To what extent can we have Autonomy in Education?

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late parents, Norman Vivian and Christina Copley, who never failed to encourage my academic journey and were already so proud of the path that I was on.

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Declaration

I, the author, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means (www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means). This work has not been previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.

Abstract

The question of autonomy in education has been a matter of debate, both within formal education (as formulated in 1870) and in the less common version of learning known as unschooling (Holt, 1972). Whilst formal education tends towards an arbitrary curriculum based on age, unschooling focuses on the autonomy of the learner and their ability to make choices regarding their education (Harris, 2018; Eden, 2024; Ricci, 2012; Illich, 1971; Zaldívar, 2015). However, the topic of autonomy also raises philosophical questions regarding its format, which then leaves the question of how to incorporate greater autonomy into an educational setting.

This thesis has explored the answer to the question 'To what extent can we have autonomy in learning?' initially through the comparison of formal education and unschooling and the problematising of the concept of meritocracy, the political and economic challenges and the restrictions that have been placed on children (Ball and Bowe, 2020; Brown and Tannock, 2009). It then discussed the three foundational ideas of the nature of freedom by conducting a detailed analysis of four key thinkers, alongside recent work which has responded to their philosophies. Firstly, looking at Kant and the concept of positive liberty, followed by analysing the work of Nietzsche and Foucault on the concept of determinism and mastery and finally by investigating the work of Freire on the concept of liberation and humanisation (Kant, 1788; Nietzsche, 1887; Foucault, 1987; Freire, 1968). This led to the problematization of the vision of autonomy in education and specifically, how this could work within an

educational setting. An original educational model was created, based on the work of Paulo Freire, which provided the reader with a step-by-step method to incorporate the philosophical concept of autonomy into an educational setting, resulting in greater learner responsibility for the process of exploration, amalgamation and creation of learning experiences. The model can be applied in either a formal educational setting or an unschooling environment.

Introduction

Autonomy in learning and education has been slowly declining since the origins of formal education in 1870. As schools become increasingly controlled, firstly by local authorities and then by the state, the autonomy of learners has decreased, leaving them with arbitrary curricula, almost constant testing and tight restrictions (Petrovic & Rolstad, 2017; Epstein, 2007). For many, autonomy is seen as an educational ideal, and a conflict then arises between this ideal and the reality of the provision of formal education within the United Kingdom (Dearden, 1975). This leads to concerns that the lack of development of personal autonomy within education could hold negative consequences for the students and for the state as a whole (Schinkel, 2010). There is an argument, therefore, for creating a mandatory, autonomy-promoting education in order to preserve the current collective as such an aim would create further certainty for the continuation of a liberally democratic governance (Schinkel, 2010).

However, Levinson (1999) brings a counter argument by stating that "the liberal ideal of autonomy not merely permits but requires the intrusion of the state into the child's life, specifically in the form of compulsory liberal schooling" (Levinson, 1999:58). Autonomy, she claims, is difficult to achieve within communities and families due to the monistic norms that are often found within a singular area. Therefore, a place is required that is both separate and distinct from the community in which the child is raised, a place where pluralism can be encouraged in order to allow the child to

develop reason, critical inquiry, and reflection in the face of alternative communities. This place, she suggests, is a school (Levinson, 1999).

Yet Swaine (2012) postulates that students within formal education should not be encouraged to develop autonomy, as this allows them to analyse content such as the fundamental moral principles in an unconstrained manner. Instead, Swaine argues that those in education should be encouraged to build moral character for the "cardinal liberal principles and values are sound and broadly applicable to all people" (Swaine, 2012, p. 116).

One solution here is to take the middle ground, which Feinberg (2015) proposes as such:

> The state can't properly select the influences that are best for a child; it can only insist that all public influences be kept open, that all children through accredited schools become acquainted with a great variety of facts and diversified accounts and evaluations of the myriad human arrangements in the world and in history
>
> (Feinberg, 2018, p. 228)

An example of this may be found in the introduction of academy schools in England; the creation of which was underpinned by increased autonomy regarding the national curriculum, local authority control and teaching conditions and pay (Werrnke and Salokangas, 2015). At a management level, the autonomy was found by McGinity (2015)

to be successful, with autonomy leading to innovation, which saw academies improve their place in local school markets; however, it was also found that these changes led to further inequalities for students who came from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Consequently, it can be seen that Feinberg's solution could protect a child's envisioned right to an open future; however, it serves to resolve neither the concerns of excessive autonomy within schools nor the concerns of a lack of autonomy within education as discussed earlier, and in reality, can lead to increased inequality within an educational setting. Learner autonomy within an institution can therefore be seen to be a conflict in terms. Sánchez Tyson (2019) also argues that, within an institution, the relationship between a teacher and a learner remains one of dependence and, therefore, autonomy is unable to thrive within formal education.

In more modern times, there has been a growing trend to remove children from school and to educate them at home, not through substitute curricula but through lived experience and a learner-centred approach (Romero, 2018; Ricci, 2012). Known as unschooling, this form of education seeks to maintain learner autonomy and provide individualised education for each child who engages in the lifestyle (Ricci, 2012).

Petrovic and Rolstad (2016) explain that autonomy is a key component of unschooling, returning to the idea that education should exemplify and transfer skills of autonomy to the learner. Unschooling as a movement grew out of the work of Illich and Holt, who proposed the theory of a deschooled society based on an open skill market and, with its focus on autonomy, became popular amongst those who protest mainstream education and society (Illich, 2019; Holt, 2017; Sánchez Tyson, 2019). Unschooling is diametrically opposed to formal education, viewing the institution as unable to self-

reflect and consequently as having become an oppressive force (Taylor, 2007). Additionally, formal education is seen by Todd (2012) as taking a hypocritical stance which, on the one hand, promotes learner-centred education, yet on the other holds firmly to its institutional agenda. In contrast, unschooling allows learners the opportunity to choose their own educational direction, providing freedom of choice and autonomy within the very fabric of education (Vesneski *et al*., 2022). It stands to increase autonomy, not only for learners, but also for those who facilitate education, outside the restrictions of governance (Ricci, 2012). However, due to its unstructured nature, unschooling does not offer insight into how best to incorporate autonomy into education and, being vastly different to formal education, struggles to provide inspiration for those in formal education on methods to increase autonomy within institutions. Additionally, autonomy itself is a complex topic, with philosophers such as Kant, Nietzsche, Foucault, and Freire all discussing the possible variations within the meaning of the term. Kant, for example, applies the concept of autonomy to individual choice, whereas Nietzsche focuses more on autonomy as a means of self-improvement and personal reflection (Dearden, 1975; Ercole, 2017). Autonomy as a term originated in ancient Greek, referring to the idea of giving laws to oneself. (Swaine, 2012) The terms autonomy, freedom, and at times, liberty are often used interchangeably within everyday parlance and academic literature. Whilst each term does hold a different meaning in English, most European languages rely on one word in order to refer to all three meanings. This holds particular importance within this thesis as the seminal works referenced throughout these three chapters were each originally written in a non-English language and, as such, use just one word to refer to all three concepts. With this in mind, this thesis will use the term chosen in the translation from

the original text; however, the terms liberty, freedom and autonomy within this thesis all reference the same concept as defined below.

The notion of autonomy is traditionally linked to ideas of sovereignty, that is, sovereignty over oneself and one's own decisions, a critical self-reflection of one's own actions, and the ability to review oneself in pursuit of 'good' (Scanlon, 1972; Christman, 2005; Rawls, 1993). John Holt, a proponent of the unschooling movement, argued that the right to control our own minds and thoughts is the most fundamental of all human rights. Autonomy is intrinsic to being human. However, in his opinion, formal education is synonymous with those who take this right away (Holt, 2004). When related to education, the concept of autonomy becomes more similar in process to Gutmann's principle of non-repression, whereby the state is prevented from using education to perpetuate its own ideologies (Gutmann, 1987). However, by removing the state-run curriculum from the education of a child, there is no guarantee that the family group will not, either through lack of knowledge or through planned ideological teaching, repress the child in question through the sole teaching of their own ideologies (Davis, 2006).

Pretovic and Rolstad (2017) chose to avoid this difficulty within their definition of unschooling by incorporating the concept of negative freedom. The concept of negative freedom, here defined as an absence of interference and a freedom from coercion, can be applied to education and a pupil's own interests. If one is to follow the path of unschooling, then one should be free to pursue one's own interests, free from coercion (Petrovic & Rolstad, 2017). However, it is difficult to see how this could be monitored without imposing the forms of inspection that so trap those within formal education to

the curriculum and testing. In modern times, autonomy has been split from morality, and the two now exist independently. This has led to a large number of definitions for the same concept, for example, Scanlon (1972) defines autonomy as "sovereign in deciding what to believe and in weighing competing reasons for action", Christmas (2005) as "the capacity for critical self-reflection in the development of value systems and plans of action", and Rawls (1993) as the "capacity to form, to revise, and to pursue a conception of the good, and to deliberate in accordance with it" (Scanlon, 1972, p. 215; Christman, 2005, p. 87; Rawls, 1993, p. 72). Turning to philosophical works on the concept of autonomy will therefore help to narrow down the definition. A number of the definitions cited above show reflections of Kant's original idea, considering the role of reflection (which Kant would name 'will') on the decisions of action. Autonomy as a topic is central to the work of Kant and his moral theory, and as such, is present in his discussions on the categorical imperative, the will and freedom of will (Kleingeld, 2017). However, the topic becomes more complicated once Kant's understanding of freedom is also considered. Kant's discussion of the four forms of freedom: transcendental freedom, practical freedom, rational self-determination and comparative freedom all add depth to the understanding of the topics. Freedom for Kant is intrinsic to his concept of autonomy, for he claims that an action cannot be autonomous unless it is completed freely; therefore, the topics of both autonomy and freedom according to Kant will be considered in this thesis (Brassington, 2012; Kant, 2012)

Coming from a different perspective, Nietzsche's understanding of autonomy is largely based on his work on the sovereign individual who is viewed as the autonomous pinnacle of human existence (Lanier Anderson, 2013). However, there is debate surrounding Nietzsche's later use of the concept of free will, as in differing works,

Nietzsche appears to either deny or support the existence of the concept (Gemes and Janaway, 2006). As an intrinsic part of his understanding of autonomy, it is therefore important that time is spent understanding Nietzsche's work on both autonomy and free will. Additionally, the work of Foucault serves to support and, in places, further the work of Nietzsche. By bringing in the concepts of power and discourse, Foucault expands the theoretical work of Nietzsche on autonomy, but Foucault also takes time to apply the concept of autonomy to education, an area that will become essential to this thesis as it seeks to answer the question 'To what extent can we have autonomy in learning?' (Foucalt, 1977). However, each of these understandings of autonomy has prioritised focus on the individual. Freire, though, argues that it is essential to consider both the individualist and the collectivist aspects of autonomy.

