (1965a): http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html; Paul VI. *Gravissimum educationis*. (1965b): http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html; Francis, Pope. *Lumen Fidei*. (2013a): http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_encyclica-lumen-fidei.html; Francis, Pope. *Evangelii Gaudium*. (2013b): http://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf; Francis, Pope. Address to the Joint Session of the United States Congress. September 24. (2015b):

example, is based on the ‘preferential option for the poor’ that includes examining the societal structures that caused social and economic inequalities.¹²² Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes about the Nussbaum link between God’s love and our neighbour that is at the core of the Christian faith. He states:

Christ will wander upon the earth as long as men exist, as your neighbour, as he through whom God calls you, speaks to you, makes demands on you. That is the great urgency and the great joy of the Advent message, that Christ is at the door, lives among us in the human form. Will you close or open the door to him?¹²³

In *The Church of Mercy: a Vision for the Church*, Pope Francis advocates strongly for the importance of solidarity with the poor.¹²⁴ Charles Chaput reiterates this theme stating that the Catholic faith includes “...the task of bringing the world to Jesus Christ, we witness best when...we help immigrants... serve the poor, when we stand against division and exploitation, when we speak for a more just social order...”¹²⁵ Similarly, the writings of the monk Thomas Merton speaks of this need of solidarity with the poor and marginalised.¹²⁶ Merton was a man of silence and contemplation who advocated strongly against the world’s injustice.

Weil stands by the protestors on the labor strike, “her emphasis waiting on the grace of attentive – as opposed to the agnostic clash of social protest—suggests that she stands at the barricades...not as a rioter but as a mystic. For those who thirst for economic and social justice, she offers a spiritual path to rhetorical agency rooted in the precariat’s own experiences of pain, anguish, and labor. Through mystic attentiveness to necessity, affliction, labor, gravity, and grace, the type of rhetorical agency that Weil describes emerges not from the ground of frustration, cynicism, or anger but through the recovery of relationships of loving respect and dignity.”¹²⁷

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150924_usa-us-congress.html; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Sharing Catholic social teaching: Challenges and directions*. (2014): <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/sharing-catholic-social-teaching-challenges-and-directions.cfm>

¹²² For example, see: the works of Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1988); Leonardo Boff, *When Theology Listens to the Poor* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

¹²³ Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Edwin Robertson. trans. Eric Mosbacher [& others] (London: Collins. 1977), 81.

¹²⁴ Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy: A Vision for the Church* (Chicago, Illinois: Loyola Press, 2014).

¹²⁵ Charles J. Chaput, “Pope Francis and Economic Justice,” *Journal of Catholic social thought* 12, no. 2 (2015), 183–184; Gruijters, Rochus-Antonin (Roman) “Solidarity, The Common Good and Social Justice in The Catholic Social Teaching Within the Framework of Globalization,” *Philosophia Reformata* 81, no.1 (2016): 14–31, doi:10.1163/23528230-08101002.

¹²⁶ For example. see: Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, N.Y: Image Books, 1968); Thomas Merton, *Faith and Violence; Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968).

¹²⁷ Maier, “Attentive Waiting in an Uprooted Age: Simone Weil’s Response in an Age of Precarity.” 235.

The lives and writings of Merton and Weil exemplify a merging of both social action and contemplation. On the one hand, Weil advocated attentive silence, stillness, and solitude, and yet she was anything but silent. As illustrated by Craig Mair above, Weil was a vocal social activist on various social justice issues that point to the essence of Christian teachings. Weil was widely accepted as a philosopher, political activist, and mystic.¹²⁸ She was involved in the political union movement and helped in World War II and the French resistance. Weil advocated against the systematic injustices she observed within society and demonstrated solidarity with the poor and oppressed.¹²⁹ Weil worked as a labourer on the land and completed manual work in a car factory. Weil writes about the dehumanising effects of manual work and the inequities within society more generally.¹³⁰

Religious scholar Karen Armstrong argues that the principle of compassion is the focus and connection that unites the three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. She defines compassion as the ‘ability to feel with the other’ and states that religion is about *practising* compassion.¹³¹ Armstrong proposes that the concept of the Golden Rule, which is to treat others as you would like to be treated, is also central within Abrahamic traditions. A religion can only be understood when it is ‘put into practice.’¹³² Armstrong suggests that compassion is the test of any genuine religiosity. Like Weil, Armstrong thought that through

¹²⁸ Many scholars have noted Weil’s influence. For example, Gustave Thibon describes Weil as a “pure messenger” and writes, “...Her work is addressed to souls...that pure goodness to which she devoted her life and death...” Gustave Thibon, in Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (London: Routledge, 2002), Xxix; Susan Sontag claims that Weil’s work has an “intellectual passion”, and her life as a martyr makes her stand with Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky and Kafka.” Heinz Abosch, *Simone Weil* (New York: Pennbridge Books, 1994), 122.

¹²⁹ Weil was aware of the inequalities in French society and actively sought to engage in social activities to address them. See, for example, Weil’s biography: Simone Pétrement, *Simone Weil: A Life*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976).

¹³⁰For example, see: Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Causes of Liberty and Social Oppression,” in *Oppression and Liberty* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973); Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1952); Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973); Simone Weil, *Notebooks of Simone Weil* Vol I, trans. Arthur Wills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976); Simone Weil, “Are We Struggling for Justice?” trans. Marina Barbas, *Philosophical Investigations* 10, no. 1 (1987): 1–10.

¹³¹Karen Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010); Karen Armstrong, “My Wish: The Charter for Compassion.” 2008 in Monterey, CA. TED video, 21:24. https://www.ted.com/talks/karen_armstrong_makes_her_ted_prize_wish_the_charter_for_compassion; See also: Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 268.

¹³²Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*; Armstrong, “My Wish: The Charter for Compassion.”; Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 268.

the act of compassion, we are brought into the presence of God and the divine.¹³³The observations of Armstrong are poignant in reminding us that the essence of all religious faith is more than just a call to interior silence and solitude; it equally requires compassion, love and good works. As demonstrated below, Weil clearly understood this.

The implicit love of God can have only three immediate objects, the only three things here below in which God is really though secretly present. These are religious ceremonies, the beauty of the world, and our neighbour. Accordingly, there are three love.¹³⁴

Contemporary religious scholar Rachel Kohn also echoes and supports Weil's insights. Kohn highlights the importance of silence in relating to the divine and its redemptive qualities. However, she also recognises when silence is not an appropriate response.¹³⁵To keep silent on important issues of injustice, she claims, can have serious moral consequences.¹³⁶Kohn, for example, states that silencing sexual abuse victims and women in domestic violence has profound ethical implications.¹³⁷Kohn continues to argue that the silence in these instances is not in keeping with the tradition of the Hebrew scriptures. These scriptures, Kohn points out (and Armstrong also alludes to), are full of examples where Yahweh (God) advocates for protecting the suffering and marginalised.

Hence, what makes Weil's work appealing is the multidimensional understanding of the purpose of attention and the Christian faith. Weil discussed the importance of taking social action towards the poor and marginalised and explores *how* to achieve this. In other words, Weil provides some fruitful insight into how we may cultivate *a way of relating* to the other that shows deep care and compassion, which, as has been argued, is through *attentive listening*.

¹³³ Armstrong, *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*; Armstrong, "My Wish: The Charter for Compassion."

¹³⁴ Weil, *Waiting for God*, 83.

¹³⁵ Rachael Kohn, "Reflections on Silence," in *Sacred Silence in Literature and The Arts Conference* (Strathfield: Australian Catholic University, 2019).

¹³⁶ Kohn, "Reflections on Silence."

¹³⁷ Kohn, "Reflections on Silence."

Weil's insights are fruitful in informing a classroom that wants a positive way of relating to others. This includes not only those in their immediate circle but, as Weil demonstrated, to reach out beyond nepotisms, toward the broader community. This approach is congruent with the vision of education that many Christian and religious educational institutions claim to uphold. This vision encourages their students to reach out to the marginalised and poor with care and compassion.¹³⁸ Weil's approach is significant for a contemplative pedagogy that seeks to encourage the development of contemplative practices such as silence and deep reflection and also a way of showing care and concern for those who are suffering. This ethical approach can potentially widen students' perspectives on their world and address the broader holistic aims of education reviewed in earlier chapters.

Conclusion

The elucidations in this chapter are aimed at helping to develop a picture of what the demonstration of care might look like in a contemplative classroom. Care as an ethical response is an essential dimension of any classroom and is particularly relevant for a contemplative approach. In extending Caranfa's model (from its focus on silence and aesthetic appreciation), I have shown how to develop and cultivate care through *contemplative listening*. In listening attentively to the other, we can cultivate careful discernment in responding to their need. A contemplative pedagogy requires more than silence and deep reflections; but also encourages ethical positive responses.

Weil weaves her notion of attention to the act of 'loving the other.' The act of 'attentiveness' in one's presence with the other, the ability to be still and attentive, is an act of caring and love.

¹³⁸ Schools that adopt the Jesuit spiritual tradition, for example, often include in their mission statements the goal of developing within students an awareness of injustices in society and the importance of showing compassion towards the poor and marginalised. See for example, "Our School - Saint Ignatius' College Riverview", *Riverview.Nsw.Edu.Au*, accessed 3 December 2021, <https://www.riverview.nsw.edu.au/our-school/>.

Weil describes attentiveness as an experience that involves metaphorically speaking an ‘emptying of the soul’ in order to make a ‘space for the other.’ Weil claims that listening attentively to the suffering of the other requires a disposition of openness which can only be accomplished once we have stripped away our ego concerns. In making this ‘space’ within oneself, the person can facilitate a capacity for attentive listening in silence. This is what I have alluded to as *contemplative listening*. It is understood as contemplative listening as it links to my definition of contemplation as an integration or way of seeing ‘the whole of reality’ that draws on *our whole being*.

Weil contextualises the importance of deep attentive presence and listening within a broader spiritual/religious context. Weil presents a synthesis between this capacity for attentive listening in silence and an engagement in social action for change. Weil’s writing on social action is an essential dimension for a contemplative Christian framework. She extends her notion of attention to deep listening and receptivity towards the other, especially the suffering. She argued that we need to be attentive in ‘discerning’ the needs of the marginalised and work towards social justice. This ethical dimension of attention is missing in Caranfa’s contemplative classroom.

Weil’s work, therefore, offers a positive contribution to the contemplative classroom. For the most part, we see that Weil lived what she wrote. As a scholar, activist and contemplative, Weil provides a holistic approach to discipleship, showing possibilities of what living out the Gospel message in today’s world might look like.¹³⁹ This practical and active approach helps complement the introspective and contemplative aspects of teaching and learning. In other

¹³⁹Some scholars claim that the influences on Manicheism caused Weil to focus on the negative aspects of Christian beliefs. For example, her general distrust of the body, an inability to express affection, not eating and concentrating on suffering. For more, see Heinz, *Simone Weil*, 87–93. While these characteristics may not appeal to young people today, Weil offers other attributes that can potentially speak to people today. Like other modern contemplatives such as Thomas Merton, Weil does attempt to synthesise the Christian faith’s contemplative and active dimensions, and for that, her contributions to education are significant. See, Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1986).

words, a contemplative classroom is not only about silence, deep reflection, and prayer – it also should aim at developing an ethics of care. Weil’s notions of attentive listening help demonstrate that compassionate action can emerge in the simple yet powerful act of ‘deep listening to’ the other.

In order to further develop her notion of attentive listening, I have discussed how others have also understood Weil’s attentive listening. These scholars include Michelle Walker, Nel Noddings, and Kazuaki Yoda. In further developing Weil’s notion of empathy, I have also drawn on Edith Stein phenomenological explorations on empathy. For Stein, empathy requires using our faculty of imagination and reflections on the experiences of ourselves (including our values) and that of others, as it presents itself as phenomena different from our own. This approach can help to enable a holistic approach when thinking about ethics.

However, while deep listening and discernment through attention provide valuable skills for students to develop within the contemplative classroom, there are some problems. The extent to which we can effectively teach these skills to students within a secondary school or university context remains a challenge. Additionally, overcrowded curriculums and neoliberal influences drive policymakers who may not see the importance of developing listening skills for teachers and students. These skills are not currently evident in educational policy documents.¹⁴⁰ While much educational policy does recognise the importance of wellbeing in education, as recalled, the definition of wellbeing is not clearly defined. More importantly, how we achieve this approach in concrete terms is not always clear. Nonetheless, as I have shown in this chapter and throughout the thesis, contemplative practices such as silence, pausing, reflective thinking and attentive listening can provide valuable insights into the general discussion on wellbeing and holistic education.

¹⁴⁰For example, see Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), *Australian Professional Standards For Teachers*. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>.

The implications of Weil's work can extend to incorporate other religious traditions and secular classroom contexts. Moreover, Weil's insights into the importance of attentive listening and presence are just as important today as they were at the time of her writing. Many current examples highlight the importance of attentive listening, which is relevant beyond the classroom context.

The increase in mental health issues during the Covid lockdowns has reminded us of the importance of human contact and connections. The limitations of technology and social media fail to fully meet the need for *quality* human contact, connection and interaction. Pope Francis (among others), in fact, warns us of the negative aspects of relying on social media and technology to connect to others. He states:

Today's media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet, at times, they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences. For this reason, we should be concerned that, alongside the exciting possibilities offered by these media, a deep and melancholic dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations, or a harmful sense of isolation, can also arise.¹⁴¹

Weil challenges us to consider a radical shift in our understanding of listening skills in the classroom and other contexts. So that when I listen to someone talking or read their work, I am encouraged to 'stand aside' as much as possible from my personal views, political agenda and 'really listen' to what has been said. For example, the refusal to listen to those who have genuine fears about Covid vaccinations has resulted in their demonisation.¹⁴² Alternatively, giving space to answer their questions and concerns respectfully and transparently may allay their concerns and contribute to a more democratic response rather than silencing their views. Only in 'listening deeply and attentively' in this way may I understand what is said. This

¹⁴¹ Pope Francis, "Laudato Si" http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html. para. 47.

¹⁴² This group were demonised as 'conspiracy theorists,' spreading the virus and prohibited from entering many places over a particular time during the pandemic.

attentive listening might also lead me to discern the suffering or view of the other and propel me to attend to their needs and facilitate a positive ethical response.¹⁴³

While attentive empathic listening may sound straightforward, most of us can observe anecdotally that it is challenging. Research has shown that attentive presence (that is based on deep listening) is a skill and disposition many of us struggle with.¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the skill of deep listening may have implications for robust political discourse; democracy; notions of citizenship and education. We see current debates on important issues, for example, often framed within either ‘left or right wing’ agendas that impede the needed open dialogue and debate. Beliefs can become entrenched within the political spectrum, with little ‘real’ listening to what people on both sides are essentially saying.