Freire's work on autonomy highlights its links both to education and to oppression (Nicolaides and Fernandes, 2008). Largely critical of neoliberal society, Freire underlines the dangers of oppression for both the oppressed and the oppressors and utilises the process of education as a method with which to transform society and bring autonomy at both an individual and collective level (Petrovic and Rolstad, 2017; Freire 1968). For Freire, neither autonomy nor education can exist in isolation - both require dialogue, which humanises individuals and transforms the world (Freire, 2017). As part of this, Freire puts forward a number of steps according to which liberation and autonomy can be achieved through education, and it is this work that will form the basis of the final section of the thesis (Freire, 2017).

Whilst the fields of formal education, unschooling and philosophy are frequently researched in and of themselves, it is more challenging to find work which combines

the three. The field of philosophy of education is growing within unschooling research; however little progress has been made since the work of Illich and Holt in the 1970s. Furthermore, the work currently being produced tends to focus on the theoretical underpinnings of unschooling, leaving the practical application underrepresented within the literature. This thesis, therefore, aims to combine the fields of education, unschooling and philosophy, providing a practical application for the theories discussed.

It can be seen above that the concept of autonomy has varied definitions throughout philosophy. However, the understandings of the topic largely work together, and as such, they can be used to inform a model of education which synthesises the work of the philosophers discussed above, and the processes of education that were previously postulated. The aim of this model is to create a system through which autonomy can be integrated into any educational setting and thus provide an answer to the question 'To what extent can we have autonomy in learning?'

The thesis will roughly follow the structure of the work above. Chapter One will look in more detail at the origins of formal education within the United Kingdom, beginning in 1870, the many policies and changes within the formal education system have at times attempted to either increase or decrease the autonomy of students within their educational settings. The discussion of these changes also provides context for the historical background of education within the United Kingdom and explains the introduction and reasoning behind key factors such as the focus on literacy skills, gender equality and the modern neoliberal agenda. This chapter will also discuss some

of the main criticisms of formal education in the United Kingdom. Criticisms such as the myth of meritocracy appear intrinsic to institutional education in this locality, and consequently, the understanding of how they have arisen, and the impact of such concepts on both schooling at large and individual students, helps to explain the intricacies of the context of education in the United Kingdom. A further criticism mentioned above is the introduction of the neoliberal agenda, which has dominatedthe political-economic governance of the United Kingdom since the 1980s. In education, this led to the introduction of controversial policies such as the OFSTED inspectorate group, frequent testing and the use of performance indicators and a national curriculum. Each of these policies affected the role of autonomy within schools in the United Kingdom, and as such, it is important to evaluate the impact of this agenda on education and autonomy. Finally, this first chapter examines the reduction of autonomy that is imposed by cultural and political restrictions on children. This section brings the focus to child autonomy, particularly in the education sector and evaluates the impact that such policies have on students who experience formal education within the United Kingdom.

In contrast to Chapter One, the second chapter of this thesis will explore the history and the definitions of unschooling. Whilst formal education has a clear, documented history, the format of unschooling as an unregulated educational process means that its history is less clear. This means that this chapter focuses more on the development of the theory of unschooling than on its physical characteristics and changes across time. The chapter begins by exploring the idea of a deschooled society, as introduced by Illich and Holt in the 1970s. Deschooling as a concept is separate from that of unschooling, as it focuses on the ideal of removing formal education from society in its

entirety and replacing it with an open market of skills, yet it is still important to discuss, as the central tenets of unschooling, such as being learner-centred, have their roots in the deschooling movement. The chapter also introduces the work of Paulo Freire, who will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. Freire's work is essential in building a link between education and the development of autonomy for both society and individuals, and it also provides several comparisons between formal education and unschooling. In comparing these two conceptions of education, this chapter therefore also explores some of the benefits of the unschooling system, particularly regarding an increase in autonomy within the educational processes. Finally, as mentioned above, this chapter explores the definition of unschooling. As an unregulated system, there is no direct definition of unschooling and academics, and those who have been unschooled (known as unschoolers) often emphasise different factors within their definitions. Consequently, it is important to compare and contrast a number of these definitions before arriving at a definition that will be utilised for the rest of the thesis.

Having discussed the educational context of the thesis, Chapter Three will move on to begin the philosophical evaluation of the concept of autonomy. Starting with Hume, this chapter explores the concept of positive liberty in autonomy, following a chronological development of thought throughout. Hume's work on the topic is briefly discussed, serving as a basis for the understanding of Kant's more developed theory of autonomy and freedom. The criticisms of Hume's work on freedom are explored and evaluated before a conclusion is drawn on Hume's understanding of freedom and autonomy. Having provided the contextual background of Hume, the chapter then proceeds to examine Kant's work in more detail. Initially summarising Kant's main arguments on transcendental freedom, compatibilism and the argument of free will,

the chapter also focuses on some of the difficulties that arise in attempting to unify the work of Kant, and some of the possible contradictions that arise when the whole body of Kant's work is considered. The power of free choice is central to Kant's views on the topic of autonomy, and this is then applied later on in the thesis to the topic of education. The chapter also works through each of the four conceptions of freedom that are mentioned above, seeking the definition of each before discussing any problems that may arise within each form. The chapter then concludes with a summary of Kant's thoughts on the topic of autonomy and freedom.

Chapter Four proceeds chronologically from the work of Kant and looks at the concepts of determinism and mastery as discussed by Nietzsche and Foucault. Beginning with Nietzsche, the topic of the sovereign individual is examined, and its links to the concepts of ethics, responsibility and freedom of will are addressed. Alternative readings of the sovereign individual are also scrutinised and discussed, and the chapter then moves on to discuss some of the complexities of the work of Nietzsche, including conflicts in Nietzsche's presentation of responsibility and of freedom of will. Possible solutions to these conflicts are also identified and analysed before moving on to the topic of constraint and its links to autonomy. While the theory behind the concept of constraint is detailed in the work of Nietzsche, the practical applications of this have not been covered, and the scope of this thesis does not allow for this to be discussed in detail. Instead, a summary of Nietzsche's views is presented before the chapter moves on to assess the work of Foucault. In viewing the work of Foucault as a clarification and development of the Nietzschean theories, the chapter focuses on the sections of Foucault's work which link directly to the concepts discussed above. This section begins with a detailed look at Foucault's views on freedom and its links to power, whilst

also exploring the link between the work of Nietzsche and Foucault. In evaluating this topic, the link between individual and collective autonomy is also briefly discussed before the concept of discourse is briefly considered. Finally, the ideas of Foucault are examined in detail in relation to education, including Foucault's thoughts on the dismantling and replacement of the current educational system.

Continuing with the idea of individual and collective autonomy, Chapter Five reviews the work of Paulo Freire, whose writings on the links between autonomy, education and liberation have been seminal in the field. Beginning with a summary of Freire's concept of conscientization, the chapter proceeds to explore and evaluate Freire's understanding of oppression and liberation as well as the role that is played by education in enabling this. The discussion of the role of education in developing autonomy is particularly pertinent to the thesis and to the following chapters, as it begins to provide a framework for the later work on modelling a system of autonomous education. Central to this discussion is the topic of praxis and its relation to dialogue, through which Freire highlights his belief that autonomy and education cannot exist in isolation. Following on from this, the chapter compares the banking method of education with the problem-posing format that Freire recommends, evaluating the strengths and the weaknesses of each method in comparison to the other. This section includes a discussion of the views of bell hooks and the links to Marxism that are inherent within the topic followed by a brief exploration of the role of literacy in the liberation and transformation of individuals. The chapter ends with a synopsis of Freire's views on autonomy.