As Muriel Barbery appropriately observes, most of us are entrenched in our limited views of the world, which we project onto the world and others. She suggests that we only authentically meet each other when we realise our projections and move beyond these. This, in essence, is what Weil (and Stein) similarly observed as hindering our deep relations with each other. Most of us do not *see the other*; we only *see ourselves*. Barbery writes:

. . . We never look beyond our assumptions, and what's worse, we have given up trying to meet others; we just meet ourselves. We do not recognise each other because other people have become our permanent mirrors. If we actually realised this, if we were to become aware of the fact that we are only ever looking at ourselves in the other person, that we are alone in the wilderness, we would go crazy. . . As for me, I implore fate to give me the chance to see beyond myself and truly meet someone.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³One does not need to look too far to see how active listening may indeed resolve many conflicts in the world. Friction is present, for example, between nations, religions, intimate relationships etc. Examining the causes of most conflicts shows that what underlies them is an inability to *see* or *understand* the other. When we fail to listen well, we miss fully understanding what the other is saying and cannot respond effectively to what the other may need. While this may not solve ‘all’ the problems in our conflicts, as you may understand what the other is ‘actually saying’ and needing, you may not be in a position to help or decide willingly not to respond. However, it may resolve some suffering. A practical example is that the UN may understand the people’s deep suffering in Africa because their workers have effectively assessed the situation by listening attentively to people’s distress and needs.

¹⁴⁴ See studies in Chapter 2.

¹⁴⁵ Muriel Barbery, *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*, trans. Alison Anderson (New York: Europa Editions, 2014), 141.

In the next chapter, I will continue to usefully extend Caranfa's model by exploring examples of contemplative practices to cultivate silence and contemplation in the classroom. For example, the ancient methods or tools taken from the Benedictine tradition, such as *Lectio Divina* and Christian meditation (among other approaches), will be examined to enhance contemplative practices in the classroom.

Chapter 9 – Practical – Contemplative Practice: Experiential Dimensions of a Contemplative Pedagogy

In the previous Chapter, I extended Caranfa's model by including the ethical dimensions of contemplative education. This chapter demonstrated how listening attentively to the other in discernment and compassion can contribute to a moral and ethical framework of care.

Chapter 9 continues the work of extending Caranfa's model of contemplation by exploring the *experiential dimension* of contemplative practice. The chapter will provide 'explicit tools' to enhance classroom contemplation. In keeping with the theme of attentive listening from Chapter 8, in this chapter we will explore the *Lectio Divina* or *sacred reading*, derived from the monastic tradition of St Benedict. *Lectio Divina* offers a way to enlighten a *contemplative way of reading and listening*, which can usefully extend Caranfa's model of contemplative practice in the classroom.

We begin by reflecting on Caranfa's account of contemplation and ask why *Lectio Divina* (and similar practices) are needed in the contemporary classroom. We then turn to what is involved in contemplative pedagogy, arguing that the *Lectio Divina* tool helps cultivate the contemplative practices advocated within this thesis. These include silence, stillness, attentive listening, deep reflection, and slow reading. This ancient technique can help us engage with texts more deeply as we learn to read slowly and repetitively. While the origin of this ancient practice is for monastic life, many of its elements can be extrapolated to the modern classroom. This approach can inform religious formation/education programs and teach humanities courses (more broadly).

In drawing briefly on T.S Elliot and others who point to the loss of wisdom in the modern world, caused by today's busyness and technological pressures, I will explain why we need a contemplative approach. A precursor on the contemplative methods and scholars who support

contemplative learning in the classroom will be included. These scholars will support much of the direction I will take in this chapter.

As I discussed in previous chapters, the aim of contemplative pedagogy is essentially holistic education, like that of *Bildung*. Some brief comparisons will be made between the objectives of contemplative education and *Bildung*.

Whilst the focus will be on *Lectio Divina*, I will refer to other practical contemplative approaches to expand the available contemplative practice to meet the student body's diverse needs. This includes Christian meditation drawn from the Benedictine tradition. Christian meditation is a valuable practice within a contemplative framework as it can help to reduce stress and potentially help develop religious faith. The benefits of Benedictine education for teaching and learning will also be discussed. Confucian education is also connected to the Benedictine tradition as it explores attention and virtue in the classroom. In addition, mindfulness as a contemplative tool understood and practised from an explicit secular framework will be examined. This practice has been proven to aid students develop greater focus and wellbeing, which is helpful for the classroom in achieving the aims of holistic education.

The various approaches discussed in this chapter offer potentially helpful methods that can be incorporated with a contemplative pedagogy. Despite the Christian focus, these approaches do vary and can be adapted to capture the interest of a diverse student body to appeal to other religious traditions and secular contexts. The hope is that students will find these tools helpful in their personal lives to reduce stress and anxiety. In addition, the contemplative practices would similarly be of help for students to potentially find personal meaning and possibly an encounter with transcendence and God.

9.1 Caranfa on contemplation

As argued in previous chapters, Caranfa advocated that education aims to achieve self-integration through the arts and aesthetic–spiritual. For example, in “Contemplative Instruction and the Gifts of Beauty, Love, and Silence” and “Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe”, Caranfa claims that aesthetic experience connected to silence is essential for holistic learning. He writes on each respectively,

...education promotes the divorce, rather than the marriage, of the aesthetic-spiritual life of the individual and a society from the natural process of all living organisms as they tend toward a final end in truth, beauty, unity, harmony, peace. ¹

The theme that connects the narrative is that artistic–aesthetic education alone can lead students along the path to self-completion by integrating silence and solitude in their life of learning. ²

Furthermore, as discussed in previous chapters, Caranfa advocated for silence and contemplation within education. In “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” Caranfa highlights the importance of reading and writing in silence for self-integration and creativity. He states:

These concrete pedagogical applications and the philosophical implications described previously reflect a vision of the theory of education that is based on silence that captures or fosters the students’ creative potential: students see learning primarily as a silent activity and embed their feelings and thoughts in it...Through reading and writing, students learn to speak the right words at the right time; in addition, reading and writing open the hearts and minds of students, enabling them to catch a glimpse of their hidden or unknown self. Words alone are incapable of revealing this self, but silence can. ³

We can see illustrated above Caranfa’s thesis on the importance of silence in education via the aesthetic experience. One method of achieving this methodology Caranfa claims is through the task of reading and writing *in silence*. These are valuable suggestions for a contemplative

¹ Angelo Caranfa, “Contemplative Instruction and the Gifts of Beauty, Love, and Silence,” *Educational Theory* 60, no. 5 (2010): 562–563, doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.2010.00377.x.

² Angelo Caranfa, “Philosophical Silence and Spiritual Awe,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 37, no. 2 (2003):99–113. Doi :10.2307/3527458.

³Angelo Caranfa, “Silence as the Foundation of Learning,” *Educational Theory* 54, no.2 (2004), 230.

framework, and as suggested in Chapter 2, silence in the classroom has demonstrated positive outcomes. However, Caranfa could have proposed some further concrete examples of *how* to incorporate silence and aesthetics in the classroom. In light of these observations, this chapter will provide concrete tools to enrich contemplative practices within our learning spaces further.

9.2 *Why the need for Lectio Divina in modern times?*

Before I begin discussing the Lectio Divina, I want to draw your attention to why contemplative practices are still important today, both within education and in society, more broadly. The growth of mindfulness in the West is now considered a well-known practice for aiding concentration, stress relief, and dealing with depression and anxiety.⁴ As considered in Chapters 1 and 2, mindfulness is part of a trend in what is termed the ‘Slow Movement.’ This movement includes not only mindfulness but also meditation practices and literature, all advocating an emphasis and importance on *slowness*.⁵ What the literature on ‘slowness’ point to, is a need to operate more ‘slowly’ and mindfully.⁶ This slowness, they argue, is essential to enhance deep thinking and wellbeing. These writers are essentially questioning the ‘efficiency and profit’ focused culture and its influences within education. These observations and criticisms on contemporary culture support the need for contemplative practices.

In addressing the above concerns, this chapter will draw mainly on the tools of Lectio Divina and other methods, such as Christian meditation from the Benedictine tradition, which can be incorporated within the classroom. I will also touch on Confucian education as it explores

⁴ See citations in Chapters 1 and 2.

⁵ See citations in Chapters 1 and 2.

⁶ It is important to note that the examples mentioned promote contemplation (slow and mindful practice) from a secular perspective. This begs the question of how religious traditions respond to this fast-past culture. Are they simply adopting this uncritically? A complex and challenging question that is beyond the scope of this chapter. Furthermore, to what extent do religious traditions adopt the so-called ‘secular’ approach in their schools and institutions? There seems to be a range of responses to these issues. Some within the religious traditions have embraced these practices, while others have been antagonistic towards these approaches. It also prompts the question: to what extent do religions draw on their rich tradition in terms of ‘tools’ or practices that serve to quiet the busyness and stresses of modern life?

attention to the classroom and its links to the Benedictine tradition. In addition, I will briefly include mindfulness as a contemplative tool. By framing some of these practices through the language of ‘usefulness’ and ‘high art’ (such as in teaching literature through the humanities), religious traditions may potentially appeal to the modern audience by relieving some of the stresses in everyday life and more importantly here, contribute to a holistic approach to teaching and learning. These practices may potentially also facilitate an encounter with the divine and help develop religious faith (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).⁷

9.3 *Contemplative pedagogy*

As I have argued throughout the thesis, contemplative pedagogy aims toward teaching and learning holistically. I have defined contemplation as a disposition or orientation that draws on all of one’s faculties and ways of knowing; the senses, thinking, feeling and imagination. Contemplation potentially leading to self-integrated. So contemplative education, in essence, is about not only attending to the mind but also the emotions, intuition and the soul. This approach seeks to concentrate on the interiority and subjective meanings of the student.⁸

Patricia Owen-Smith, illustrated this point. She writes:

Contemplative educators call for an integrated model of knowing that canvasses both interior and exterior epistemologies. They argue that first-person modes are not in conflict with the more traditional, third-person classroom approaches in many of our classrooms but rather complement, enrich, and expand.⁹

Contemplative pedagogy then needs to be guided by the aim of self-integration and the development of the interiority of students. This is included in many educational institutions’ mission statements and rhetoric as attending to ‘the whole person’ or ‘holistic learning.’

⁷ While it is not in the scope here to discuss the complexity of religious faith as one of the possible outcomes of contemplative practice, this issue is explored in Chapter 6.

⁸As Parker Palmer observes in *The Courage to Teach*, the interior life of students is the significant and challenging task of education. He states “...To educate is to guide students on an inner journey towards a more truthful way of seeing and being in the world. How can schools perform their mission without encouraging the guides to scout out that inner terrain?” Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*, 1st ed (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998) inside book jacket.

⁹ Patricia Owen-Smith, “Reclaiming Interiority as Place and Practice,” in *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Pedagogy and Place-Based Education*, 26 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50621-0_3.

However, how we achieve this integration of mind, heart, and soul is not entirely clear. One example is how the educational concept of *Bildung* attempts to explore this question. *Bildung* seeks ways to make learning more meaningful so that students can integrate what they learn in class into their personal lives.¹⁰ As noted in a UHR document on *Bildung*, it is “what we are left with after we have forgotten what we have learned.”¹¹ The aim for this integration of learning points to the broader holistic goals of education. Holistic learning is a theme explored within the philosophy of education literature examined in Chapter 4. Where philosophers investigated all advocated that holistic learning is achieved when we work towards teaching the attainment of *wisdom*.

9.4 *The loss of wisdom*

The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness; Knowledge of speech, but not of
silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
All our knowledge brings us nearer to death,
But nearness to death, no nearer to God.
Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycles of heaven in twenty centuries
Brings us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.¹²

The poet, T.S Eliot’s well-known verse critiques modern culture with its focus on ‘information’ and ‘endless invention’, which he claims has abandoned wisdom. Eliot may consider much of what we may think as valuable “knowledge” today as part of our ‘ignorance.’ Eliot would

¹⁰ Solveig M. Reindal defines *Bildung* in the following ways: “The UHR committee holds that it is not possible to add *Bildung* to the curriculum as if it were a prescribed bit of knowledge or a learning goal. This argument we base on what has already been said, about *Bildung* as internalised knowledge and competence—“what we are left with after we have forgotten what we have learned.” (UHR 2011, pp. 33–34, my translation). See Solveig M. Reindal, “*Bildung*, the Bologna Process and Kierkegaard’s Concept of Subjective Thinking,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32, no. 5 (2013): 533–49.

¹¹ UHR. Dannelsesaspekter i utdanningen. Rapport fra arbeidsgruppenesatt av UHRs utdanningsutvalg, September 2011.

[Report from The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions]: 33-34, <http://www.uhr.no/documents/DannelseRapportEndelig.pdf>. Accessed December 2011 in Solveig M. Reindal, “*Bildung*, the Bologna Process and Kierkegaard’s Concept of Subjective Thinking,” 536.

¹² T.S. Eliot, “The Rock,” in *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909–1950* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 96.

probably find the integration of technology in education and its utilitarian emphasis on developing skills for the workplace ‘unenlightened.’

In *Slow Philosophy*, Michelle Walker explores how we are confronted with the stark realities of an educational environment that is caught up with speed and efficiency, so much so that our focal task of philosophy (and, therefore, wisdom) is inhibited. Walker argues that philosophy and deep-thinking demand ‘a slowness.’ As I discussed in previous chapters, this was the view of Max Picard, Simone Weil, Caranfa, Sean Steel and Josef Pieper. As Owen-Smith argues:

They see such practices as silence, reflection, witnessing or beholding, listening, dialogue, journaling, and self-inquiry as proto-typical and critical to the classroom. All are grounded in introspection, mindfulness, and self-reflection and serve as an important means for accessing the place of interiority...¹³

However, Owen-Smith makes some practical suggestions on how we can teach holistically and towards wisdom. As mentioned, Owen-Smith understood a holistic approach that addresses the interior and exterior dimensions of learning and is best addressed through contemplative practices grounded in introspective acts such as silence, reflection, listening and mindfulness. This view supports much of what has been proposed in this work.