Having discussed and evaluated the philosophical conceptions of autonomy, Chapter Six focuses on synthesising the previous explorations of formal education, unschooling and philosophy. By summarising the links between the three topics, the chapter highlights for the reader the development of thought across the thesis and emphasises specific links such as the importance of respect, community and trust within education. The chapter begins by discussing the importance of respect, both for the self and others, throughout the work of Freire and within the concept of unschooling. In relation to respect, the topic of power is also considered. The tension between respect and power is explored in detail, particularly in reference to the work of Laricchia and Nietzsche, before the chapter moves on to the topic of trust. Again, synthesising unschooling and the work of Nietzsche and Foucault, the section underlines the importance of self-reflection as part of education, which will be important for the following chapter. The chapter then progresses to a more detailed exposition of self-reflection and self-knowledge, with reference to Kant's understanding of duty and the four forms of freedom. This is followed by a second discussion of power, this time in relation to democracy, before an exploration of the links to the work of Freire on oppression and education. As briefly highlighted in the chapter on Freire, the argument then moves on to cover the connections between individuality and justice and the ways in which formal education may be perceived as a dehumanising force. Here, some of the benefits of unschooling are highlighted, as well as the work of Kant on free choice and the role it could play in education. Before developing this into a discussion of unity, issues are raised regarding unschooling and its claims to develop literacy and with formal education and its reliance on grading. These topics are both explored in relation to the students and the effects that they may have on autonomy in these situations. The

section on unity refers back to previous evaluations on the topics of individuality, community and democracy and gives an example of a grouping in Reggio Emilia, Italy, where these concepts are being put into practice. This then leads to a detailed examination the role of discourse in education, including the work of Foucault and Freire, before a conclusion is reached as to the links between autonomy and education.

Chapter seven then works to apply this theory to a usable model of autonomous education. Based primarily on the work of Freire, the model develops Freire's framework for liberation through education and synthesises it with the work of the philosophers discussed previously. The model comprises of four main sections which, are then broken down into multiple steps, followed by a summary of the justification for each section based on the previous work on both the philosophy of autonomy and education. The section concludes by discussing possible limitations of the model alongside some of its strengths.

Philosophy of education is a topic that is intrinsic to my everyday life. As a doctoral student, teacher of philosophy, and now a tutor, I am immersed in the fields of philosophy and education from several different perspectives. As a student, the topic allows for a depth of thinking rarely found outside of academia, yet as a teacher and a tutor, the need for consideration of the extent of autonomy within education is emphasised as I come into contact with both students and teachers.

1. Formal Education

1.1. Origins

1.1.1. Pre-1870

Autonomy in education has long been a contested idea; before the introduction of state-wide, formal schooling in 1870, education for those other than the upper classes occurred on a casual basis and due to this, children were more likely to learn life skills from their parents, rather than being taught formal material in a planned manner (McDermid, 2007). Whilst it may appear that this would result in highly autonomous education, this was not the case, as social norms dictated paths set out for both boys and girls. There was a clear dichotomy between the roles available for each gender, based on beliefs regarding their 'natural' characteristics (Eden, 2024). Men were viewed as the primary economic provider, with women, who were believed to be physically weaker, being seen as men's subordinates who were to be controlled by men (Clabaugh, 2010). Women were, however, seen to hold a stronger moral imperative and thus were confined to the private, familial sphere, serving the men of the household and fulfilling their ambition with motherhood.

Education for boys was often an apprenticeship in their father's workplace, for example in carpentry, blacksmithing, or animal husbandry, and possibly basic education in reading, writing and arithmetic at the local charity schools, but girls were rarely taught more than household management by their mothers or older women, or basic education with the boys, and then domestic skills at the local charity school

(Parliament UK, 2020, McDermid, 2007). This expectation that a child would follow in the trade of their parents was not reflective of autonomy; with choice in employment type restricted by societal norms and pressure, and employment location restricted by the distance a horse could travel. Data shows that in 1801, 32-36% of those employed were working in agriculture, 36-37% were working in industry as labourers or builders, and 29-32% were working in commerce, military, domestic servitude or professional work; mostly jobs that were filled by those in the local communities. However, 27% of adults were classified as labourers, cottagers and paupers, 8% as vagrants and 1% as high titles and gentlemen. This means that overall, approximately 64% of the adult population were employed in some form (Broadberry, Campbell and van Leeuwen, 2013). Consequently, there was little to no educational autonomy for most of the populace, whose choices were severely restricted by the nature of society and technology at that time.

For girls, the lack of education was due to a widespread hostility to the idea, with society entrenched in the ideology that women were inferior to boys academically, as well as the societal emphasis on the role of women in the domestic sphere (Eden, 2024). McDermid (2007) argues that this emphasis fulfils two main functions; it imbues them with the notions of femininity held by the middle classes, and it ensures that women, with the stronger moral imperative, are acting to uphold social control in the home, which has the further effects of reproducing the narrative on family roles into the next generation .

It was acknowledged that some women would need to find work, but roles were restricted to those of a nurse or a governess - roles which kept them within the caring functions of a family (Eden, 2024). Therefore, some girls, who showed particular skill in housework, may have been hired as a house servant for the local landed gentry, but for most, the lessons from their mother were the sum of their education and work prospects, therefore removing almost all autonomy from educational prospects (Parliament UK, 2020; Her Majesty's Inspectorate, 1992). It was expected at this time that a child fortunate enough to be born into wealth, or who demonstrated particular academic skill, would receive an education that took on a form more familiar to those of us living in modern times (Gomersall, 1994). Girls who found themselves in this fortunate position were often educated in association with their brothers in order to improve their opportunities for a successful marriage - receiving a basic education in the 'three Rs'; reading, writing and arithmetic, and then a more formal education under tutelage in topics such as needlework and music (Purvis, 1991). In contrast, boys in this position received schooling in areas such as Classics, Latin and History, which were believed necessary for life among the upper classes, for example, for the better servitude of church or state.

Consequently it can be seen that tradition and social norms dictated the level and type of education that one could receive, and thus choice and autonomy for learning were severely restricted, and with only 1% of people being classed as 'high titles and gentlemen', this was not an opportunity open to most (Her Majesty's Inspectorate, 1992, p.11; Broadberry, Campbell and van Leeuwen, 2013). However, the continued

restriction of workers' education to the '3 Rs' (reading, writing and arithmetic) also allowed the landed gentry to maintain a level of control over the lower classes (Parliament UK, 2020). The resulting lack of educational opportunities and autonomy in the working class ensured that critique of and rebellion against the upper classes was kept to a minimum, as the working class lacked knowledge of alternatives regarding lifestyle and education, and were consequently forced to accept the status quo, with low educational autonomy. Subsequently, the chances of workers rebelling against their current way of life were low, and the status quo was generally maintained despite previous workers' rebellions. However, this began to change between 1789 and 1848.

During this period, the growth in technology threatened numerous traditional methods of production, leaving workers with a growing sense of unease about the loss of traditional skills and jobs, and with them, the education and lifestyles with which they were accustomed. Whilst this may initially be seen as a time when more autonomy could be sought, particularly in the areas of education and employment, the reality was that the newly built factories required fewer people to complete the same tasks, and therefore it was not only a matter of learning new skills to continue employment; there were simply fewer jobs going. This meant that there was, in fact, no ability to fight for further autonomy in education at the time; indeed, what little autonomy they did have in following the family trade to gain employment was at risk. Instead, the new situation would see families with no chances of education or employment at all. Such struggles were further exacerbated by the political and economic positions of the time, with disruption to the trade of food and goods, and a bad harvest in 1795, leaving many

families struggling for employment, money and food (Scriven, 2021). As a result of this, the country went through a period of multiple revolts and unrest, with rebellions such as the Jacobin movements, the Luddite disturbances and the formation of the National Union of the Working Classes, which aimed to secure employment and, thus, continued education for its members. Such rebellions were concerned with the government's move to increase state intervention in individual lives (Harris, 2018). The Jacobin movements showed concern about the lack of autonomy of the working class as a whole; focusing on the principles of virtue, reason, and electoral purity and criticising the war against the French Republic, national debt and the high taxation of the times, which was adding to the struggles of the working class (Scriven, 2021). The Luddite rebellion, on the other hand, was more interested in the problems caused by the introduction of machinery to traditional handicrafts, for example the loss of skills, education and employment, and with it, the lack of autonomy in lifestyle which would follow. Such textile skills had previously been passed down by families via education in the home, with little autonomy in educational choice, but with the introduction of mechanised knitting, lace-making, and other forms of mechanised textiles, such jobs and lifestyles, as well as any form of education, were now at risk (Binfield, 2004). From 1811-1817, the Luddites broke machinery and took part in riots against the increasing and high food prices, as well as sending letters to factories and politicians threatening the burning and destruction of houses, machinery, property and the ending of lives, all with the aim of ending manufacturers' use of machines to reduce production costs via decreased wages and hours worked as it was these conditions threatening livelihoods as discussed above. Unfortunately, like any group which fights a losing battle, the cotton handloom weavers and their problems became an almost forgotten bad dream

as soon as they lost their place in the social and economic structure. (Bythell, 2008). Yet despite the failure of these numerous revolutionary attempts and the loss of these skilled lifestyles, the ensuing counter-revolutions were one factor that diverted the protests into a religious fervour for Methodism (1800-1820) and constitutional Radicalism (1820 onwards).

Whilst Methodism, and particularly Calvinism, taught that hardship and misfortune were direct consequences of human error, a growth in extreme evangelical community led to a spread in the belief that "just as God intervened in human affairs, so governments had a duty to intervene in social affairs" (Harris, 2018, p. 34).

The burgeoning religious fervour for Methodism and with it, Calvinism, served to encourage the working classes to adopt the Protestant work ethic, which emphasised the value of hard work and frugality (Nielsen, 1996). Indeed, Weber noted in 1904 that there was a correlation between those who were literate and thus completed skilled jobs, and those who showed adherence to Protestantism – in fact, he concluded that one result of Protestant belief was a greater participation in capitalism, including greater ownership of wealth, and an expensive education (Weber, 193). In this case, Protestantism played a part in encouraging greater autonomy in employment and educational opportunities as it encouraged those in society to seek work outside of their family trade and the education required to access such employment. Weber went on to postulate that this was partly due to the Reformation, which substituted what he saw as the Catholic churches' lax social control for a new form of control which "penetrat[ed] to all departments of private and public life, was infinitely burdensome and earnestly enforced" (Weber, 1930, p.4). In other words, the seeking of

governmental and church intervention, and the reduction of autonomy, were increasing the rewards of capitalism. Further on in the text, Weber writes that:

> Labour must [...] be performed as if it were an absolute end in itself, a calling. But such an attitude is by no means a product of nature. It cannot be evoked by low wages or high ones alone, but can only be the product of a long and arduous process of education.
>
> (Weber, 1930, p.25).

Thus, when the belief in the Protestant Work Ethic (described above) is situated within the social changes of the industrial revolution and its reliance on the introduction and materialisation of capitalist ideals, the growing belief in the suitability of additional governmental interventions demonstrates the growth in the government's responsiveness to the needs of the general population (Harris, 2018). As a result of this growth, there was a growing concern for the well-being of workers, especially those under 18, which soon led to an increasing intrusion of the state into the life of the individual. As acts brought in regulation within the areas of children's rights and education under the guise of preserving social order and stability, they also represented a change in the priorities of the state, who were now taking on the role of protecting the interests of children, whilst reinforcing the view that adults were independent individuals, and as such, they should be responsible for their own working conditions (Harris, 2018).

1.1.2. Education in the Industrial Revolution to 1915

Despite the changes in work, education and public health, the majority of the population in the late 19th century were still living on a very low income and they were left with a very small margin for expenditure on formal education, meaning that even the few who could afford to pay for education were often only able to cover the costs for limited periods at a time (Kiesling, 1983). This contradicted the spread of Protestantism which had given rise to the Protestant Work Ethic; however, struggles for money continued to be the priority for such families. As such, the early years of the Industrial Revolution initially saw a reduction in the uptake of education for children. For many families, the chance of an extra earner in the form of children proved to be necessary money for survival, and it thus seemed counterintuitive to pay for children to be educated in additional skills. Literary and mathematical skills for a theoretical future position were simply not a priority when the factories would pay for the skills the children had now; therefore, many families chose to illegally withdraw their children from school and send them to work in the factories (Harris, 2018). The inability of families to pay for education, combined with the temptation to send children to work, inevitably reduced autonomy, particularly regarding education, and whilst the additional workers for the factories benefited the upper classes, the government and the upper classes grew increasingly concerned regarding the possibility of continuing revolts and uprisings from the working classes. Leonard Horner, a factory inspector, argued that:

> Independently of all higher considerations, and to put the necessity of educating the children of the working classes on its lowest footing, it is loudly called for as a matter of police, to prevent a multitude of immoral and vicious beings, the offspring of ignorance, from growing up around us, to be a pest and a nuisance to society; it is necessary to render the great body of the working class governable by reason.
>
> (Parliamentary Debates, 1807)

Initially, there was opposition to the idea of supplementing the education of the working class. In 1807 the MP for Bodmin, Davies Giddy, responded to the introduction of a Bill to support the education of working class and pauper children by claiming that "the bill […]would teach [the labouring classes] to despise their lot in life…render them factious and refractory…[and] insolent to their superiors" (Parliamentary Debates, 1807); however, the levels of literacy needed to work the machines made formal education, at least at a low level, necessary for the factories to be staffed (Madsen, 2015).

To begin with, this need for increased literacy was met through an increase in dame and charity schools. Dame schools focused on teaching reading, writing and arithmetic to the age of seven, with the possibility to progress to private venture schools for a more varied curriculum including sewing and knitting for girls, and possibly subjects such as geography and grammar, whereas charity schools taught children from the age of seven

upwards and carried on the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic alongside occupational or vocational training, but these still came at a financial cost (Harris, 2018). Yet this reliance on dame and charity schools also coincided with growth in the idea that Protestantism was the only acceptable form of religion, and it is here that the first signs of 'unschooling' are seen: with non-conformists beginning to rebel against the Church of England-centred education of the time (Nielsen, 1996).

Dame schools provided a mediated service to an extent as they were organised by different denominations; however the Quaker society also worked to fill this void as they set up schools, known as Friends' schools, and particularly valued the education of all, including women and girls.

This is partly due to the fact that the Quakers blamed poverty and criminal behaviour on inadequate education and consequently were keen to educate as many people as possible. Day schools (which took place on Sundays) were open to non-members and eventually evolved into adult schools, and Quaker committees, as well as private individuals, ran schools for members. They also diversified their work to offer mechanics institutes, British and Foreign Schools (originally called the Royal Lancastrian Society), prison schools, schools of industry and the running of schools not associated with the Society (Leach, 2007). Later, the government worked with the Quaker Society in the provision of the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) with the aim of quashing non-conformist rebellion. However, the Society, which was created to educate the children of nonconformist parents and was based on non-sectarian principles to ensure that all people were receiving a formal education despite their beliefs, was not able to meet such demands in full (Gates, 2005).

In 1833, the first major breakthrough for the provision of a unified mass education came in the form of government grants (Eden, 2024). Here, the government offered a grant of £20,000 for the construction of new school buildings, providing that half of the cost for the buildings was met through private subscription. This was soon followed by the introduction of the Privy Council Committee on Education in 1839, school equipment grants in 1843 and teacher training in 1846. By the 1860s, the original figure of governmental support rose from £20,000 to £700,000 (Sanderson, 1995). Changes to the method of grant calculations in the 1860s, where money was now paid to schools based on the number of children leaving school with a 'proper command' of reading, writing and arithmetic, led to an increase in the number of children attending school, as well as improvements in the quality of education being provided and thus the literacy rates of the country. This led ultimately to the passing of the 1870 Education Act. William E. Forster, the proponent of the act, argued that state education would remove "that ignorance which we are all aware is pregnant with crime and misery, with misfortune to individuals and danger to the community" as well as maintaining the nation's industrial prosperity and national power (Harris, 2018). From this, it could therefore be argued that the introduction of mass education in 1870 was seen primarily as a method of policing the working classes through the enforcement of moral education, as well as benefiting the economic sector through the creation of skilled workers. However, upon its introduction, Forster emphasised that the reform was not intended to replace the existing system of voluntary education, but rather to supplement it by filling the gaps left by the government's reliance on the volunteers through the creation of school boards in areas where educational provision was found

to be lacking. Such school boards were given the power to establish rate-aided schools, as well as to make education compulsory between the ages of 5 and 12, if they saw fit in their local area (Harris, 2018).

However, education was still oriented in favour of boys over girls and encouraged and emphasised the need for different forms of training for the two genders. During this period, girls were still expected to spend more time on needlework and domestic economy, with their scholastic achievements often being minimised. This happened to such an extent that the non-attendance of girls in schooling was overlooked, even after the introduction of compulsory education, providing they could prove that they were helping at home (Eden, 2024). Whilst this gives the appearance of low autonomy in education, it is important to note that state-funded education was not the only option available to the public at this time: both voluntary schools (such as the dame and Quaker schools mentioned above) and private schooling were also available (Harris, 2018). The existence of a variety of forms of schooling, therefore meant that there was more autonomy in education than it may appear, although it must also be acknowledged that greater autonomy was available for boys than girls across all forms of schooling, as the curriculum for girls was still restricted to basic skills and vocational training (Eden, 2024).

By 1890, however, the British educational system was haphazard in nature, a result of the high autonomy of local people to create schools as they wished. With independent school boards running a growing proportion of primary education and attempting to break into the secondary system, the voluntary sector still provides large amounts of primary education, and the private sector is also attempting to maintain the secondary

system. As a result of this conflict and disunity, there was growing pressure on the government to abolish school boards and transfer responsibility for schooling to 'local education authorities.' (Harris, 2018). This new system was eventually passed as a legal act in 1902, and subsequently, further power was transferred to county councils, allowing them to control the provision of secondary education according to the needs of their respective area, thus demonstrating a continued reduction in local autonomy over educational opportunities (Eaglesham, 2025). However, the Act did not make clear the relationship between county boroughs, counties and districts, with districts responsible for elementary education, and counties and county boroughs responsible for both elementary and secondary education. The strain of this system became apparent over the next decade, with questions about the administration of schools and the provision for non-conformists coming to the fore; however, the start of World War I meant that change at this time was seen as irrelevant (Sherington, 1976).

1.1.3. 1915-1988

The outbreak of World War I significantly slowed changes in education between 1914 and 1917; however, the effects of wartime meant that by 1918, changes to national education were required. In 1916, the Bradford Charter called for: reductions in class sizes, extension of school meal and medical provision, abolition of part-time education, changes to grant provision, the introduction of free, compulsory secondary education, the raising of the school leaving age from 14 to 16 years old and free access to higher education (Steedman, 1992). However, there was significant concern surrounding the proposals to place all schooling - from nursery to university - under public control due

to the reduction of academic independence and autonomy that would result from such changes. In its previous forms, formal schooling had maintained academic independence and relative autonomy over the subjects that were taught and the children that were enrolled; however, a move to place all schooling under public control and therefore public scrutiny risked changing this. There was also concern amongst industrialists and smaller local authorities about the controls being suggested on child labour, and the devolution of power and autonomy regarding control of schools; the perceived reduction in autonomy over the education and schooling of children created unease around the Charter (Harris, 2018). Following the war, additional concerns were raised regarding the deficiencies that existed within scientific and technical education at the time, and regarding the new and growing awareness of 'social evils' which it was felt needed addressing. A further impact of the war meant that many of the country's trained and most able men had died on the battlefield, and thus pressure existed to train more young people to a high standard, and bring back to education those who had left in order to work on farms and munition factories (Sherington, 1976). In reality, the resulting new goals of policies continued to reflect those that were proposed before and during the war, particularly those in the Bradford Charter; however, such policies had gained new and more urgent explanations and support. When the Act was eventually passed in 1918, it retained most features; however, the devolution of power to county councils was removed, and instead, local authorities were given greater power and authority to arrange medical inspections and treatments of children in their care, working to actually increase local autonomy in schooling (Steedman, 1992).