As this chapter highlights, *Lectio Divina* is a tool that can aid the contemplative acts of silence, reflection and listening mentioned by Owen-Smith. We can also note that other scholars have similarly proposed the importance of the contemplative practice of *Lectio Divina* as an antidote to the age of information and a fast-paced approach to culture and education.¹⁴ What *Lectio Divina* can offer students is slow and meditative reading, which counteracts the emphasis on

¹³ Owen-Smith, “Reclaiming Interiority as Place and Practice,” 26. Owen-Smith points out above the numerous approaches to contemplative practice; a focus on silence, pausing, stillness, meditation, and prayer. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, many scholars advocated for a contemplative approach within the classroom, some drew on the wisdom traditions for their approach to contemplative practice.

¹⁴ Owen-Smith, “Reclaiming Interiority as Place and Practice,” 23–35; Mary Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities* (Taylor and Francis, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315098104>; Byron E Anderson, “Stop, Look, Listen: Contemplative Teaching and Learning,” *Christian Education Journal* 10, no. 2 (2013):392–406, <https://doi.org/10.1177/073989131301000210>.

information and content noted by Elliot earlier. This method can facilitate a way of reading that is personal, meaningful and has ontological significance. As Byron E. Anderson explains,

Much reading in the college and seminary classroom has the same informational emphasis. But little of this information finds its way into heart, soul, memory, and imagination. Also, much informative reading can be done quickly as we search for the “facts.” It is something we “consume”, but, like fast food, it is neither readily digested nor very nourishing. We often do the same with Scripture, turning to it and using it only for “answers” without waiting to see and hear what it has to say to our hearts.¹⁵

9.5 *Lectio Divina*

Fortunately, many in the church today are rediscovering the church’s own tradition of formational or contemplative reading, what is usually identified by its Latin name as *lectio divina*, or simply “sacred reading.” For some, *lectio divina* may be a well-rehearsed practice, but it may appear quite strange to those whose reading practices are strictly informational.¹⁶

In keeping with the aim and scope of the thesis on silence and contemplation, I will discuss how the contemplative practice of *Lectio Divina* can be a positive pedagogical tool within the contemplative classroom. Firstly, as mentioned, this ancient practice can enhance our capacity for reading slowly, which can be an antidote to the information overload, fast-paced and technological culture. While these practices originated as a “holy reading,” their method can be applied more broadly to other religious writings and humanities courses. This practice can be helpful in both a religious and secular context. Secondly, this approach incorporates silence (as studies showed in Chapter 2, this has positive benefits for learning) and listening in the classroom. Thirdly, it allows students to become familiar with their religious traditions and contribute to their own religious/spiritual formation. Furthermore, *Lectio Divina* can help cultivate contemplative dispositions discussed in this thesis beyond the narrow focus of education solely for the purpose of career training. By cultivating these dispositions, we are essentially teaching toward the soul and wisdom, broadly defined, as Socrates taught.

¹⁵ Anderson, “Stop, Look, Listen: Contemplative Teaching and Learning.”

¹⁶ Anderson, “Stop, Look, Listen to Contemplative Teaching and Learning,” 400.

There are various stages in the practice of *Lectio Divina*. The first phase is reading, *Lectio*; the second is meditation, *meditatio*; the third is prayer, *oratio*; and the last is contemplation, *contemplatio*.¹⁷ Each of these steps draws the reader deeper into the text.¹⁸ The first stage involves reading a short passage, usually a few verses from the Bible, a few times and slowly. We are encouraged to listen to the word/s in our mind each time we read. The reader then ‘comes to rest’ on a particular word or phrase within the selected passage which has spoken to them.¹⁹ They then repeat this in their mind many times. It is here the reader moves into the stage of meditation, or *meditatio*. The reader in this stage begins to ponder the meaning of the words for their own lives and engage in the hopes and memories the words may elicit.²⁰

Michael Casey describes *meditatio*, as a *techné* (a skill) the monks applied to “search a text for authentic meaning.”²¹ The practice of *meditatio* in Latin, means “to think over, to reflect, to consider”²² The third phase is prayer, *oratio*. Here the person takes their ponderings to prayer. The reader ‘talks to God’ on what was spoken to them in the passage. The last stage is contemplation, *contemplatio*.²³ Here the reader is in the silence and presence of God. This process of *lectio divina* does not strictly adhere to a linear approach and is rather circular. The person can go back and forth between the phases. Although the phases are connected, I will focus more on the first two phases and make some links to the classroom context. As Mary Keator explains,

Rumination began with deliberate, focused attention. As the monks entered into the world of the text, they had to put all other thoughts aside in order to ruminate on a specific word or verse... Rumination was a disciplined practice that strengthened the monks’ faculty of concentration.²⁴

¹⁷ Matthew A. Rothaus Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise,” In *Christian Faith and University Life*, 104 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61744-2_6.

¹⁸ Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise,” 104.

¹⁹ R.D.G. Irvine, “How to Read: Lectio Divina in an English Benedictine Monastery,” *Culture and Religion* 11, no. 4 (2010): 399, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2010.527614>.

²⁰ Irvine, “How to Read: Lectio Divina in an English Benedictine Monastery,” 399.

²¹ Michael Casey, *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina* (Ligouri, MO: Triumph Books, 1996), 63.

²² Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*.

²³ Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise,” 104.

²⁴ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 119.

The method of *lectio* demanded the monks practice their faculty of ‘total attention.’ In listening to the words of the text over and over, the monks are instructed to cast aside all other thoughts and fantasies and focus all their attention on the word/s. This focused attention can be likened to Weil’s notion of the ‘gymnastics of attention.’²⁵ Keator describes this method as including an embodied approach. For the monks listen and repeat the word/s with their senses; their eyes, ears and lips, she states:

Once the monks had placed their full attention on a word or verse, they began to repeat it slowly and intentionally. Repetition required bodily vigour. By seeing the words with their eyes and repeating the words aloud using their lips, tongues and vocal cords, the monks engaged their whole bodies in the repetition process.”²⁶

This is the discipline of imaginatively entering into a text, and learning to inhabit it. “Meditation” means “to chew” on a text the way a cow chews on its cud: slowly, in no rush, and with great deliberation. Meditative reading is repetitive, even (if we push the cow metaphor farther), regurgitative. It involves the consideration of the text from beginning to end—taking it in, chewing it, swallowing it. And then it involves bringing the text back up (to mind, not stomach!), reconsidering it, taking it in again, chewing it again, and swallowing it again. Each time you do this, the text takes on a new and richer meaning.²⁷

Matthew A. R. Moser also explains the phase of *meditatio* as a sensual and embodied exercise. Moser states that the reader is to “chew” on a text the way a cow chews on its cud.²⁸ This metaphor is significant in describing how ‘chewing slowly, again and again’ until new meanings emerge is how the text can penetrate its deeper meaning and in a personified way. Enzo Bianchi describes rumination as derived from the Latin *rumin-are*, referring “to chewing the cud” or “to turn over in the mind.”²⁹ Keator proposes that in the *meditatio* the monks

²⁵ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harp Perennial Classics, 2000), 57.

²⁶ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 119.

²⁷ Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise,” 106.

²⁸ Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise”; See also: Casey, *Sacred reading: The ancient art of lectio divina*; Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*.

²⁹ Enzo Bianchi, *Lectio Divina: From God’s Word to Our Lives* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2015), 55.

diligently searched the text for meaning as they “chewed, pondered, probed, dug and analysed” the text.³⁰ Duncan Robertson also argues,

The medieval writers, we recall, conceive the activity of reading in alimentary metaphors; the reader ‘tastes’ the words of Scripture on the ‘palate’ of the heart, or indeed literally in the mouth as he or she pronounces them; one has then to ‘chew’ the text thoroughly and ‘digest’ it, that is to say, proceed toward interpretation and personal appropriation.³¹

Robertson emphasises the sensuous characteristics of the *meditatio* process.³² Robertson states the monks ‘chew, taste and digest’ the words until they can find a way into one’s interiority. Keator sensuously describes this process as “savoured the words of verses as though sipping fine wine”.³³ Keator goes on to argue that the monk’s rumination on a word or verse was a process that elicited emotions. As the monks continued in the process of rumination and memorising the texts, “they came to sense and feel it.”³⁴ This was demonstrated not only in listening to the reading, narrating, and words but also reciting the words in a song. The evocation of emotion within *meditatio* results from pondering, ‘chewing’ and ‘digesting’ the words as food so that they make their way to our hearts.³⁵ This approach of reading the text from the heart and whole being is illustrated further by Jean Leclercq, who writes:

For the ancients, to meditate is to read a text and to learn it ‘by heart’ in the fullest sense of this expression, that is, with one’s whole being: with the body, since the mouth pronounced it, with the memory which fixes it, with the intelligence which understands its meaning, and with the will which desires to put it into practice.³⁶

The affective dimension provoked within the meditation process is how a text can potentially facilitate personal meanings. The *lectio* demands a reading of the text in an embodied way that

³⁰ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*.

³¹ Duncan Robertson, *Lectio Divina: The Medieval Experience of Reading* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 31.

³² Robertson, *Lectio Divina: The Medieval Experience of Reading*, 31.

³³ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 121.

³⁴ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 122.

³⁵ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 121–122.

³⁶ Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 17.

draws on the mind, senses, emotion, and imagination. It moves from attentive listening in the *oratio*, towards a deep recognition of what the text might say personally for the reader. The text can then speak to the heart of the person, their soul and spirit, in a way that provides meaning and leads towards conversion. As Keator and Moser write,

Through the acts of reading and interpretation, the monks were re-constructing themselves. Bernard urged his monks to analyse the text in relationship with one's life. "Today the text we are to study is the book of our own experience. "As the monks worked through the allegorical meaning of the text, they deepened their relationship with the text, themselves and one another...They were trained to listen to the voice behind and within the text. And as they began to hear the wisdom that the text was sharing with them, they leaned in closer and began to listen more intently.³⁷

No longer do we read a text for its utility for our projects of self-aggrandisement. No, we read out of the brokenness and hope that constitute our lives, handing ourselves over to the text in patient and humble apprenticeship, a willingness to be challenged, to be transformed, to *be* mastered, rather than to master.³⁸

A critical theme that describes how sacred (or other) text can facilitate the transformation process even further is illustrated above by Moser. The willingness to 'hand ourselves over to the text', "to *be* mastered, rather than to master", conveys an interesting theme of passivity that is paradoxical. It is this passive act of handing over, of becoming 'passive' and 'mastered by the text', that it can 'speak to us' existentially. Being passive here is paradoxically not a weakness or inertia but rather a conscious act. In other words, to "*be* mastered" by the text is a

³⁷ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 136. Moser describes the potentially transformative process of reading a text in the following ways: "It is a dangerous thing to open the pages of a book. There's no telling who we might be challenged to become in and through those pages. But this possibility of a transformative encounter with God's love is the wellspring of joy that comes in reading and teaching the Christian tradition. To read in this way challenges the rushed and consumptive styles that use and exploit texts. Performative reading carries our vision through the text until we behold the "Love that moves the sun and the other stars" and find ourselves transformed and made wise in that vision." Moser, "Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise," 109.

Irvine similarly highlights the transformative power of the text in the following way: "Well, both I'm thinking. Yes, I am searching for myself; I'm searching myself for that resonance. But it's also trying to listen to God. God is speaking to me, to where I am right now, and I suppose what we would say is that God's there; he's speaking those words on the page, but a lot of the time, they're flying past me. But as you move slowly through the text, you realise that it's not just a voice out there; it's a voice speaking to me, directly. Do you know John Henry Newman's motto, 'Cor ad cor loquitur'? 'Heart speaks to heart'? Well, it's like that"... "I hope we're not going to be deconstructionists about this! Let me see. It's something simple in experience but doesn't translate well to words. Let me put it this way. When you're reading something, you can read it very superficially. Lectio is about going beyond that, it's not just, 'oh, that's nice' and then put it away. This is more than that. You are letting it enter you, you are opening yourself to it and yes, you can become very, very moved by it. I've not personally been reduced to tears, but it's definitely something that results in a change within you. Afterwards, I will walk around with warmth, and when I return to that text, that warmth is still there." Irvine, "How to Read: Lectio Divina in an English Benedictine Monastery," 8.

³⁸ Moser, "Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise," 109.

deliberate process. This passivity is sometimes attributed to a 'feminine' way of being in the world,' which contrasts with the 'masculine' 'doing' and 'action.' Feminist writers have noted these distinctions.³⁹ In addition, this process of passiveness when engaging with a text similarly points to the notion of Christian grace. Grace is the concept that divine interference can emerge in a person's life without human effort and will. This act of grace, as Anderson points out below, ultimately moves beyond technique and can appear as a gift from God. As he explains:

That said, we have to acknowledge, as does Casey, that while the process of sacred reading tends to be sequential, contemplation in the end is not the result of a process or a set of techniques; rather it is a gift from God. "It is given in God's time not as a 'reward' for work well done, but as an energising component within the total context of life" ⁴⁰

Of course, the way of reading meditatively, which is open to transformation, is similarly identified by other writers. This is especially evident among existentialists, who understood life's pursuit (particularly through the arts) as a search for personal meaning. This is reiterated by those such as Theodor Adorno, Immanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur.⁴¹ These scholars argue that this engaging method of reading a text has an ontological purpose. This approach to reading is particularly relevant for the contemplative classroom that wants to cultivate depth of reflection and personal values. Ricoeur describes the power of a text as bestowing existential importance. He states this in the following way:

The interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself [or herself] better, understands . . . differently, or

³⁹ For example, see: Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love* (London: Continuum, 2008); Michelle Boulous Walker, "An Ethics of Reading: Adorno, Levinas, and Irigaray," *Philosophy Today (Celina)* 50, no. 2 (2006): 223–38, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday200650254>.

⁴⁰ Anderson, "Stop, Look, Listen: Contemplative Teaching and Learning," 402. Thiselton points out that ". . . a rational dimension remains within the process of hermeneutical inquiry, the more creative dimensions of hermeneutics depend more fundamentally on the receptivity of the hearer or reader to *listen with openness*." Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*. 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 7.

⁴¹ Paul Ricoeur, "What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding," in *Paul Ricoeur: Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 158–159; Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum international Publishing Group - academi, 2004); Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987); Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991); Michelle Boulous Walker, "An Ethics of Reading: Adorno, Levinas, and Irigaray, 223–38.

simply begins to understand himself [or her- self] . . . Initially, the text had only a sense; . . . now it has a meaning.⁴²

Oratio

Oratio is the third phase of the *Lectio Divina*. In Latin, this means “a discourse,” “mode of expressing,” and “prayer.”⁴³ Having read and recited the word of God, in the *Oratio* phase, the monks express their heartfelt *responses to the text* through prayer. Prayer can be expressed through song and poetry. This phase is described in Latin as a “conversation” with the Lord.⁴⁴ Keator depicts this process as an awakening within the interiority of the monks. Here the words of the text can prompt an emotional response that expresses itself spontaneously in a range of ways. The prayer comes from the depths of the monks that can lead to ‘transforming their minds and hearts, leading to a deeper experience of deeper humility and self-understanding’⁴⁵

The spontaneous nature of prayer in the *Oratio* means its implementation within the classroom poses a challenge. For it requires the educator to be flexible and adaptive to students. As Moser points out, while we can introduce students to reciting texts slowly, eliciting spontaneous prayer is not so easy.⁴⁶ Even if students who are open to religious experiences may not respond in prayer at the time allocated in the classroom, the teacher may not witness the prayer. Furthermore, students may react to prayer the way the educator does not expect, as prayer is often an intimate and private experience.

Nonetheless, Keator attempts to incorporate the *Oratio* in her humanities course at university. She does this by provoking students with an extract. Keator tries to entice students’ responses to the text by employing two strategies that could be useful in today’s classroom. Firstly,

⁴² Ricoeur, “What Is a Text? Explanation and understanding,” 158–159.

⁴³ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 155.

⁴⁴ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 155.

⁴⁵ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 158.

⁴⁶ Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise,” 106–107.

students write a journal response, reflecting personally on what the text meant to them. Secondly, students act out the selected text through a drama performance.

Contemplatio

The last state of the Lectio Divina process is the *contemplatio*. This final phase is where reading, meditation, and prayer culminate into personal transformation. It involves a resounding presence with God that eventually surpasses language and text. The practice of repetition has allowed the words to become internalised so that they become redundant. The silent presence of God transcends the necessity for words. As I have mentioned in earlier chapters, this points to the mystical experiences that many have written about within the literature of negative theology. The encounter with the divine is often described here as beyond the power of the will, which can appear as an act of grace and cannot be adequately explained in language.⁴⁷ It is often understood as a positive and transformative experience with the divine.

George A. Hillery explains this as a communion with God:

...the monk may pass from such thinking to being simply in prayer, in a state of communion with God. In its advanced form, words are not needed, just as old friends can enjoy each other's company without speaking. This is contemplative prayer (also called centering, mental or quiet prayer). It is not "thinking of nothing." The monk is instead in a state of loving surrender to his God...⁴⁸

While the previous stages included contemplative thinking, wondering, reflecting, and praying on the word in the text, in this stage, the work is done in such a way for the person to move into an experience beyond the discursive. Moser describes this in the following way:

⁴⁷ See, for example: Oliver Davies and Denys Turner, *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Contemplation is the loving enjoyment of God that comes about by means of our intellectual and spiritual pursuit of truth; contemplation is where we are drawn into the life of God. This is where we become the wisdom and love of God. It is where we become the love that God is." Moser, "Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise," 106–107.

⁴⁸ George A. Hillery, *The Monastery: A Study in Freedom, Love, and Community* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992), 158.

“*Contemplatio* takes us beyond the discursive and into the *dilectio* of love. In contemplation, truth, knowledge, and love perfectly coincide in our enjoyment of God.”⁴⁹

I have demonstrated how the tools of *Lectio* and *meditatio* could be applied to a secular and religious context in a classroom, for example, when dealing with literature. However, how we incorporate and adapt the *oratio* and *contemplio* for a culturally and religiously diverse modern classroom environment will need further development by future researchers.

Critique of the allegorical in the Lectio Divina

There is but one true interpretation’ (2000, 67), and for the fundamentalists Crapanzano describes, seeking this true interpretation involves working on the ‘plain’, ‘ordinary’, ‘common sense’ value of words (2000, 64). This means taking the approach that ‘One should assume a literal interpretation unless there is some indication in the text to do otherwise’ (2000, 65); here, we are told that the ‘literal’ reading is opposed to the ‘allegorical’ reading, and those who attempt to read scripture as though it means something other than that which it appears to say are subject to suspicion. They are looking for God’s intention in the text, and there is an acute sense of the danger of reading unintended meaning into a text...⁵⁰

The subjective nature of the *Lectio Divina* method has raised some concerns. What if, as pointed out above, we read ‘unintended meaning into a text? Richard Irvine cites Brian Flynn, who is concerned about the decontextualization of the Bible from the pursuit for objective meaning.⁵¹ Flynn states, ‘By taking passages of Scripture, which have an intended meaning, and breaking them down into smaller, separate segments, often for the purpose of chanting over and over the true meaning of the passages are lost’.⁵² Flynn equates *Lectio Divina* as part of the new age movement such as yoga, reiki, and Transcendental Meditation. Flynn claims this method poses a great threat to Christian churches today.⁵³

⁴⁹ Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise,” 106–107. Moser also states the following: “The contemplative fulfilment, what we hand over is not simply *ideas* but a person, the one who is the truth in his incarnate flesh.”

⁵⁰ Irvine, “How to Read: *Lectio Divina* in an English Benedictine Monastery,” 402.

⁵¹ Irvine, “How to Read: *Lectio Divina* in an English Benedictine Monastery,” quoted in Brian Flynn, *Running Against the Wind: The transformation of a New Age Medium and His Warning to the Church* (Silverton: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2005).

⁵² Flynn, *Running Against the Wind: The Transformation of a New Age Medium and His Warning to The Church*, 136–137.

⁵³ Flynn, *Running Against the Wind: The Transformation of a New Age Medium and His Warning to The Church*.

Flynn's approach to reading sacred texts echoes religious fundamentalism. This attitude rejects allegorical or mythical dimensions within the text and focuses heavily on a literal interpretation. While different understandings and meanings are unavoidable amongst biblical scholars, some interpretations are problematic. Literal interpretations of texts have resulted in extreme and rigid views, sometimes causing negative consequences resulting in violent and coercive actions, as in extremist religious fundamentalism. Karen Armstrong argues that religious fundamentalism is founded in fear and is a simplistic interpretation and distortion of religious faith.⁵⁴

The issues above points to the discussion on biblical hermeneutics. This raises the question regarding how we understand the meanings of the texts. Are texts 'constructed' by the readers or are meanings 'given' through the text by the author? While it is not in the scope here to give a detailed response, I will point to some possible answers. Firstly, it is important to note that Lectio Divina is not exegesis. While this approach is valuable in examining critically the text using the historical-critical method (and undertaken by scholars within the monastic tradition), it is not the main aim of the Lectio Divina. The focus of the Lectio Divina is more akin to *eisegesis*, which involves a subjective reading *into* the text. So, in response to the earlier question: while the writers of the sacred text had an intention or meaning (that was mostly to account for their experiences of the divine), the reader similarly constructs this meaning in their own personal way.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God: What Religion Really Means* (London: Vintage Digital, 2011), 263, 260. Armstrong argues that most religious fundamentalists are antagonists against secular or scientific perspectives viewed as a threat. She claims that these groups are often founded on fear and protection from elimination. Armstrong states: "Every single fundamentalist movement that I have studied in Judaism, Christianity and Islam is rooted in profound fear. . . Rooted as a fundamentalism is in a fear of annihilation, its adherents see any such offensive as proof that the secular or liberal world is indeed bent on elimination of religion."

⁵⁵ However, as Flynn highlighted earlier, this problem of subjective interpretation of the sacred text can be unsettling. Personal interpretation can result in various responses, leaving the religious tradition vulnerable. There are risks of unorthodox and even blasphemous interpretations of the sacred text, which may not be in line with the status quo or the understanding of the mainstream understanding of the tradition.

If religion is to have some relevance for people today, it must engage in peoples' experiences and speak to their existential questions and needs. If religion does not offer that to people, it fails to be relevant. As Socrates and others have taught us, one way we can lead people towards wisdom is by engaging them in important personal questions that lead them to the *examined life*. Socrates argued that this could be achieved through the method of curiosity, wondering and open questioning. The method of Lectio Divina is conducive to open questions, which are existential in nature and do not often demand the simple responses Flynn and other fundamentalist readers of the text often advocate.

This open-ended approach that the Lectio Divina can facilitate is at the heart of what it means to be religious and a seeker of truth. Timothy K. Beal supports this view. He describes the essence of religion as a creative process of engaging with the most profound questions via reading the sacred text. Beal suggests that religion (or 'relegere') means 'to read repeatedly' sacred texts and engage them in the important human questions.⁵⁶ Beal states:

In what sense is religion a kind of *binding* (from the Latin, *religāre*), a being bound to a web of principles, doctrines, certainties, and in what sense is it a *process of reading again*, as Cicero suggested (*relegere*, "to read over again [and again]"), a continuing engagement with texts, a way of articulating, by reading/writing, the most profound questions about life and death, identity and otherness? Is religion about asserting answers or crafting questions?⁵⁷

Of course, the process of inquiry and personal open-ended questions within an attitude of wonder and epistemic humility can potentially lead one towards existential personal meanings.⁵⁸ Within the context of the Lectio Divina practice for monastic life, however, the purpose of the open questions is to find the answers in something greater than oneself, and for

⁵⁶ Timothy K. Beal, "Opening: Cracking the Binding," in *Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies: Identity and the Book*, ed. Timothy K. Beal and David M. Gunn (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1–12.

⁵⁷ Beal, "Opening: Cracking the Binding," 1. However, Flynn's caution about the subjective nature of interpretation of the text prompts some valid epistemological concerns. While a subjective interpretation of a text is valid insofar as it is the individual's interpretation. This does not mean that the interpretation is true.

⁵⁸ However, the endless posing of questions can also lead one to the opposite of personal meaning, which is nihilism.

this community, it is God. In other words, *Lectio Divina* can lead one towards transcendence and an encounter with God.

9.6 *Lectio Divina* in the classroom

I. *Inquiry methodology*

Contemplative methods do not teach, encourage, or require students to become religious or to adopt a particular worldview or faith commitment. Rather, contemplative methods unlock the innate yet often unexplored capacity for intuitive knowledge, expanded consciousness, unconditional compassion for self and others, appreciation for beauty, and creative fulfilment.⁵⁹

The holistic approach to reading a text offered through the *Lectio Divina* is essential for a contemplative classroom that wants to move beyond superficial meanings to deep understandings and wisdom. However, this slow approach to reading, thinking, and learning does not necessarily answer questions in the way we would expect in the context of a content-driven approach to education. The process in *Lectio Divina* is more in tune with inquiry-based learning. Inquiry allows students to go deeper as they explore different levels of understanding and ways of thinking about a particular issue or question. The inquiry model places the teacher as a facilitator in the learning process. Educators encourage and promote risk-taking and discovery in learning to allow engagement with ideas and questions within students' minds.⁶⁰

As Irving argues,

Yet, in the monastic culture of reading aloud, which gives rise to *lectio divina*, the individual loses this control. He does not set the pace for reading; he does not dart from place to place in the text; 'Listening, we have to take it as it comes; someone else is in

⁵⁹ T. Coburn, et al., "Contemplative Pedagogy: Frequently Asked Questions." *Teaching Theology & Religion* 14, no. 2 (2011): 169. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9647.2011.00695.x>.

⁶⁰ Therefore, classrooms become places where the inquiries and wondering minds of the youth are encouraged. This approach has become evident in project-based learning, design thinking and action research. The benefits of inquiry-based learning have been demonstrated within educational literature to show positive outcomes. This is exemplified through the works of scholars such as: Philip Cam, *Thinking Together: Philosophical Inquiry for the Classroom* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1995); Mary Hayden and Jeff Thompson, eds., *International Education: Principles and Practice* (London: Kogan Page, 1998); Matthew Lipman, *Thinking for Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

charge of the words' (Foster 2005, 19). This is what is learned in the life of the monastery and what shapes the monastic approach to scripture.⁶¹

Furthermore, through the *Lectio* (reading), students can cultivate the act of listening. The importance of listening for contemplative practice and pedagogy was examined in Chapters 3, 5 and the present chapter, where I demonstrated that listening to silence is essential for self-knowledge, learning, creativity, connecting to the divine, and caring for the other. *Lectio* offers a further practical tool for enhancing listening in the classroom. The monks, through the *Lectio*, developed the faculty of attentive listening in silence to the word/s of the text. As we saw in Chapters 2, 3, and 8, this skill of attentive listening is critical for learning and an ethics of care. The way students can achieve this deep attentive listening is through focused attention. Irvine describes below how *Lectio Divina* enhances listening skills:

This paper argues that *Lectio Divina* aims to transform the relationship between the reader and text by changing how we approach the written word. Learning how to read is related to the ongoing process of learning *how to listen*, and it is argued that this relational approach to reading emerges from the social life of the monastery.⁶²

II. *Lectio Divina* in World Literature courses

The monks discovered that their memory was primed during *Lectio*, but further developed in *meditatio*. In my World Literature course, the students deepen what they read in *lectio* during *meditatio*. The two practices are interconnected and mutually dependent. Students need to read a text multiple times, break down larger texts into shorter segments and exercise their faculty of memory in order to search a text for deeper meaning.⁶³

Keator uses the tool of *Lectio Divina* in her teaching of World Literature with university students. She claims that this method has enhanced her students' abilities to slow down, increase their memory, attention, and listening skills, and an overall deeper engagement with

⁶¹ Irvine, "How to Read: *Lectio Divina* in an English Benedictine Monastery," 409.

⁶² Irvine continues to state; "...I am interested in way that reading is constituted as an act of listening and the forms of relationship that this may generate through which the listeners foster a new relationship between themselves and God. It is this process of attentive listening that interests me, and which I wish to explore further. *Lectio divina* is part of a wider setting in which monks learn to listen, and this becomes the context for a dialogical relationship with scripture. Irvine, "How to Read: *Lectio Divina* in an English Benedictine Monastery," 396.

⁶³ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 129.

the texts. When studying a text, Keator begins with an analysis of literal interpretation, then moves to allegorical and symbolic/personal meanings. She also instructs students to read slowly, recite, and repeat verses from the texts in class and in their own time. Keator states this technique helps improve memory and understanding and is also training for listening deeply for deeper meanings behind the words. Students examine the text drawing ethical and personal relevance for their own lives.⁶⁴ Keator states: “They were trained to listen to the voice behind and within the text. And as they began to hear the wisdom that the text was sharing with them, they learned in closer and began to listen more intently.”⁶⁵ She continues,

Educators need to be patient, stand their ground and not give in to students’ impatience and petulance. They need to trust that as students begin to repeat the words slowly, they will begin to hear them, feel them and think about them deeper. As the text slowly enters into them, it will continue to inform and form them. ⁶⁶

Furthermore, Keator highlights the importance of slow reading and reciting of verses as necessary for developing memory to facilitate deeper understanding. As noted earlier, the monks recited the verses from the sacred texts and knew them by heart. In the monastic tradition, Keator notes that memory is connected to the heart. She states: “Memory” as “heart” was encoded in the common Latin verb *recordari*, meaning to ‘recollect.’⁶⁷ In Latin, the word *memoria* means ‘memory, remembrance, recollection’.⁶⁸ Keator makes this connection to the Platonic understanding of memory (particularly long-term memory), which is essential for deep understanding. Socrates thought that memory was a gift from the divine. Keator points out that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (through experience, not recollection) viewed memory as vital for personal growth.⁶⁹ Socrates describes memory as the following:

⁶⁴ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 137.