Unfortunately, most of these changes proposed by the Act were not implemented, largely due to a reduction in funds following the end of the war, but there was also increasing criticism of the freedom the Act gave to local authorities. Within the working class, the manufacturing industry and local authorities, there was also a growing hostility towards the introduction of compulsory education to 16 years old due to the impact it had on family earnings and availability of workers, meaning that the supposed autonomy brought in by the 1918 Education Act did not, in reality, exist (Harris, 2018). Despite this, the increased demand for secondary education was greatly above the number of places that were available, meaning that elementary schools were forced to run advanced courses to try to meet the demand for further education (Jefferys, 1984). In 1923, the Hadow report discussed the need for greater access to education for girls, yet, restricted by tradition, still saw this as fulfilled by a gendered curriculum (Eden, 2024). However, it did argue for greater freedom in the curriculum for girls, suggesting an increase in girls' autonomy within education.

By 1924, the lack of school places had become a governmental issue, with selective secondary schools still unable to offer places to all students who qualified, and the ability of the elementary schools to offer advanced courses being stifled by regulations and societal pressure for the tradition of education. In 1925, changes were made to reflect this growing pressure as the Conservative government created 8,000 new secondary school places in that year alone and increased education spending to a higher amount than had been seen since the war (Jefferys, 1984). The next decade saw little happen regarding changes in education, largely due to disagreements within government, which saw several bills discontinued, but also due to an overshadowing concern regarding the economy. (Jefferys, 1984). The debate regarding the school

leaving age continued for years, and while a Circular was due to come into force in 1939, its enactment was overshadowed by the Nazi invasion of Poland, which happened on the same day, leaving the circular unfulfilled and forgotten (Harris, 2018).

During World War II, pressure was again increasing to make changes within education. Despite a Minute which forbade Lord Butler from introducing a new Education Bill during the war, by 1944, he had successfully passed the 1944 Education Act (Earl, 1984). Building on the Hadow report, which questioned the use of psychological testing in selective schools due to its being unreliable, Butler reported that he was:

> Troubled by the dangers to children in making irrevocable choices at the age of 11 which would affect their careers and the rest of their lives. I am not satisfied that the age of 11 is the one and ideal age at which children should divide their future lives.
>
> (Wallace, 1981, p.287)

The 1944 Education Act thus attempted to promote equality in schooling through the introduction of a tripartite system of education, which divided children based on ability rather than on their own decisions. This system then placed children into one of three schools: grammar schools for the most academically able, technical schools for those with manual skills, and secondary modern schools for everyone else (Blackburn and Marsh, 1991). The basis behind this was to enact two main principles: universality and individuality (Ku, 2013). Universality, according to Fred Clarke, would see that all would

be included in education and all would receive further opportunities as a result of the Act; additionally, universality would see considerations made regarding the child's life and needs. Further to this, the new principle of individuality meant that local authorities were now required to provide facilities for children that would see their needs met according to differing abilities, aptitudes and ages (Clarke, n.d.)

As a result of these new principles and the new system, school fees were abolished within this system with the hope that this would broaden the number of working-class students attending grammar and technical schools, further meeting Clarke's envisioning of 'education for all' (Blackburn and Marsh, 1991; Ku, 2013). By instituting free, universal education, alongside a new three-tier system of primary, secondary and further education, Butler and Clarke were aiming to increase educational equality within formal education (Ku, 2013). Indeed, Clarke went so far as to link the introduction of compulsory further education (for one day a week) to the idea of individual freedom and the development of the free personality (Clarke, 1942). This did have the effect of reversing the trend of the previous two decades, which saw those at the top of schools increase their advantage over those in the middle of schools; however, the new tripartite system caused further inequality at the lower end of the schools by benefiting those who would have previously not been able to access education due to financial constraints. Blackburn and Marsh (1991) found in their analysis that overall, inequality in educational selection of social classes declined following the 1944 Education Act, with the decrease in inequality at the top of schools outweighing the increase in inequality at the bottom of schools. However, this did not last, as the increase in population during the 1950s and 1960s meant that the value of

social advantage increased and the inequalities that were seen in the 1920s and 1930s returned with greater impact (Blackburn and Marsh, 1991).

1.1.4. 1988-2018

Between the years of 1988 and 2018, the structure of formal education experienced a complete overhaul with the decision to further centralise the administration of schooling. The 1988 Education Reform Act saw the move from locally administered systems to a nationally administered schooling system meant that funding for most forms of schooling (which had previously come from local authorities) now came entirely from the Department of Education (Ball and Bowe, 2020). However, this did little to combat the class, racial and gender inequalities that were inherent in the formal education system at the time, indeed the New Right argued that freedom, social justice and equality were incompatible with each other and that inequality between classes, races and genders was necessary in order to provide incentives for competition in the economic market (Ball, 1990). Centralisation of administration was further aided by the introduction of the National Curriculum and national testing, creating an education market over which neither local authorities nor schools had any control. In order to further support this new education market, which was built on neoliberal economics (discussed in more detail in the critiques of formal education below), choice was introduced into the market in the form of a greater diversity of school types, which were encouraged to compete for pupils through a system of per capita funding (Taylor, 1993). The introduction of choice within formal education on the one hand served to increase autonomy within education; it allowed parents and students to assess local schools

and make a decision of enrolment based on which best suited their needs - an improvement in autonomy from the previous selection based system, yet on the other hand, evaluating school suitability and understanding the data provided on each school required educational and social capital that was often above that accrued by lower class parents (Bourdieu, 1986). This meant that the system, in reality, worked to increase class inequality as lower-class parents had less capital than those of the upper classes and so had less choice and less autonomy in school enrolment (Blum, 2023). Indeed, Ball argues that notions such as opportunity and equality were here replaced by terms such as standards, quality, efficiency and value for money (Ball, 1990).

Here, it must be acknowledged that the concept of equal opportunity is included within the 1988 Education Reform Act; however, rather than actively being anti-racist or anti-sexist, etc., reform has been left to chance (Arnot, 1992). The reduction of selective education, alongside centralisation of control, had progressive potential regarding equality in autonomy within education; however, there were no active policies aiming to reduce the inequality within formal education. For example, despite the claim that parents have the right to select a school for their children, the Parents Charter added clauses which allowed schools to reject this choice if they were full of students with a stronger claim to that school, and which allowed grammar schools to maintain empty spaces if not enough children passed the selection test (Taylor, 1993). Consequently, as stated above, the appearance of choice was in fact not one of autonomy.

As New Labour came into government in 1997, schooling began to take on a more creative, entrepreneurial and individualised form with more focus on personalised

schooling. This was largely a response to new social and economic conditions as well as a growing consumer demand for individualised education rather than the traditional 'one size fits all' method of previous years (Clarke *et al*., 2007). Schooling, it appeared, was becoming more meritocratic and thus more autonomous. This new, more individualised form of schooling was further adopted by both the coalition government that followed New Labour and the Conservative government, which remained in power until 2023; however, the Conservative influence saw this new form of schooling blended with traditional forms of education that had emphasised character education and virtue. Such a rate of change in education, however, left the United Kingdom with an educational legacy of blended, mismatched schooling, much like that of the early 1900s, featuring a diverse list of providers, varying degrees of autonomy and overall, a fragmented institution of education (Ball and Bowe, 2020). As Ball and Bowe describe:

> In the terms set by all governments since 1988, the changes that have been wrought upon schools in this period have moved us from a system with disparities between schools of different sorts, run by local authorities in relation to their intake and performance [...] to a much more complicated system of different sorts of schools, delivered by a range of different providers, with marked disparities between schools in relation to their intake and performance
>
> (Ball and Bowe, 2020, p. 98)

Further individualisation, autonomy and choice may have been the aim of the changes introduced, first by New Labour, and then by the Coalition and Conservative

governments, but, as Ball and Bowe postulate, the actual result has been a form of chaos.

Diversity of choice could be seen, on paper, as a clear way to increase autonomy; by giving more choice of providers, the chances of each student finding a form of schooling that meets their needs, and perhaps even their wants, increase. Yet by increasing competition and choice without simultaneously installing adequate systems to monitor and maintain intake and performance, the sheer number of agencies, businesses and partnerships that exist within the current schooling system is reducing effectiveness and confusing the options available. Therefore, despite appearing to increase autonomy, this diversity of choice in effect lowers the standards of the available schooling options. Whilst schooling had been highly differentiated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the fragmentation of the late 20th and early 21st centuries has been further complicated by the introduction of federations, multi-academy trusts, charter schools and networks, which maintain their administration, as well as the funding of the individual schools, beyond the control of local authorities or county councils. This, in effect, also works to counter the intent of such measures. The initial plan of devolving administration to central government has transformed into a series of proposals and acts which have localised administration and fundraising to the extent that local schools are now entirely in control of their own policies and budgets, or at best, pay heed to a local (or sometimes national) multi-academy trust who oversees general policies and funding but allows local schools some individual control on how these are enacted. Yet again, this system creates the appearance of high autonomy; for staff and for learners, yet as Ball and Bowe have summarised, this diversity of devolved, autonomous provision of schooling has occurred alongside an

escalation in the “bewildering and reactive form of state ‘policy hyperactivity’ – mostly aimed at raising outcomes based on performance indicators but including an array of other ‘priorities’.” (Ball and Bowe, 2020, p99). Competition and choice have led formal education to focus almost solely on data as a means to measure performance, at the expense ofcreativity and personalised learning that was the aim of New Labour. Autonomy within formal education has been reduced so that the only important factor is how a student is performing based on data-led indicators, leaving students to deal with arbitrary curricula, high levels of testing and little choice in what they learn, or how they learn it.

Further to what is written above, there are many problems with formal education, particularly this modern iteration, ranging from its basis on the myth of meritocracy to the influx of neoliberalism and the restrictions placed on children, all of which serve to further reduce autonomy within schooling. These will now each be discussed in turn.

1.2. Problems with formal education

1.2.1. Myth of Meritocracy

The rhetoric of meritocracy has been central to the neoliberal agenda since the 1950s, seeing various iterations throughout the Conservative, Labour and Coalition governments that have existed since that time (Brown and Tannock, 2009). The modern economy, and thus education, seems to be based on the assumption that the more

qualified a person is (that is, the more skills and credentials that are attributed to that one individual), the more productive that person must be and consequently, the more contribution that one person can make to the economy. Such a belief is self-perpetuating, as people find that the harder they work and the more they contribute to society, the more they are rewarded by society with higher salaries, more respect, and at times, fame. This self-perpetuation of the belief therefore encourages the continued reproduction of meritocracy for the new generations of society (Becker, 2006).

In formal education, 'meritocracy' often takes the form of familial educational capital, which allows middle and upper class families to seek out the most desirable and prestigious schools and learning opportunities, in order to give their children an increased social and educational capital, or positional capital, which then increases their chances of joining the elite (Kapur and McHale, 2005). In contrast, however, those without this capital - those seen as being without merit - are left to fall behind and enter the lower echelons of society where they are viewed as unproductive and therefore deserving of their own situation (Brown and Tannock, 2009). This then serves the dual purpose of increasing the autonomy available to the upper classes and reducing the autonomy available to those in the working class.

Yet such merit is not a quality inherent to one's personality but is instead believed to be the amalgamation of familial wealth and an individual's capabilities, developed by their interactions with society and based on capital gained during their life (Bowles and Gintis, 1976) . It is these capabilities which afford an individual the ability to respond to formal, educational opportunities, as well as to develop and utilise social and economic advantages over others (Ball, 2003). The concept of meritocracy thus ignores

other factors that influence a person and their apparent economic success in life. The 'myth of meritocracy', therefore, acknowledges that whilst society purports that hard work and merit lead one person to succeed over another, this is simply not the case (Brown and Tannock, 2009).

Mazza and De Mari (2011) argue that as early as 1902, the Education Act, which restricted local authorities' ability to offer education beyond primary level, brought meritocracy to education. According to this argument the meritocratic belief in hard work as the key to a successful life was encouraged by the new system. Such a system saw good students from the working class attend free secondary education. This argument is further supported by the words of politician John Gorst, who said:

> While primary instruction should be provided for, and even enforced upon all, advanced instruction is for the few. It is in the interest of the Commonwealth at large that every boy and girl showing capacities above the average should be caught and given the best opportunities for developing these capacities. It is not in its interests to scatter broadcast a huge system of higher instruction for anyone who chooses to take advantage of it, however unfit to receive it
>
> (Bergen, 1982, p.16).

Wallace (1981) argued that this infiltration of meritocracy into the British formal school system continued through the 1944 Education Act, which he saw as "promoting 'meritocracy' before the word was invented" (Wallace, 1981, p.285). The preservation

of the selective grammar school system was seen to allow the continuation of academic selection and further academic segregation, decreasing autonomy for those unable to pay fees for such education. In removing fees from such grammar schools, however, Butler's act served to transform the grammar school system from a system of income segregation to a system of meritocracy (Mazza and De Mari, 2011).

Yet there is an alternative argument on this topic: Allen (2011) argues that we are not, in fact, experiencing a myth of meritocracy, but instead a development of the concept. Viewing meritocracy as a concept that is neither static nor timeless, Allen instead argues that the current system, where meritocracy is held as an abstract ideal against which societies are judged, has changed beyond recognition. Whilst meritocracy began with the idea that there was a perfect match between the typical distributions of both ability and jobs, it can now be argued that the principle of meritocracy has become internalised to the individual, and that each person is therefore left to judge their own ability and associated possible jobs. The neoliberal move away from a government of direct intervention to one of distant guidance has, in part, enabled individuals to hold this further responsibility, requiring those who succeed to hold personal ambition, arguably increasing the autonomy of individuals within education (Allen, 2011). This move in power was demonstrated, for example, in formal schooling when funding and administration of schools were moved from local authorities to the Department of Education, and then devolved largely to individual schools as described above (Ball and Bowe, 2020). In this instance, students, teachers and schools were required to make their own decisions over their investments of time, resource and energy as balanced against perceived returns of qualifications, opportunities and capital, giving further autonomy to individuals to pursue a life of their choosing. However, this has also led

Rose to argue that the value of life has consequently been reduced to little more than the rationalised outcome of choices made, or to be made (Rose, 1996). When all decisions are made based on the rationalisation of outcomes, it can be argued that all creativity and individuality have been removed from the situation.

Whilst such changes have occurred across society, Allen argues that a simultaneous development in the understanding of intelligence led to it being viewed as a malleable skill. This has consequently led to a pressure to be perpetually improving this ability in order to reposition and increase social mobility, as well as to increase competition between both students and institutions, something that was not originally a part of meritocracy (Allen, 2011). As a result of this individuals and family units have, as Allen described, taken responsibility from the government for their formal education, through decisions such as school choices, personal performance and self-improvement; they have received more autonomy, but in return they have also given more responsibility, this could explain the change in the value of life which Rose has previously argued (Ball, 2003). This change to society has therefore allowed the government to focus on becoming a competition state, introducing policies which encourage the competitive result of meritocracy to an international level (Ball and Bowe, 2020). Such policies provide profit-making opportunities for businesses and expand the economic sphere into the sphere of formal education. This expansion has brought market forces such as competition, enterprise and entrepreneurship to both the collective and individual levels of education.

Many of these initial changes were made under the Thatcher administration from 1979 to1990. For example, the conversion of the tripartite education system to one of

comprehensive education reduced the type of school available, but increased competition as all schools were now aiming to recruit from the same sector of society. Further competition was also introduced through the creation of OFSTED, which evaluated schools and rated them accordingly - creating additional competition between schools that vied for the top grades and therefore, the top students and increasing the illusion of meritocracy (Arnott, 2000).

Education during this time had come to be seen as overly bureaucratic whilst also failing to acknowledge or correct its own mistakes, with even government ministers blaming formal education for the decrease in Britain's ability to compete on an international economic scale (Hall and Gunter, 2015). As a result, professional qualifications were introduced in teaching, and the government started to integrate industrial management logic into education systems in order to rectify the impact that was being had on the economy (Ferreira Junior and Bittar, 2014). Autonomy was therefore reduced as the government attempted to regain the respect for the concepts of formal education and meritocracy, which had been lost since the last education act of 1944. However, the results of these introductions have led to increased tension between teachers and the government as individual autonomy has been consistently reduced (Mazza and De Mari, 2011).

1.2.2. Neoliberalism

The aforementioned influx of market forces into education and other societal institutions is partly a result of the growing influence of neoliberal forces, that is, a political-economic system in which concepts such as competition, choice and efficiency are utilised to create a free market (Brown, 2015). Neoliberalism has enabled society to prioritise and master the system of mass production and market capitalism, and through the organisation of human labour, mass production has thrived, leading to an unrivalled period of fabrication and consumerism. However, scholars such as Mark, Engels and Freire argue that this has come at the cost of the human mind. Mass production, Freire says, domesticates man; it mechanises him and reduces him to a cog in a machine. It exemplifies the hegemonic rationality and removes the individual's ability to communicate and be heard (Freire, 1973). Reflecting what has been said above, neoliberalism has reduced the autonomy and voice of those in formal education, both staff and students, whilst bringing the focus to data and performance indicators such as student grades and OFSTED ratings. Formal education is now a "a site for building human capital and contributing to economic productivity, from the early childhood years, right through to the tertiary level" (Savage, 2017, p.150). Freire also argues that formal education is the promulgation of this ideology of mass production. The scripting of the curriculum, competitive grading, high-stakes testing and even the factory-style architecture of school buildings all implicitly teach children that neoliberal massification is the status quo, that challenge and change are synonymous with being a difficult child, and that obedience, submissiveness and subjugation are needed for self-preservation (Petrovic & Rolstad, 2017).

The influx of neoliberal capitalism, particularly in the Modern West, appears set on devaluing public interest, including that in educational excellence. Universities, for example, have become places of corporate demand where skills, knowledge and credentials are exchanged for money (Giroux, 2010a). In addition to this, the role of parental preference has increased substantially until it is "the linchpin of an education system" (Blum, 2023, p.6). Whilst appearing to contradict the previous statement of the devaluing of public interest in education, the combination of the increased role of parental preference, increased competition and the lack of knowledge available regarding schooling options serves to continue the devaluation of public interest in educational excellence. Blum summarises a number of problems with this situation, including parents' lack of knowledge about their child, mismatched desires for the child's future and the impact of disruptive individuals within formal education (Blum, 2023). However, it is the problems with consumerism within education that are most relevant to this argument. Blum firstly acknowledges that there is a lack of knowledge both about schooling options and about how to find this information in general. For example, whilst it is relatively simple to gain knowledge of a school's achievement levels and OFSTED grade, this goes little way to explaining how an individual child would perform in the school (Blum, 2023). This makes finding sites of educational excellence for an individual difficult and ultimately devalues public interest in the area. Indeed, even when a choice is made, it is reduced to being but a 'controlled choice' where preferences for schools are submitted and the local authority aims to meet as many parental preferences as possible (Blum, 2023).