⁶⁵ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 136.

⁶⁶ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 147.

⁶⁷ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 126.

⁶⁸ Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 126.

⁶⁹ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 16, quoted in Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 126.

Imagine . . . that our minds contain a block of wax, which in this or that individual may be larger or smaller, and composed of wax that is comparatively pure or muddy, often harder in some, softer in others, and sometimes of just the right consistency. . . Let us call it the gift of the Muses' mother, Memory, and say that whenever we wish to remember something we see or hear or conceive in our own minds, we hold this wax under the perceptions or ideas and imprint them on it as we stamp the impression on a seal ring. Whatever is so imprinted, we remember and know so long as the image remains; whatever is rubbed out or has not succeeded in leaving an impression, we have forgotten and do not know.⁷⁰

Keator points out that while short-term memory is what seems to be the focus today in education, primed for exams, it is long-term memory that is critical for deep understanding. Moreover, Keator argues that students are not taught to remember for the long-term. Keator draws on the works of Nicholas Carr on memory and technology. In his work, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brain*, Carr suggests that long-term memory is where we store deeper understanding. According to Carr, this is similarly where the more complex 'schemes' give depth and richness to our thinking. Carr writes:

...brain scientists have come to realise that that long-term memory is actually the seat of understanding. It stores not just facts but complex concepts, or 'schemas.' By organising scattered bits of information into patterns of knowledge, schemas give depth and richness to our thinking.⁷¹

9.7 *The Rule of St Benedict and Benedictine education*

It is important to note that *Lectio Divina* was taken from the *Rule* of St Benedict and formed part of the life of the men and women within the monastic tradition.⁷² Benedictine education today attempts to draw from the ethos and spirituality of St Benedict.

In the *Rule* of Saint Benedict, written in the early 6th century, there are formal prayer periods: Matins or Vigils, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. During this time, the monks would have heard the sacred text/verses repeated many times. The ethos of the

⁷⁰ Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 21, quoted in Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 126.

⁷¹ Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 124, quoted in Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*, 147.

⁷² Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities*.

regimented life was prayer and work, *et labora*. The days were spent in either manual labour or reading and prayer. The sole aim of this approach to living and the Rule was to *cultivate an attentiveness to the task at hand*.⁷³ Life revolved around prayer and contemplation in silence. The *Rule* also advocated the development of virtues including silence, obedience, humility, charity, chastity, and stability.⁷⁴ St Benedict emphasises the importance of humility for spiritual development.⁷⁵ Benedict understands humility as a disposition that avoids narcissism, individualism, pride, and egoism. These have positive dispositions that point to virtue that are important for a holistic approach to contemplative pedagogy.

Scholars such as Susan Muto and Lori McMahan have drawn from the Benedictine tradition for spiritual development and education.⁷⁶ Marielle Frigge, for example, describes the characteristics of Benedictine education as a holistic approach to teaching and learning focused on the three elements: attentive listening, discretion, and holism.⁷⁷ Frigge claims that this involves listening to the words in the sacred text, the Abbot (teacher) and listening to one's 'heart' in all aspects of life.⁷⁸ The habit of discretion, Frigge argues, requires the habit of listening attentively.⁷⁹ Frigge proposes that Benedictine education cultivates attentive listening and discerning, enabling a holistic methodology to facilitate wisdom. This approach seeks to integrate knowledge and wisdom born from experiences. Frigge states:

⁷³ Jānis (John) Tāivaldis, Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education* (Routledge: United States, 2020), 107.

⁷⁴ Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Justin McCann (London: Sheed and Ward, 1976).

⁷⁵ Susan Muto and Lori McMahan, "Humility of Heart Keys to Understanding St Benedict of Nursia," Lecture, Ave Maria Press, Nov. 18, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NMWhCRWEZU.

⁷⁶ Muto and McMahan, "Humility of Heart Keys to Understanding St Benedict of Nursia," See Joan Chittister, "St. Benedict's 10th Step of Humility: When Is Funny, Not Funny?" *National Catholic Reporter* 56, no. 4 (2019):11–12; Charles Dumont, "A Phenomenological Approach to Humility: Chapter VII of the Rule of St Benedict," *Cistercian studies (Spencer, Mass.)* 20, no. 4 (1985): 283–302; Maureen McCabe, "Truthful Living: Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2000): 265. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/truthful-living-saint-benedicts-teaching-on/docview/212842346/se-2?accountid=8194>; Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*; Marielle Frigge, "Ancient Way in a New Land: Benedictine Education in the Great Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2003): 231–244.

⁷⁷ Frigge, "Ancient Way in a New Land: Benedictine Education in the Great Plains," 231–244.

⁷⁸ Frigge, "Ancient Way in a New Land: Benedictine Education in the Great Plains," 233.

⁷⁹ Frigge, "Ancient Way in a New Land: Benedictine Education in the Great Plains," 233.

Benediction monastic life, then, presents a programme of studies that is organic, all-encompassing and lifelong. It strives to teach knowledge integrated with wisdom.⁸⁰

Jānis (John) Tāivaldis Ozoliņš, describes Benedictine education drawn from the *Rule* of St Benedict as that which requires a level of attentiveness to the task at hand in everyday endeavours as a way of praising God. This is illustrated by the motto of the Benedictine, the *ora et labora*. In the Benedictine Rule, the day's activities are structured to include hard physical work, reading, reflection, prayer, and communal worship. The aim of this approach Ozoliņš, suggests is to connect the mind and body. This routine imposed on the monk he proposes is to "habituate the monk to a rhythm of life in which the mind and body work as one, so that virtuous life is reinforced by every action."⁸¹ The body is thus disciplined to adhere to the mind for the development of virtue.⁸² Furthermore, in the Benedictine tradition the attentiveness to the tasks at hand in the activities throughout the day are mostly done in silence, prayer and a mindfulness of the divine.

9.8 Confucian education explores attention in the classroom

Confucian education is essentially humanistic and seeks to cultivate the sprouts of virtue with every human being is endowed. Interesting Confucius is revered as a teacher in China rather than a philosopher, reflecting a different value system. He sought to introduce into education the three principles—humanness, harmony, and hierarchy. Humanness meant developing virtuous conduct through education in, passing on virtues such as benevolence *ren*, righteous, *yi*...practical wisdom *shi*, loyalty *zhong*, and altruism *sheji*. Central to the understanding of Confucian education is the connection between... *ren* and *li*, humanness and propriety. The connection between these two virtues brings out the harmony that needs to exist between the inner states of the person and outward behaviours. Heart and mind need to be in harmony if the persons are to live fulfilled and meaningful lives...Likewise, when the two virtues are considered, it is not enough to observe *li*, says Confucius (1979), if we do not have *ren*, but we will not attain *ren*, if we do not practice *li* (*Analects*, 12.1).⁸³

⁸⁰ Frigge, "Ancient Way in a New Land: Benedictine Education in the Great Plains," 232.

⁸¹ Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 138. The development of virtue here is akin to that proposed by Aristotle who asserts that moral character is developed through reason and habit formation. Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 138.

⁸³ Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 137. My apologies, but due to technical difficulties the Chinese translations of words do not include the exact or correct punctuation.

In examining the educational approach in Asian countries, Ozoliņš, brings to our attention some of the underlying principles influenced by Confucius in this region that provide specific positive implications in thinking about attentiveness in the classroom.⁸⁴ Ozoliņš, states that like St Benedictine, Confucius understood the importance of practice, discipline, and attention to the task at hand as critical. These were important in not only developing an overall disposition of attentive mindfulness, but also attaining virtue.⁸⁵ Confucius, like Aristotle, thought that habit and the practice of right behaviour, leads one to virtue. Our practice of right conduct over time habituates us towards moral behaviour. While the young person may not always understand the reasons for good behaviour (as their parent or teacher), such as good manners and respect towards others, they can internalise ‘good’ habits/behaviours over time.⁸⁶ It is not in the scope here to discuss what is considered right or moral behaviour but rather to highlight that morality is incorporated into the conceptual framework in teaching and learning within the Confucian approach to education.⁸⁷

Ozoliņš, likewise claims that *Lectio Divina* is another way Benedictine education resonates with Confucian education, which extols rote learning. That is, learning where passages of works are read repeatedly. Texts are memorised and repeated in order that the text can become intelligible to the students. Understanding the meaning of the text and reading attentively was the focus implemented by Zhu Xi, the influential reformer of the Confucian tradition in the twelfth century AD. Xi proposed that learning should incorporate extensive study, reflection, and clear analysis.⁸⁸ Ozoliņš, describes the Confucian approach to reading as similar to the

⁸⁴ Confucian education has varying influences within the Asian region. It is evident in countries like Taiwan, Vietnam, and China.

⁸⁵ Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 138

⁸⁶ Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 138. Some scholars have drawn on Aristotle’s notion of habituation to understand moral development in education. For example, Giulio Di Basilio’s “Habituation in Aristotle’s Ethics: The Eudemian Ethics, the Common Books, the Nicomachean Ethics.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 59, no. 4 (2021): 531–57, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2021.0066>.

⁸⁸ Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 139.

Lectio Divina in that both methods lead to a way of reading that aims to facilitate personal meanings, virtue, and ultimate transformation.⁸⁹ The positive features of this approach for teaching and learning are described in the following ways:

Knowledge of *li* also leads to the possession of *ren*, which in Zhu Xi's system is broader than the classical Confucian concept of humanness and is more broadly the principal of love, which can only be possessed through the practice of virtue (Zhu Xi, in Chan, 1963, p 633). Memorisation is therefore...an internalisation of the text that leads to a transformation of the self (Yu, 2002, p.79). In modern, constructivist terms, memorisation of texts leads to individuals making what they have learnt their own.⁹⁰

Furthermore, Ozoliņš highlights that despite some of the criticisms received from the West about the countries with a Confucian heritage, they have achieved success in educational achievements measured by organisations such as PISA.⁹¹ Some criticisms of countries with Confucian heritage include favouring the needs of the state over the individual, teacher-centredness, and authoritarian and conservative tendencies.⁹² It is not the scope here to explore these issues. However, as illustrated above, Ozoliņš, brings to our attention some of the underlying beliefs that form the Confucian approach, similar to Benedictine education, which are conducive to holistic learning. More importantly, for our purposes, the Confucian method highlights another way of considering how attentiveness, mindfulness and silence can be integrated into the classroom.

While the influences of the Confucian tradition vary within East Asia, this approach can offer us a way of thinking about attentiveness, silence, reading and learning in positive ways within the classroom. Moreover, while students are not necessarily living in monasteries today in the West, many schools and universities have attempted to retain elements of the Benedictine tradition.⁹³ However, as with most educational

⁸⁹ If we accept Keator's earlier observations, implementing the *Lectio* and *meditio* by encouraging memorising and repeating words from a text we gain a deeper understanding and personal meaning. This potentially can also be a contributing factor towards long term memory.

⁹⁰ Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 140.

⁹¹ Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 133. PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment) conducts several tests on 15-year-old students for reading, mathematics and science by the OECD. In recent results for 2016, Singapore was identified as the top-performing, followed by other Confucian heritage schools. Ozoliņš identifies that this has been identified amongst scholars as the Confucian paradox. This means that despite focusing on rote learning and memorisation, students show an in-depth understanding of what they have learnt according to educational measurements. See, Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 145.

⁹² See, Ozoliņš, *Education and the Pursuit of Wisdom: The Aims of Education*, 135–136, 145.

⁹³ For example, see: "Mount St Benedict College," accessed 4 December 2021, <https://www.msb.nsw.edu.au/>.

models, the extent to which these institutions have embraced this ancient practice and its success is difficult to determine with certainty.

9.9 Christian meditation

Contemporary Benedictine monk Fr Lawrence Freeman has also drawn on the monastic tradition to develop a contemplative practice for the modern-day. The Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) is a worldwide movement. This method draws from the earlier writings of *Rule* Benedictine. Benedictine Fr John Main originally developed this meditation approach. The meditation likewise draws on the works of desert father, John Cassian. Freeman describes the ontological significance of Christian meditation as openness in silence to one's heart and prayer. He states:

I use meditation in the sense of the earliest writings of Christian spirituality: a repetitive, calming and focusing discipline that leads the whole person into the poverty of spirit, purity of heart, silence, and so into the prayer of Christ. ⁹⁴

Christian meditation, like *lectio*, can also be a positive pedagogical tool for contemplative practices in the classroom. The mediation technique proposed simply repeats the Aramaic word "Maranatha", which means "Come, Lord. Come, Lord Jesus."⁹⁵ This mantra is to be repeated slowly during meditation practice. It is recommended that the meditation sitting should be twice a day for approximately twenty minutes. This short practical meditation could potentially be useful for the modern classroom context. Christian meditation appeal to people from all Christian faith traditions. Freeman writes,

...there is a deeper experience beyond language and thought. In that experience, which is silence, uniqueness and difference, along with all other dualities, coincide: they meet in the unity that respects and fulfils difference and, at the same time, transcends division. ⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Fr Lawrence Freeman, "Christian Meditation and Traditional Religion," *The Furrow* 40, no.2 (1989), 69; John Main and Laurence Freeman, *John Main: Essential Writings. Modern Spiritual Masters Series* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2002).

⁹⁵ Laurence Freeman, *The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus /His Holiness the Dalai Lama*, ed. Robert Kiely (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications,1996).

⁹⁶ Freeman, *The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus /His Holiness the Dalai Lama*, 19.