Additionally, Blum highlights the fact that, as a result of neoliberalism, society has a high stake in the education that is received in formal schooling as society requires

formal education to produce students who will become productive members of the society in which they live (Blum, 2023) This view is further supported by Specia and Osman (2015) who argue that society has been left with an “uncritical, unreflective education which serves to perpetuate the current dominant ideology of neoliberalism” (Specia & Osman, 2015, p. 166), acknowledging not only that formal education can be uncritical and unreflective, but also that it leaves parents without these skills when finding schools for their own children. This leads to fears that formal education could be seen as a tool for the upper classes to deskill teachers, or to reduce schooling to a system which teaches to test and produces students who will work with, rather than against, society as a whole. According to Freire (2000), formal education as a process reduces an individual’s awareness of oneself and the world and convinces humanity that they are dependent rather than equal, which further supports this argument. Here, neoliberal education is seen to encourage compartmentalisation and reinforce the separation of public and private. It encourages teachers and students to see little connection between their life and their education, leaving teachers to focus more on their position of authority than on students’ well-being (hooks, 1994).

The antagonism between economic and political neoliberalism and the concept of the state therefore, provides the context for the processes of fragmentation in education that have been discussed above, particularly since 1988 (Ball and Bowe, 2020). Neoliberalism within formal education has, among many things, lent itself to creating passive adults who struggle with the skills of critical thinking or self-reflection, as where there is knowledge of the system, individuals struggle to use it effectively, making formal education a self-perpetuating concept for each generation.

1.2.3. Restrictions on Children

Another criticism of formal education is that it reduces autonomy by imposing numerous restrictions on children. Formal education was originally created as "a means for the moral training of the population with a view to enhancing the strength and prosperity of the state and thereby the welfare of the people' (Hunter, 1996, p. 149) That is, it developed disciplinary procedures and a focus on moral practices (among other things) in order to produce citizens who were useful and productive members of society. Ball and Collet-Sabé (2022) therefore argue that it should not be a surprise when we try to compare formal schooling with concepts such as inclusion, critical thinking, or well-being and see that it fails, for that was never the intention of formal education. Indeed, Foucault, in regard to this topic, asks, "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons? (Foucault, 1979, p.228) and when Epstein (2007) completed research in this area, he found that teenagers were subjected to twice the restrictions of soldiers and even prisoners, and ten times as many restrictions as everyday adults, with younger children also suffering from a similar disrespect (Epstein, 2007). Unfortunately, this means that those who are seen to fail the school experience suffer a level of dehumanisation - faced with punishment, shame, exclusions and even abuse - such children are taught that they are not normal and that they do not fit into society (Ball and Collet-Sabé, 2022).

Modern, formal education, in some regards, has become more focused on human beings as cognitive individuals than on their relational needs. According to Freire, in

formal schooling the teacher is cast as the narrator of the world, and the student is the listener, with the teacher discussing reality as a predictable and motionless concept, or describing concepts and topics which are alien to the lived experiences of the students - either because they are abstract or because they are so far removed from that lived experienced that they are inconceivable (Ball and Collet-Sabé, 2022; Freire, 1970). One task of the teacher in formal education, then, is to fill the student with detached and arbitrary information and sell it as knowledge; the main task of the student is to act as a passive receptacle to be filled with detached and memorised information. Formal education in this form is little more than a banking system, where information is deposited not because it is useful or relevant, but as a storage system based on the fear that this information will disappear (Freire, 1970). Yet Freire also argues that education is a potential system in which change can occur - it is the method towards conscientization and through which the oppressors may overthrow their oppression (Freire, 1970). Consequently, the issue here is not with education as a whole, but with the specific form that formal education is currently taking.

As a result of the banking method, students are encouraged to accept their ignorance based on the positioning of the teacher as their knowledge-filled opposite; continuing to hold this mentality as they enter the world of work (Freire, 1970). Students are pressured to forget knowledge that they gained outside of formal education, as it is cast as the 'other' - morally bad and technically inadequate (Ball and Collet-Sabé, 2022). Such an emphasis on memorisation within modern formal education has reduced critical thinking and self-reflection to the point that children adapt rather than being willing to transform the world.Freire argues that they become restricted by the choices

available (Freire, 1970). In addition, Freire argues that banking education mythicizes reality in order to conceal its hegemonic explanation. He says:

> Schooling in itself had been a disciplinary response to the need to manage growing populations; within the progressively discriminating space of the schoolroom the productive regulation of large numbers of pupils also required new methodologies … the apparently 'simple' transfer of knowledge from one person to another cannot be disentangled from those authoritative processes which seek to instil discipline into the deepest recesses of the school system, into the moral fibres of its inmates.
>
> (Deacon, 2005, p. 89)

Yet it is not they who need to transform in order to integrate, but society, which should be transformed to allow all to become a 'being for themselves' (Freire, 1970). Indeed, Ricci (2011) highlighted the fact that "we can do things to young people that we would never dream of doing to adults" and concluded that this is because society lacks trust in children (Ricci, 2011, p. 45). However, this lack of trust is not supported by scientific evidence: by splitting adulthood into different competencies such as love, physical abilities and handling responsibilities, Epstein was able to test both adult and teenage abilities in these areas. Epstein then averaged the results for all competencies and found that the mean score for adults was 116.7, whereas for teenagers it was only 114.2, a difference of only 2.1% of the teen mean. In addition, the lowest adult score

was lower than the lowest teenage score. Although they are restricted in areas such as education, liberty and autonomy, Epstein consequently believes that adolescents are, in reality, capable thinkers. The problem is that adolescents are capable people who are treated like children (Epstein, 2007). Indeed, some, like Couture (2016), argue that the current industrialised culture (which began with the Industrial Revolution) is at odds with child development, and that formal schooling as a system, which forces a child to follow capitalist rules and schedules, is in fact developmentally inappropriate (Couture, 2016). This view is well supported by the work of Ariès, who, in 1960, came to the conclusion that the modern concept of childhood had only come into being in 18th-19th-century Europe. Based on historical records, he deduced that modern childhood did not become a widely accepted phenomenon until after World War I. Before this, he argued, children were simply mini-adults (Ariès, 1962). Indeed, Moshman (2009) highlights that, for many cultures and societies, teenagers – as they are now known – were previously deemed as adults. In Jewish culture, for example, the Bar and Bat Mitzvahs occur at the ages of 13 and 12, respectively. It is at this point that Jews believe that the child becomes an adult, including gaining full rights and responsibilities for their spiritual, social, and emotional selves. The idea of adolescence as part of childhood, rather than part of adulthood, evolved at the turn of the 20th century, at which point government and parental pressures infringed on adolescents' rights and forced them to continue schooling whilst severely reducing their liberty and autonomy (Moshman, 2009). Ricci believes that it is these unhealthy demands that formal schooling makes on children that are then leading to behavioural and mental health problems, an idea which finds support in the modern-day epidemic of mental health problems in young people (Young Minds, 2018; Ricci, 2012).

Furthermore, there is evidence that teenagers' information processing abilities are at their peak and, supported by Piaget's formal operational reasoning, are at their maximum stage of maturity (Moshman, 2009) For example, research has found that information processing speed peaks at 18-19 years of age, and short term memory at around 25 years of age, although some areas such as vocabulary do not peak until a person reaches their 60s (Hartshorne & Germine, 2015). However, the fact that information processing speed peaks early suggests that teenagers are capable of understanding the areas restricted to them, and therefore could be seen to deserve more adult treatment. This would mean that the restrictions that are in place to 'protect' teenagers may indeed be excessive. If society is restricting the life of teenagers because it believes they do not understand the dangers of sex and alcohol, or the details behind electoral candidates, for example, then this may be a neuromyth (Epstein, 2007). Applied to formal education, this further questions the need for such restrictions on students, particularly teenagers.

Yet Ball and Collet-Sabé (2022) question whether formal education can thus be changed. They describe formal education as intolerable and irredeemable, as irreparable - hoping for a school that is equal or inclusive, they argue, is to ignore schooling's epistemological foundations. Instead, they propose that the end of modern schooling is sought, particularly by those who work in education and who can therefore work to revolt against what they are (Ball and Collet-Sabé, 2022; Foucault, 1982).

1.3. Conclusion

Autonomy within formal education is a complicated matter; throughout the history of formal schooling within the UK, autonomy has, to a certain extent, fluctuated. Prior to the introduction of formal, state-wide schooling, the pressure of social norms meant that children were most likely to be educated in their parents' work, with boys apprenticing in a trade and girls taking on domestic duties (McMermid, 2007). At this time, therefore, autonomy in education was low. As the industrial revolution took hold, technology began to threaten traditional skills and methods of production and despite revolutions and counter-revolutions, the growing adherence to Protestantism saw an increase in educational opportunities as workers were encouraged to seek new skills to take advantage of the opportunities that the new factories and machines offered (Harris, 2018). Such opportunities would serve to increase education in autonomy as people were encouraged to seek education and schooling outside of their traditional family skills, however, the population at the time was still existing on low income and so, despite the encouragement of both religion and the government, many families chose to illegally send their children to work rather than take advantage of the new levels of autonomy in education (Harris, 2018). In 1870, the lack of uptake in educational opportunities led the government to further intervene with the 1870 Education Act, which sought to make education compulsory between the ages of 8 and 12 (Harris, 2018). However, autonomy within education itself was still restricted as the curriculum continued to focus on trade skills for boys, and domestic skills for girls (Eden, 2024).