As Freeman emphasises, Christian meditation is the practice of silence that transcends language and thought. It is like the *contemplatio* phase of meditation discussed earlier, where the adherent experiences a communion with the divine that surpasses words. Here, the devotee uses the mantra, leading one to silence and experience the transcendence of God. As we have mentioned earlier, this is referred to as a mystical experience and is evident in negative theology literature. The experience of God from this context cannot be understood in language and surpasses our thinking.⁹⁷

Jonathan Marc Mermis-Cava's qualitative research on the practice of Christian meditation found that most participants understood this practice in three ways.⁹⁸ Firstly, this meditation was drawing on an ancient practice within the Christian tradition. Secondly, the presence of silence was representative of a universal practice that connected it to all religious practices.⁹⁹ And thirdly, it endowed participants with a sense of agency and capital, which removed the church's power to mediate between the individual and God and be the sole interpreter of the tradition. He writes:

Christian meditators claim to have rediscovered the practice of silence from the ancient roots of Christian tradition. In this sense, it can be argued by them that this ritual is at the very heart of Christianity. But it was, by their own narrative, both suppressed and forgotten. It cannot claim to be located within the habitus of any church. In their (re)production of this tradition, however, Christian meditators are asserting silence as a pure form of prayer. This reflects their belief that it provides them with a heightened degree of intimacy with the divine. It is, for them, the removal of any intermediary, i.e., the church, within the relationship between themselves and God. Divine intimacy is, therefore, a fundamental dimension of Christian meditators' religious role that is enacted through the use of silence. This sense of connection to the divine, moreover, leads to the notion that silence empowers one with authority in the realms of scriptural interpretation and discernment in other religious and social matters. That is, it imbues Christian meditators with an unquestionable sense of religious capital. This symbolic resource further leads to the sense of agency in the transformation of the institution as a whole.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ See for example: Oliver Davies, and Denys Turner, *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁹⁸ Jonathan Marc Mermis-Cava, "Relating with Silence: Christian Meditation and the Production of Roles, Relationships, and Culture" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2007), 152.

⁹⁹ Mermis-Cava, "Relating with Silence: Christian Meditation and the Production of Roles, Relationships, and Culture," 152.

¹⁰⁰ Mermis-Cava, "Relating with Silence: Christian Meditation and the Production of Roles, Relationships, and Culture," 240.

However, Christian meditation has received criticism for its focus on individual agency and ecumenical appeal. This movement has also been described as connected to new age, and some state its focus on meditation reflects more Buddhism than Christianity.¹⁰¹ Alexandra Slaby for example, notes that Christian meditation moves away from the Catholic doctrine, and people should avoid it. Slaby proposes that adherents should return to focus exclusively on the writings of the Church Fathers to find spiritual nourishment in their prayer lives.¹⁰² Slaby states:

One could argue that all about prayer is contained in the writings of the Church Fathers, or in later texts slightly closer to us, such as Walter Hilton's *Ladder of Perfection* or *Epistle on the Mixed Life*. Main and Freeman serve as talented popularisers for those who will not read the foundational texts. However, there is a caveat for those who follow Main and Freeman: the method should not be idolised...Christians meditating far from their spiritual base point to a problem that needs to be addressed at a pastoral level. Such Christians perhaps did not find in their Church the fulfilment of their aspiration to a new 'depth' in their prayer life, and to 'wholeness', that is, to the integration of soul, mind and body in their spiritual development...¹⁰³

Slaby does not give a convincing argument of how a practice developed from the Catholic Benedictine tradition is outside the Church's teaching. Also, the narrow view of 'who' constitutes part of the Church is a limitation to the argument, and so is the appeal to authority in substantiating his claims.¹⁰⁴ Ironically, the characteristics of enabling agency, ecumenical and the inter-faith aspects of Christian meditation can make it relevant to a contemporary audience and classroom.

Most educational institutions value independent thinking and agency and include a diverse student body. This is often in a mix of multifaith, agnostic and atheistic backgrounds. Furthermore, empirical studies have demonstrated the positive benefits of Christian Meditation

¹⁰¹ For example, see: Alexandra Slaby, "The Christian Meditation Movement: A Critical Perspective," *Studies (Dublin)* 108, no. 431(2019), 317.

¹⁰² Slaby, "The Christian Meditation Movement: A Critical Perspective," 317.

¹⁰³ Slaby, "The Christian Meditation Movement: A Critical Perspective," 327.

¹⁰⁴ Following the works of Vatican II, which developed a broad vision of what constitutes 'the church', Slaby's claims could be called into question. The teachings of Fr Lawrence, drawn from the rich spiritual tradition of St Benedictine can equally be viewed as containing just as 'fruitful readings' as the Church Father's he notes. This reaction perhaps speaks to the tensions which have existed historically between the members of the magisterium and religious orders.

in addressing stress and anxiety.¹⁰⁵ As Richard Christian Bauer writes below, Christian meditation, like most meditation practices, offers a way of regulating emotions that can increase wellbeing. The experiential focus of Christian meditation allows it to speak to the mind and our senses, intuition, and heart (affective). These factors are conducive to a practice that addresses ontological and existential issues at the heart of Christian formation. These offer positive tools for a contemplative pedagogy. Bauer's research suggests that Christian meditation can also develop Christian faith and love.¹⁰⁶ He writes:

And herein, perhaps, lies the greatest allure of meditation in Christian formation. When cognitive belief in God alone fails to produce in us positive emotional states that override our dispositions toward fear and aggression or heal the emotional traumas embedded in our experiences of life, meditation can help us to learn how to regulate our emotions and activate biochemical dispositions toward healthier moods and outlooks. Like Camus' Sisyphus, even in the midst of boulders, we too can be "happy." ...Fully embracing the existence of a benevolent and an active God, present in all things, I believe that we have been invited to work with God to make *this world* better. And as more Christians learn how to enter into (and be shaped by) silence, stillness, and simplicity, the world may very well come to know that we are Christians...by our love.¹⁰⁷

9.10 *Mindfulness as a contemplative tool*

Another contemplative tool that can further develop our understanding of silence and attentiveness and, unlike the approaches mentioned so far, does not explicitly prescribe to metaphysical underpinnings is mindfulness. Mindfulness programs, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). Much literature has been written on this topic, and I will mention it briefly as another method that

¹⁰⁵Anne Graham and Julia Truscott, "Exploring Mystery: Can Christian Meditation at School Nurture Students' Relationships with God?" *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 41, no. 1 (2020): 58–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2019.1611070>; Thomas V. Frederick, Yvonne Thai, and Scott Dunbar, "Coping with Pastoral Burnout Using Christian Contemplative Practices," *Religions* 12, no. 6 (2021): 378, <https://doi.org/10.3390/re112060378>; Thomas Frederick and Kristen M. White, "Mindfulness, Christian Devotion Meditation, Surrender, and Worry," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 18, no. 10 (2015): 850–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2015.1107892>; Jane K. Ferguson, Eleanor W. Willemsen, and MayLynn V. Castañeto, "Centering Prayer as a Healing Response to Everyday Stress: A Psychological and Spiritual Process," *Pastoral Psychology* 59, no. 3 (2010): 305–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-009-0225-7>; Richard Christian Bauer, "Investigating Contemplative Christian Spirituality as Christian Formation through a Process Hermeneutic: An Analysis of History, Evolution, and Neuroscience in Christian Meditation" (PhD Diss., Duke Divinity School, 2020).

¹⁰⁶ Bauer, "Investigating Contemplative Christian Spirituality as Christian Formation through a Process Hermeneutic."

¹⁰⁷ Bauer, "Investigating Contemplative Christian Spirituality as Christian Formation through a Process Hermeneutic," 124.

can usefully inform our understanding of contemplative practices within the classroom. As Mark Williams and Daniel Penman describe,

A typical meditation consists of focusing your full attention on your breath as it flows in and out of your body . . . Focusing on each breath in this way allows you to observe your thoughts as they arise in your mind and, little by little, to let go of struggling with them. You come to realise that thoughts come and go of their own accord; that *you* are not your thoughts. You can watch as they appear in your mind, seemingly from thin air, and watch again as they disappear, like a soap bubble busting. You come to the profound understanding that thoughts and feelings (including negative ones) are transient.¹⁰⁸

The practice of mindfulness teaches people the skill of how to *be in the present moment and to be silent*. It does this by teaching practices that aim to encourage an awareness of breathing, thinking, emotions, and bodily sensations. These practices aim to move away from preoccupations and from overthinking, particularly thoughts related to worry and anxieties.¹⁰⁹ Mindfulness encourages a movement away from focusing on the mind to embody the *senses* and our physical body.¹¹⁰ Its practices encourage the skills of *awareness of the mind* and its thought process. The aim is greater control in overthinking, especially negative thoughts and worries. Williams and Penman continue:

Over time, mindfulness brings long term changes in mood and levels of happiness and wellbeing. Scientific studies show that mindfulness not only prevents depression but that it also positively affects the brain patterns underlying day-to-day anxiety, stress, depression and irritability so that when they arise, they dissolve away again more easily.¹¹¹

As mentioned early, mindfulness has increasingly become a critical practice today in many Western countries within a range of settings such as education, counselling, and daily personal life. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, studies have suggested that mindfulness over time has real

¹⁰⁸ Mark Williams and Daniel Penman, *Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World* (London: Piatas, 2011), 4–5.

¹⁰⁹ Rosemary Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 355.

¹¹⁰ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues*, 355.

¹¹¹ Williams and Penman, *Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World*, 4–5.

benefits in reducing depression, anxiety, and stress.¹¹² This approach reminds us of the importance of an awareness of the present moment, including not only our thoughts, but also our bodies and emotions.

Mindfulness highlights for us some important epistemological issues debated by philosophers throughout history and restores a prominent role to the importance of our senses.¹¹³

Mindfulness draws our attention to the importance of our senses in the way we understand and respond to the world and explicates some positive pragmatic implications on our sense of wellbeing. Furthermore, what is interesting is that although officially mindfulness states it is ‘not religious,’ it clearly has in its practice obvious links to religious contemplative practices, particularly Buddhism.¹¹⁴ Moreover, we can say that through the growth of mindfulness in the West, silence may have been redeemed from what Max Picard termed as its holy ‘uselessness.’¹¹⁵ Further, as I have previously argued,

Science has rescued an old religious practice and now made it ‘socially acceptable in a culture which is predominately scientific in its view of the world and suspicious of religion. It is in this context that I would suggest that silence may have been redeemed from its ‘uselessness.’¹¹⁶

In concluding this chapter, it is worthwhile to identify some distinctions between contemplation and meditation. While there are diverse approaches in meditative practices, as

¹¹²See for example: Kimberley Holmes, “Neuroscience, Mindfulness and Holistic Wellness Reflections on Interconnectivity in Teaching and Learning,” *Interchange* 50, no. 3 (2019): 445-460, doi:10.1007/s10780-019-09360-6; Kimberley Holmes, “Mindfulness as a Practice of Professional Life,” *Journal of Educational Thought* 50, no. 1 (2017): 21-42. See chapter 2 for further citations.

¹¹³ This also points to the discussions between rationalism and empiricism.

¹¹⁴ One of founders of mindfulness in the West, Jon Kabat-Zinn spent some time in India where he claims to have received inspiration in developing this practice. For more on the Buddhist influences see: Ville Husgafvel, “The ‘Universal Dharma Foundation’ Of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: Non-Duality And Mahāyāna Buddhist Influences In The Work Of Jon Kabat-Zinn,” *Contemporary Buddhism* 19, no. 2 (2018): 275–326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2018.1572329>; Rosemary Laoulach, “Silence, Transcendence And Therapy,” *Thresholds, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Summer edition, (2014): 13–16. In this article I highlight the religious influences of mindfulness especially in relating to silence and Buddhism.

¹¹⁵ Max Picard, *World of Silence*, (Wichita: Eighth Day, 1952).

¹¹⁶ Laoulach, “Silence, Transcendence and Therapy,” 16. There are others who have also critiqued mindfulness for removing itself from philosophical and religious references and debate. For example, see: Aislinn O’Donnell. (2015). Contemplative pedagogy and mindfulness: Developing creative attention in an age of distraction. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 49 (2), 187–202.

we have seen in mindfulness and Christian meditation, for example, where there tends to be more of a ‘focused attention.’ This can be on a word or mantra as in Christian meditation and the breath or body as in mindfulness. Conversely, contemplation, as defined in this thesis, is a broad term. It has generally been referred to as a process of ‘attentiveness,’ the ‘act of looking at.’ Contemplation tends to be attributed to a much slower pace of thinking and reflection. This was exemplified in the *lectio* and *meditatio* of *Lectio Divina*. In previous chapters, I have also included meditative practices as part of my broader understanding of ‘contemplation.’

Moreover, it is important to point out that contemplation and meditation can be understood within both a religious and secular context. As we have seen, meditation can be practised both within and outside a religious framework; this also applies to the act of contemplation more broadly understood.¹¹⁷ Contemplation can be comprehended in the broader sense to include slow thinking and reflection without necessarily connecting this to a religious dimension. Nevertheless, contemplation and meditative practices can also open the possibility of an encounter with transcendence (understood in the broad sense), and contemplation of that transcendence without necessarily naming this transcendence as God. Considering these observations, we can see how the tools of contemplative practices (including meditation) can be appealing and meaningful to the modern-day classroom. These contemplative tools can potentially address the needs of students from various backgrounds and perspectives in dealing with the stresses of modern-day living and, possibly for some, exploring a reflection and encounter with the transcendence and God.

Conclusion

While this is not a comprehensive approach to contemplative practices, I hope I have brought attention to some ancient and new tools to inform educators in the classroom. The old methods

¹¹⁷ The Literature Review in Chapter 2, discusses and defines meditation and contemplation from a religious and secular perspective.

or tools taken from the Benedictine tradition, such as Lectio Divina and Christian meditation, further enhance contemplative practices for the contemporary context. These include slow reading, reflection, meditation, mindfulness, and silence. Lectio Divina also provides a way of reading and pondering a text that can elicit personal meanings conducive to a contemplative classroom practice that attempts to teach holistically. Benedictine education offers ways of thinking about learning, work, and attentiveness to the rhythm of the day based on the *Rule*, which can usefully inform practice. I also included Confucian education as it explores attention in the classroom and its links to the Benedictine tradition. Mindfulness was also discussed as a contemplative tool understood and practised from an explicitly secular framework.

Lectio Divina and Christian meditation can be helpful for religious/spiritual formation and integration within the practices of Benedictine education. Christian meditation and mindfulness can address some of the stresses of modern life and have proven to increase wellbeing. These are important to help students to focus more on learning in the classroom. Research has also suggested that Christian meditation can enable the development toward the Christian faith.

The slow reading espoused in Lectio Divina aims to *open questions* rather than answer them and is congruent with the inquiry approach to teaching and learning. Lectio Divina can likewise be used more broadly outside the religious framework, such as in teaching the humanities. The Lectio Divina offers educators a way of pondering and questioning as we read text (sacred or secular). This process of pondering in the Lectio Divina can facilitate the development of personal meaning and speaks to the aims of *Bildung*. This approach is concerned with holistic and meaningful learning that students can internalise. As Socrates and his followers have taught us, the examined life is essential for developing the soul and wisdom.

Furthermore, as I demonstrated in Chapter 3, Socrates understood that silence was critical for deep thinking and questioning. Socrates likewise emphasised the importance of open-ended

exploration and wonder to attain wisdom. *Lectio Divina* proposes a type of reading that engages in open-ended questions in silence, slowly, reflectively, and meditatively.

In addition, the Benedictine tradition was connected to Confucian education as it explored another way of thinking about attention and virtue in the classroom. For example, the rote learning method within Confucian education was linked to the *Lectio Divina*. Here we saw a similarity in its method of learning and a way of cultivating a disposition of attentiveness, personal meanings, deep understanding, and virtue. As Martin Heidegger explains,

...Then man would have denied and thrown away his own special nature—that he is a meditative being. Therefore, the issue is in saving man’s essential nature. Therefore, the issue is keeping meditative thinking alive.¹¹⁸

If Heidegger’s observations are correct, that humans are essentially ‘meditative’, then as I have discussed in different sections throughout the thesis, our current education system has failed in the broad context, to address this dimension within our teaching and learning. In Heidegger’s terms, education today has favoured ‘calculative thinking’ over ‘meditative thinking’.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, our education is falling short of teaching holistically. Education is generally directed towards catering for the needs of the workplace and developing skills around a neoliberal vision. What is missing is an education focused on the whole person that includes the development of the soul and the attainment of wisdom.¹²⁰ Moser articulates this idea well,

But is this careerist focus really the purpose of the university, of education? Despite the necessity and the importance of such pragmatic goals for education, the reduction of learning to its professional utility misses out on the humane and sapiential vocation of education. We read, study, and learn, not to become employable, but to become wise.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, “The Memorial Address,” in *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper Perennial, 1966), 56.

¹¹⁹ Heidegger, “The Memorial Address,” 56.

¹²⁰ This view broadly speaking is echoed in the writings of many within the philosophy of education discussed in Chapter 4. For example: Gert Biesta, *Good Education in An Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2010).

¹²¹ Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise,” 93.

In this context of education today (in most places, not all), the contemplative practices discussed will have some challenges, especially within primarily content-driven and crowded programs.¹²² While these ancient (and ‘new’ such as mindfulness) methods can offer positive contributions towards teaching and learning, and institutions can, to some extent, implement a strategy that meets the needs of their organisation and culture; they are nevertheless influenced by government bodies such as the Department of Education. Overall, government policies (at least in Australia and the UK, as noted in Chapters 1 and 6) are moving towards approaches that diverge from the contemplative approach proposed in this thesis. As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 6, many educators have voiced being time short and under pressure from increasing demands of evidence accountability. This makes some of these contemplative methods more difficult to implement.¹²³ As Moser points out below, *Lectio Divina*, for example, provides an antidote to much of the approach to reading today. Moser claims that we view reading as a “commodity” used as a resource rather than for personal transformation. He writes:

Regardless of our motivation, these consumptive reading practices distort our relationship with the text in such a way that it becomes a commodity meant to be used as a resource rather than as an invitation to a transformative personal encounter.¹²⁴

Furthermore, our increasing focus on the rapid rate of technological advances adopted within education (often unquestioningly) is a problem for contemplative practice. What these technologies generally promote within the classroom context counters the aims of contemplative practices. Technological devices may provide new approaches, but the seduction

¹²² Alternative models of education that move away from the mainstream approach and include contemplative methods include Benedictine education, Steiner, Montessori schools and Catholic education more broadly.

¹²³ See for example: Gabbie Stroud, *Teacher: One Woman’s Struggle to Keep Her Heart in Teaching* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2018); Brendan James Murray, *The School: The Ups and Downs of One Year in The Classroom* (Sydney: Picador, 2021); Ewan Ingleby, “Teaching Policy and Practice: Early Years, Neoliberalism and Communities of Practice,” *Contemporary Social Science* 8, no. 2 (2013): 120-129, doi:10.1080/21582041.2012.751505.

¹²⁴ Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise,” 97.

of ‘newness’, which is linked to ‘progress’, leaves many of our students distracted, restless, and overloaded with information and ‘facts.’¹²⁵

While it is evident that technology has provided us with more information and a faster way of accessing it, the focus on developing students ‘calculative thinking skills’ with technology is at the expense of the ‘meditative’ has implications that we have not fully realised. No studies, to my knowledge, have adequately demonstrated the increase in technology directly resulting in student ability to develop more reflective and deep-thinking skills. On the contrary, what we are seeing are studies that demonstrate student addiction, restlessness, distractions and isolation.¹²⁶ This has been particularly evident during COVID lockdowns.

With the use of technology (such as in internet searches), information is often read in a hurry, and the critical contemplative skills of silent, reflective pondering, and meandering are usually forgotten. Despite the positive effects of silence on learning, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, educators and policymakers often ignore this. For these reasons, the ancient method of *Lectio Divina*, Christian Meditation, Benedictine education, Confucian education and mindfulness; can potentially restore some of the ‘madness’ observed by T.S Eliot and that technology continues to bestow on us today. Moser describes this madness and the distractions of technology in the following way:

The dominance of technology in our lives accentuates these two characteristics that Peterson identifies. Technology also nurtures a third major characteristic of malformative reading, distraction. This topic is exceedingly important for understanding the intellectual situation of contemporary students. The more distracted we become by the constant demands of social media, the less we are able to sit patiently under the tutelage of difficult texts that cannot be reduced to a sound byte. Further, the more we streamline our intake of knowledge so that it comes to us through highly

¹²⁵ For example, see: Newport, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in A Distracted World*; Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains*.

¹²⁶ On technology and addiction see: Kristy L. Carlisle, et al., “Exploring Internet Addiction as a Process Addiction,” *Journal of Mental Health Counselling* 38, no. 2 (2016): 170–82; Kentaro Kawabe, et al., “Internet Addiction: Prevalence and Relation with Mental States in Adolescents,” *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 70, no 9 (2016): 405–12; George Pattison, *Thinking about God in an Age of Technology*, 1st ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

curated channels of self-selected resources, the more superficial our thinking and understanding become.¹²⁷

In what follows next will be the conclusion that will summarise the main arguments of this project, which is ultimately to show the importance of silence and contemplative pedagogy in education today.

¹²⁷ Moser, "Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise," 110. See also: Andrew Sullivan, "I Used to be a Human Being," *New York Magazine*, September 18, 2016, <http://nymag.com/selectall/2016/09/andrew-sullivan-technology-almost-killed-me.html>.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

This study has examined the importance of contemplative pedagogy within the classroom. Contemplative practices have been defined broadly as silence, attentiveness, reflection, humility, attentive listening, and mindfulness. Having provided a theoretical and practical account of these, I hope they will inform educators in teaching towards a holistic approach to teaching and learning. I initially based my analysis on Angelo Caranfa's writings on silence and contemplation. Noting the limitations of his approach, I extended his model to include other practical and useful approaches. This thesis has drawn on both the philosophical and Christian tradition in examining silence, thinking, and contemplation more broadly.

In examining some of the literature on contemplation and silence in education in Chapters 1 and 2, I discovered that there is much evidence to indicate this approach has a wealth of benefits for learning—by reducing stress and anxiety and leading to an increase in wellbeing. However, I found some distinctions when contrasting the literature with Caranfa's approach. Caranfa's method provides a *synthesis* between philosophy and theology. His distinctive contribution to this area is apparent in the way he weaves together these domains, ensuring an understanding of silence that is multifaceted and complex. Caranfa discusses the nature and intricacy of silence and contemplation without reducing them solely to empirical data.

Furthermore, Caranfa's work is based on the claim that silence is the foundation of learning. He argued that we need to allow silence within our pedagogical practices for our discourse to facilitate self-knowledge and deeper learning. Caranfa, like many philosophers before him (for example, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Dewey), advocates an education system based on the person's mental, moral, and spiritual development. Caranfa combines the ideas of philosophers such as Socrates (Socratic method), Augustine, and the spiritual and poetic writings of Max Picard and Simone Weil. They advocate for using silence (connected to listening) as the basis of all learning.

Caranfa draws on the above philosophers and theologians and weaves their insights into a holistic education model. He attempts to combine the critical method with the silences evoked through the aesthetics and art to promote the contemplative and feeling dimensions within a classroom. The arts and aesthetic experience are also central components of Caranfa's work. He describes this as the aesthetic–spiritual approach within the classroom. This approach makes his ideas relevant, applicable, and distinctive. He writes:

...A theory of education that is based on silence and that captures or fosters the students' creative potential: students see learning primarily as a silent activity and embedded their feelings and thoughts in it...¹

I showed how Caranfa understood contemplation. I explored (in Chapters 3, 4 and 5) an examination of Caranfa's influences and a thematic discussion of his work on silence and contemplation. Some of the core themes that emerged throughout these chapters include:

1. The connection between listening to silence and speech. Silence intertwined with dialogue and discourse.
2. Philosophical inquiry leads to contemplation, wonder, humility, and self-knowledge—philosophy and its connection to reason and the dialectic.
3. The limitation of reason (and exclusion of feelings) and link/progression to silence, mystery, and transcendence.
4. Silence is best understood through art and the aesthetic experience. Caranfa argues that when reason has reached its limits, the self is transformed through art and the aesthetic experience.
5. The intention of silence is to engage in internal dialogue, its effects resulting in self-knowledge and humility.
6. The characteristic of silence expresses itself in the process of contemplation. This includes stillness and listening, listening to the silence of the inner dialogue within the subjective self.
7. The notion of listening also extends toward listening to the voice of divine beauty and the Christian notion of God.

¹ Caranfa, "Silence as the foundation of learning," *Educational Theory* 54, no. 2 (2004), 230.

However, there were some limitations to Caranfa's work. His interpretations of the writers he cites could have been further developed. Furthermore, Caranfa does not provide examples of implementing the aesthetic–spiritual approach within the classroom. Neither does Caranfa address the difficulty in managing a modern–day student body and classroom. Issues such as young people's religious/spiritual development or the neoliberal influences that affect teaching and learning today are omitted. In Chapter 6, I explored some of these challenges and drew on young people's religious/spiritual development literature. I highlighted the critical pragmatic and theoretical difficulties that Caranfa's contemplative model faces.

While Caranfa's focus on the aesthetic–spiritual approach within the classroom has benefits (as shown in Chapter 2) for learning, I argued, however, it is also limited in meeting the broader aims of education that ideally aims to develop the mind and critical thinking skills.² In Chapter 7, I focused on exploring ways of developing these skills within a contemplative pedagogy. I termed this *teaching towards the development of epistemic humility* through the teaching of philosophy. I contended that developing epistemic humility through the dialectic can potentially lead to an awareness of mystery. As Socrates and Weil taught, understanding the limits of our knowledge allows us to develop a diminishing of our egos and self–preoccupation. This can enable the capacity for humility. This can lead to a sense of wonder about the world. The awareness of wonder and humility potentially can lead to an encounter with the greater mystery and God.

In developing the theme of epistemic humility, I drew on the elucidations of Socrates, Weil, Jacques Maritain, Josef Pieper, Sean Steel, and Martin Heidegger. These philosophers help inform how we can understand 'thinking' and the dialectic more broadly and teach towards a

² To what extent education achieves this goal is the basis of another discussion.

‘contemplative mindset.’ These philosophers also helped address the need for holistic learning, the flourishing life, and the Socratic notion of wisdom.

Furthermore, while Caranfa identifies the moral importance derived from listening to the other in silence, he does not develop this in any real depth. In Chapter 8, drawing primarily on Weil’s attentive listening, I extend Caranfa’s model and construct an ethical response to listening and contemplative pedagogy.

In the classroom, we want to encourage ethical behaviour, and learning to be better listeners is one way of achieving this aim. In examining some of the literature on listening and empathy, I highlighted how Weil’s work is distinctive. Weil proposes that a detachment from personal egos and agendas adds depth and quality to our listening, which facilitates a capacity to discern the needs of the other adequately. These dispositions are what I have termed *contemplative listening*. This approach is understood as contemplative listening as it links to my definition of contemplation. This is an integration or way of seeing ‘the whole of reality’ that draws on *our whole being*.

In further developing our understanding of what it means to ‘listen attentively’ and empathetically to other people’s suffering, I drew on Edith Stein’s work on empathy. While this was not a comprehensive response, I revealed the complexity of empathic listening, which demands a radical level of discernment, as Weil also infers. This discernment draws on all our faculties (e.g., in-depth reflection, imagination, memory) in responding appropriately to the needs of those suffering.³ This ethical dimension extends Caranfa’s work and seeks to address

³ Edith Stein identifies much of what hinders empathy. These include analogy, personal agendas, and perspectives we often project onto the other. Stein argues that we need to see the other as separate from ourselves in the empathic act. Furthermore, constantly evaluating the differences in values and perceptions between the other person and me will assist in viewing the ‘other’ person as a separate person from myself. Stein states that while empathy can be effective, it also has its limitations. See: Edith Stein, *On the problem of empathy*, trans. W. Stein (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1989); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: A Philosophical Prologue* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2007).

the social justice component of contemplative education and points to the *vita activa* dimensions of the Christian faith.

As noted, while Caranfa provided a theoretical account of silence and contemplation in the classroom, he needed to offer some concrete examples of *what this may look like* in the classroom. In light of this, in Chapter 9, I extended Caranfa's model by postulating some valuable resources that may assist in developing contemplative exercises within the classroom: the *experiential dimension* of contemplative practice. Although these were mostly derived from the religious tradition of St Benedict, such as in Lectio Divina and Christian meditation, I also discussed Confucian education and mindfulness.

In keeping with the theme of attentive listening from Chapter 8, this chapter focused mostly on the Lectio Divina or *sacred reading*, derived from the monastic tradition of St Benedict. Lectio Divina offers a way to enlighten a *contemplative way of reading and listening*. This ancient technique can help us engage with texts more deeply, as we learn how to read slowly and repetitively. While the origin of this ancient practice is for monastic life, many of its elements can also be applicable for the modern classroom. This approach can help inform religious formation/education programs and the teaching of humanities courses, more broadly speaking. In order to widen the resources for educators and appeal to a diverse student body in many of our educational institutions, I also included Confucian education as it explores attention in the classroom and its links to the Benedictine education tradition. Christian meditation was discussed as offering practical tools that can be used within a classroom context. Mindfulness was also considered as a contemplative tool understood and practiced from an explicitly secular framework.

In addition, my argument throughout the chapters was for the central role of the arts and humanities (e.g., sacred music and literature) in a *proper* education which helps students find

meaning.⁴ This is valuable within a contemplative classroom framework. In connecting silence to the arts, silence can be a vehicle for habituating students towards an encounter with mystery. Through its engagement with the arts and humanities, I argued that silence can help facilitate a sense of wonder, self-knowledge, and awareness of ignorance, which can potentially lead to epistemic humility. These qualities and dispositions in education are critical if we are serious about holistic education and not just upskilling people to get work.

Humility was another significant theme discussed throughout the thesis. Since to embrace humility is to be an authentic seeker of truth. Humility lets us know that our knowledge of the universe is never complete, and that uncertainty (rather than certainty) can give birth to new ideas. Humility and an awareness of our ignorance also lead to an encounter with the mystery. Despite all we know and discover, as many great minds have testified – the world remains mysterious.⁵ This can propel people into a state of fear or wonder.⁶ This presence of mystery that pervades the universe is the basis of our intuitive religious faith. In other words, we sense intuitively that the world is mysterious. For some of us, this points to the reality of a God and creator that resides within this mystery that we cannot fully comprehend through logical reasoning.⁷ Therefore, it is entirely possible that this ‘realisation’ and encounter with mystery and God is a viable process that we can guide students towards within a contemplative classroom context with humility and grace.

⁴ Both Picard and Caranfa suggest that the arts are critical in listening to silence. I briefly mentioned in Chapter 3 how Martin Heidegger’s elucidations on the arts (and also the critique of the sciences) support much of what Picard and Caranfa claim on this matter.

⁵ Rosemary Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 81–82.

⁶ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers*, 81–82.

⁷ Laoulach, *Inquiry into Philosophical and Religious Issues: A Practical Resource for Students and Teachers*, 81–82.

A holistic approach to education

Holistic education is a term mentioned in mission statements and educational documents. However, the question of *how* we achieve this for students in concrete ways is often unclear or missing. I have shown the importance of holistic education for a contemplative classroom.

For a contemplative pedagogy, we want to move beyond superficial understandings toward meaningful experiences and deep reflections. These are not only about academic success but also a mode of thinking that engages all aspects of the learner. This includes a greater awareness and engagement with their interior life, which is made up of emotions, intuition, senses, and thoughts. This generally points to what is understood as ‘holistic education.’ This aim is reiterated by educator Parker Palmer who notes that the interior life of students is the core task of education. He states:

...To educate is to guide students on an inner journey towards a more truthful way of seeing and being in the world. How can schools perform their mission without encouraging the guides to scout out that inner terrain?⁸

Holistic education also points to the educational aims of *Bildung* which seeks to teach towards personal meaning and understanding. *Bildung* argues that education must guide students towards their ‘inner terrain.’ *Bildung* seeks ways in order to make learning more meaningful for students. As Solveig M. Reindal notes, *Bildung*, it is “‘what we are left with after we have forgotten what we have learned.’”⁹

Holistic education, as alluded to throughout the thesis, is also a theme explored within the philosophy of education literature. As examined in Chapter 4, for example, the philosophers all advocated that holistic learning is achieved when we work towards teaching towards

⁸ Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), inside book cover.

⁹ Solveig M. Reindal, “Bildung, the Bologna Process and Kierkegaard’s Concept of Subjective Thinking,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32, no. 5 (2013): 533–49, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-012-9344-1>.

personal meaning, *wisdom* and the *flourishing life*.¹⁰ Philosophy, as we have seen through the writings of philosophers (especially the existentialist) not only aim in developing the mind towards understanding the world better but also helps us construct personal meaning.

Personal meaning that lead to wisdom and human flourishing have been the call of philosophy since Socrates and are therefore conducive to what we have understood so far as holistic learning. Modern philosopher Pierre Hadot further illustrates this point in his work *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. What philosophy can offer us, he proposes, is an exploration of our *whole being*. He states:

Philosophy thus took on the form of an exercise of thought, will, and the totality of one's being, the goal of which was to achieve a state practically inaccessible to mankind: wisdom.¹¹

The wider implications of contemplative pedagogy

Having summarised the main concepts and arguments put forward in this thesis, there is further work to be done to elaborate the implications of a contemplative pedagogy. I will briefly indicate some of these and the barriers that may stand in the way.

Contemplative education is essentially a call for society to slow down. It is an appeal to engage with acts of silence, attention, pausing, deep reflection, and attentive listening. It is also an invitation to humility. Contemplation leads us back to our fundamental humanity. While skills for employment are valuable, the human person is more than just part of a production line, endowed with 'skills' for the workplace. Our value as persons transcends what the market determines.

¹⁰ Most educational institutions are often in the dark about achieving holistic education. Although not easily measurable, this approach remains a vital process. Additionally, while these questions and issues are traditionally within the philosophy of education, this area of study has become obsolete in many universities and pre-service teacher training.

¹¹ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as A Way of Life*, trans. Arnold I. Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 265.

As the Socratic tradition points to, humans have a soul and are endowed with virtue and wisdom. The Christian tradition also informs a view of the human person who has a soul with innate dignity made in the image and likeness of God. So, how do we make sure that our education reflects these ideals? To what extent can we teach towards an awareness of the transcendence and wisdom and move beyond the focus on skills for the workplace? Moser raises similar concerns below:

...The corporate structure of the university often works against the art of teaching and learning for the sake of wisdom—an art that is notoriously inefficient and resistant to universally applied “best practices.” I think many of our students have been formed to think of their education in these strictly utilitarian ways. They have inherited a careerist mentality aimed at acquiring useful information that resists the slow, difficult work of becoming wise. How do professors resist this impulse and reform our students’ approach to learning? How can we be stewards, not just of information but also of wisdom? What follows in this essay might best be understood as a strategy of pedagogical resistance to the careerist and utilitarian encroachment on the classroom. It is a way of reclaiming the classroom as a workshop for wisdom.¹²

One of the ways I have answered the questions posed above is that we teach philosophy. Philosophy is essential for the teaching of wisdom. I have shown that through the works of Socrates, Augustine, Weil, Maritain, Pieper, Steel, Caranfa and Heidegger (on meditative thinking), philosophy can help students to wonder and ask questions. Philosophy can also help facilitate the development of epistemic humility that may lead to a consciousness of transcendence. I am proposing that we not only teach philosophy, but that philosophy also engage more actively within education and, more decisively, policymakers who directly impact the method and content of teaching and learning.

Within much of educational literature, teacher training and teaching practice today we see various methods proposed for improvement. In more recent years, technology has been presented as ‘the way forward’ within education – I would argue that this is often without the

¹² Matthew A. Rothaus Moser, “Ever Ancient, Ever New: Reading to Become Wise,” in *Christian Faith and University Life*, 93–115 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61744-2_6.

needed critique from educational institutions. At the same time, various technologies within the classroom have led to an increase in access to information and provided an ability to engage students in a variety of methods. To my knowledge, there are no studies that have demonstrated a direct link between the use of technology and *deeper thinking skills*.¹³ It is these skills which are critical for contemplative pedagogy and education more generally. Furthermore, despite its seduction of connection with others, the *quality* of our connection many have observed has declined. Some studies, for example, have suggested that the increase in social media has ironically led to further social isolation and loneliness.¹⁴

Moreover, I have shown the distractions that result from technology in our classrooms.¹⁵ Any educator today would have experienced a student with their laptop, who might be in their class physically, but their attention was elsewhere. This is an important point. While our students might be physically present in our classrooms, their ‘attention’ is increasingly elsewhere and often lagging. *It is the level of ‘inattentiveness’ which is a problem in modern classrooms today.* The literature in Chapter 2 identified some of these issues. I have also argued throughout this thesis that *attentiveness is critical for contemplative pedagogy and holistic learning.*

Attentiveness, I have contended, is a crucial component of holistic learning. This can be demonstrated in deep reflection, understandings, and demonstrating care. When students cultivate attentiveness that includes pausing, silence, and mindfulness, they have the ‘needed space’ to reflect, wonder and listen attentively. As I showed in Chapter 4, Socrates sought

¹³When education is instrumental and focuses on achieving skills for economic growth, students’ profound understanding and reflections can be overlooked. These deep understandings and reflections are part of the contemplative approach proposed in this thesis. Unfortunately, much of the current assessment and metrics used in education are limited in measuring deep reflection and thinking skills. See for instance: Steven A. Stolz and R. Scott Webster, Eds., *Measuring up in Education: Philosophical Explorations for Justice and Democracy Within and Beyond Cultures of Measurement in Educational Systems* (London: Routledge, 2019).

¹⁴See for instance: Luke Fernandez and Susan Jipson Matt, *Bored, Lonely, Angry, Stupid* (London: Harvard University Press, 2019); Susan B. Carter, “Letter to the Editor: Is Poor Sleep, and Loneliness Linked by Increased Use of Technology?” *Psychological Medicine* 48, no. 5 (2018): 876–77, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291717002070>; Leslie Katz, “How Tech and Social Media Are Making Us Feel Lonelier Than Ever,” 2020, <https://www.cnet.com/features/how-tech-and-social-media-are-making-us-feel-lonelier-than-ever/>.

¹⁵ See Chapters 2, 6 and 9.

silence to deepen his reflections. Furthermore, as Weil and Stein have taught us, attentiveness also gives us the space to be ‘present’ in the presence of the other. Attentiveness is crucial in order to discern carefully what the other may need, and significant for moral development.

Furthermore, this thesis has shown that one of the dispositions that can emerge from contemplation is humility. Humility is the hallmark of true learning that leads us to wisdom. Humility rather than indicating lack, is a disposition that can allow us to investigate further, ask questions, and wonder about the world. It requires an ability to stand in the uncertainty and unknowing.¹⁶

Weil and Stein have shown us that humility is also connected to an ability to listen attentively to the other who is different from myself and discern what they may need. As Stein and Weil understood, failure to listen attentively and empathetically means we do not respond discerningly and with adequate care. For example, in the encounter between the early English settlers, missionaries, and the Aboriginal peoples of Australia; the failure to listen empathetically and discerningly led to poor policy decisions concerning the needs of the Aboriginal peoples. The removal of Aboriginal children from their families and the re-settling of Aboriginal peoples on Mission stations that were far from their own country are examples of policies that did much damage. Contemplative listening as I have explained, however, can inform way of being and offer positive ethical responses in the classroom. Patricia Owen-Smith illustrates this point well in the following:

The contemplative classroom, imbued with its emphasis on deep awareness, attention, and appreciation of a shared world, provides a critical context in which students might explore their moral imaginations and ethical dilemmas. It affords a portal for a place-based pedagogy grounded in an ethic of care and compassion. Educational researcher Encarnacion Soriano connects the ethical stance to a reinvention of education in the global world, arguing that one of the significant challenges confronting education is the development of student values that will contribute to their citizenship in a democratic world. For Soriano, our students, as participants in and constructors of the twenty-first

¹⁶ Anecdotally, I observe that this is a challenge for many educators especially those training in a content-focused pedagogy.

century, are called upon to coproduce “a universal and transcultural moral,” one centered on social justice, human rights...¹⁷

Deep listening and empathy call us to a life of silence and deep discernment. This can help us to hear the other more clearly, especially ‘the cries of the poor.’ If education is to *move beyond itself*, to encapsulate the greater ideas of virtue, truth, and wisdom, it must really listen. It needs to begin *listening and discerning the deep existential needs of its students* (and teachers). I have argued that student needs are beyond just developing skills for the workplace; they are also about developing the ‘whole person,’ their soul and spirituality. While many in education pay lip service to this, there is little in terms of concrete developments in achieving this goal. Policymakers need to embrace humility and really listen to the needs of their students in the way Weil and Stein have taught us.

There are many possibilities of what education *can be*. Education is capable of moving beyond itself to encapsulate the greater ideas of truth, beauty, freedom, virtue, wisdom, and happiness. However, as alluded to, these terms are rarely evident in educational documents.¹⁸ As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, philosophers of education have generally supported these ideals. They have also argued in favour of a holistic approach that seeks to teach wisdom and counteract the push for education aimed at the workplace. We need to take their lead. It is no surprise that current educational policymakers (particularly in Australia), on the whole, see little relevance for philosophy in schools. Despite the research which suggests that philosophy increases critical and creative thinking skills and the work of many educators advocating for this approach, it has not led to any real action.¹⁹

¹⁷ Patricia Owen-Smith, “Reclaiming Interiority as Place and Practice,” in *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Pedagogy and Place-Based Education*, 31 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50621-0_3.

¹⁸For example, the NSW Teaching Standards which are guide in assessing teacher’s skills and knowledge capabilities omit the contemplative dispositions and skills advocated in this thesis. For example see: “The Standards | NSW Education Standards,” Accessed 28 December 2021, <https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/meeting-requirements/the-standards>.

¹⁹For example, see: Philip Cam, “Dewey Lipman & the Tradition of Reflective Education,” *Leichhardt, Australia: Philosophy in Schools NSW, 2016*. https://web2.northsydgi-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/pinsnsw/?page_id=88; Stephen Law, “Why Study Philosophy at University” (Blog, Journal Cambridge, 2016). <http://blog.journals.cambridge.org/2013/02/13/why-study-philosophy-at-university>

It seems that philosophy as a subject taught in schools has not attracted enough interest from policymakers in Australia. Considering this, I fear that neither will they value contemplative education. The pedagogy advocated in this thesis, of silence, pausing, deep listening and thinking, has been shown empirically to lead to positive learning outcomes but is largely ignored by policymakers. These dispositions and skills are rarely mentioned within official educational documentation. As Chng Huang Hoon observes below, there is a hesitancy in education to move towards contemplative education, which he proposes will disrupt the status quo. He states:

To accept contemplative pedagogy requires that “radical bravery,” a willingness to step beyond the comfortable boundaries of traditions.²⁰

This thesis has posed a challenge for policymakers and education more broadly. If policymakers are serious about holistic learning, they must embrace the issues and questions posed by philosophers of education and contemplative pedagogy.

philosophy/; Gert Biesta, "Should Teaching Be Re(dis)covered? Introduction to a Symposium," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38, no. 5 (2019): 549–553

²⁰ Chng Huang Hoon, ““Sitting at the Edge of (most) Disciplines: Contemplating the Contemplative in Classroom Practice,” A Review of The Contemplative Mind in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Patricia Owen-Smith, Indiana University Press, 2018.” 195 *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (2019): 191–195.

<https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.7.1.13>. Quote draws partially from Patricia Owen-Smith’s work on page 121.

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