Beset by continued problems, including the transference of authority from schools to county councils, the government saw that change was needed but this was temporarily thwarted by the outbreak of World War I (Sherington, 1976). By 1918, a further Education Act was passed, which transferred authority from county councils to local authorities. The Act increased local autonomy in schooling and improved the educational experience of children; however, there continued to be a problem with the number of school places available to children, and this was not resolved until 1944 (Steedman, 1992). This again worked to hamper educational autonomy, as students who met the criteria for secondary education were unable to access this opportunity in reality.

The 1944 Education Act, among other things, introduced the tripartite system of education, which opened up grammar schools to all social classes and abolished school fees, removing the restrictions of educational autonomy that had been in place for the lower classes (Blackburn and Marsh, 1991). However, the selection of students meant that the level of educational autonomy available to each student was dependent upon their social class, with the upper classes experiencing much greater autonomy in education than those in the working classes. The 1988 Education Reform Act aimed to rectify this scenario by replacing the tripartite system with a new, comprehensive system, mostly abolishing education by selection and instead basing the location of education on parental choice (Ball, 1990). This system, based on neoliberal forces of competition and choice, nominally increased autonomy in education as parents assessed local data to find a school that would best support their child. However, in reality, the choice was largely controlled as information on schools was not easily

accessible, creating a class divide in the ability to choose and restricting autonomy in education (Taylor, 1993).

In 1997, New Labour focused on creating more individualised schooling based on the principles of meritocracy and autonomy; however, the Conservative government which followed blended this new form of education with traditional formal education, leaving the country with a diverse list of providers and a fragmented school system (Ball and Bowe, 2020). Such diversity led to chaos within the school system as autonomy in education continued to decline, and further devolution of power to central government removed the ability of local authorities to make changes necessary for their region (Ball and Bowe, 2020).

Based on this history of formal education, the epistemic basis for formal schooling has therefore been argued. It continues to be argued as a form of violence against an individual's subjectivity and their possibility of self-formation. Neoliberal schooling and formal education are so deeply ingrained in the modern psyche that it is accepted almost without thought as necessary and inevitable, yet they simply are not. Education is necessary, formal schooling is an obstacle in its path (Ball and Collet-Sabe, 2022). Foucault also acknowledges that one cannot create something new without first bringing to an end what has passed (Foucault, 2000). Refusing to replace the old with simply a new take on the old powers (here seen in pedagogy, curriculum and forms of governance), what is needed is a form of education that looks nothing like the formal education discussed above (Deleuze and Foucault, 1977; Ball and Collet-Sabé, 2022). Komatsu and Rappleye (2017) summarise it as follows:

> We need to radically rethink our starting assumptions about modern mass schooling, one rooted in the modernist western paradigm, and consider whether education is in fact a solution or a cause of the trouble we now face … it is clear that the Earth does not need more 'educated' consumers of knowledge – a mere refurbishment of the long-standing Western-turned-modern assumption that knowledge alone will allow us to reach the 'good' life. Instead, we must first fundamentally change ways of being, then (re)describe the world including education in those terms.
>
> (Komatsu & Rappleye, 2017, p. 168)

Education in this form means that one is to test one's limits through a continued orientation of scepticism (Ball and Collet-Sabé, 2022). In such a situation, community is important and borderless as people join together to support a collaborative system of learning in which caring for the self means caring for others (Olssen, 2007; Foucault, 1994). Indeed, Olssen (2017) suggests that education could take the form of "a cooperative and collaborative activity centred upon experiential, creative responses to contingent sets of relations to cope with uncertainty in a never-ending quest" (Olssen, 2017, p.510). This new face of education, therefore, is looking for agentic skills, critical thinking, collaboration, cooperation, community and the continual testing of one's limits - it is looking for autonomy.

2. A History and Definition of Unschooling

In contrast to formal education, which takes the form of an arbitrary curriculum, unschooling is based on the idea of increasing learner autonomy. It aims to give the learner control of their learning, allowing them to make choices about what they learn, when they learn it and how. It is about learning through every day, lived experience rather than an arbitrary set curriculum, which is identical for all learners. Here, autonomy and freedom are strongly linked; Freire claims that freedom is the ability to become 'beings for themselves' (Freire, 2017). In contrast, society, particularly modern Western society, is seen as valuing characteristics such as conformity, production, and similarity as these are the characteristics most suited to mass production. However, Marxist theorists argue that this reduces the freedom and individuality available to the masses and restricts the options for education within society as a whole (discussed in more detail below)

Yet unschooling runs counter to this. In contrast to formal education, unschooling can be highly individualistic. The willed curriculum (Ricci, 2012) emphasises the importance of interest and internal motivation, something which is unlikely to be sustained as a child accesses an arbitrary curriculum, but which instead flows out of the belief that all people can direct their own lives, regardless of age or other sociocultural factors. When learning is the focus of education, rather than the instilling of a hegemonic ideology, learners become empowered to make their own decisions and attain a deeper learning

experience than when they are manipulated or corralled into rote learning; they experience learner autonomy (Ricci, 2011). Instead of allowing people a reduced freedom in their day, where they retain only 8 hours of leisure time to pursue their interests, Ricci and the willed curriculum propose that the whole of life should be turned over to real-life learning from real-life experiences (Ricci, 2011). Formal education, according to Ricci, is not preparation for life, but rather busy work, motivated by ideological perpetuation rather than life relevance. In contrast, unschooling allows a child to explore their passions in a gentle and powerful way and trusts each individual to make mature decisions about their inner cravings and passions (Ricci, 2012). Without a curriculum or a teacher-centred environment, learning becomes more about the autonomy of both children and adults, as they are allowed to make their own decisions about what they will learn next. Yet this brings problems in relation to the topic of autonomy from whence we started. Whilst freedom is undoubtedly an important aspect of unschooling, it is different and distinct from autonomy, and the development of autonomy in a child. Left without a concept of autonomy and without any coercion, Petrovic and Rolstad (2017) argue that a child will be unable to become intellectually independent and will be unable to live in harmony with others, which is a prerequisite for a flourishing life (Brighouse, 2008).

It is harder to create a chronological map of the origins of unschooling, given that it is a system in which there is no formal bureaucracy, policy or documentation. Instead, this chapter will look at the origins of the original concept of deschooling through the work of Illich and Holt, followed by the definitions of unschooling and the problems that exist within the system.

2.1. Differences between formal education and unschooling

Many trace the formal roots of unschooling back to Ivan Illich's seminal work 'Deschooling Society' (1971). Deschooling, Illich argued, was the process of transferring educational functionality away from formal schooling towards non-institutional learning (Illich, 2019). This theory required the relation between schooling and education to be re-evaluated, with schooling being recast as a result rather than a process, and education being viewed as the myth that generates a need for schooling.

In contrast to the ideas behind the development of formal education in the UK, which was discussed in the previous chapter, Illich traces the concept of educational institutions back to the European ecclesiastical history of the third century C.E. Tracing its roots to the 1400s, when maternal tasks such as education were transferred from the church to specialised institutions, he viewed the conception of formal education to be a result of the process of cultural secularisation (Illich, 2019). A process that continued until the modern day, this cultural secularisation eventually resulted in a situation where the "education myth generates the school ritual with the latter sustaining and reinforcing the former" (Zaldívar, 2015, p. 98). Yet, as can be seen above, one could argue that the education myth prevails further than merely generating the schooling ritual: it also works to create a distance between what is promised in formal education and what the system actually achieves (Lister, 1974).

The education myth teaches people that school is a form of salvation based on meritocracy and autonomy—that it is a method to improve an individual's life if they work hard enough and make the 'right' choices. Following on from this, Reimer argues that the idea of schooling and education as a form of salvation makes school and formal education a religion of the working class; the promises of salvation, while futile, serve as a fuel for the concepts of hard work and competition on which neoliberal and capitalist ideas are built (Reimer, 2015). This is a secular version of the Protestant Work Ethic. However, as the work of Marx suggests, this is not necessarily the reality of education. Instead, Marx and his followers argue that schooling and education are littered with forces such as the hidden curriculum, hierarchy and ideological state apparatus which benefit the higher and oppress the lower classes, reducing opportunities for freedom (Apple, 1979; Althusser, 2014). This results, not in meritocracy and social mobility as capitalism would have the general population believe, but rather in a societal reproduction which maintains the status quo and benefits the hegemonic ruling class (Banfield, 2011), Marx acknowledges that education is needed, primarily in order to enable the means of production, but for him it should be an act of maintaining life, rather than the primary focus (Marx and Engels, 1976). Yet in reality, the means of production and the labour are brought together in a way that means producers are forced to work for non-producers, who are in the numerical, although not social, power minority. This means that the basis of such societies, including the United Kingdom, is exploitation (Marx, 1978). Such exploitation is, however, hidden from view in capitalist societies; the idea of meritocracy creates an appearance of a level playing field where all have the opportunity to succeed if they work hard, and all have the ability to negotiate fair pay and a level of autonomy through

individualism. Yet this leaves such societies in a state of contradiction between individual appropriation of wealth and the concept of common wealth. This, it is argued, leaves society in a place where freedom, autonomy and democracy are simply cultural beliefs - incapable of becoming realities (Banfield, 2011).

In response to this situation, Freire investigated how to 'humanise' the population - that is, how to allow all to seek autonomy, freedom and justice as realities rather than simply ideologies. Approaching the problem through the lens of education, rather than the traditional lens of value judgements and axiological problems, Freire aimed to lead people to recognise the historical reality of dehumanisation, where oppressors contribute to injustice and exploitation of the oppressed, and as a result, hold a distorted view of the vocation of becoming more fully human (Freire, 2017). As Marx describes:

> When we leave this sphere of simple circulation or the exchange of commodities, which provides the 'free trader *vulgaris*' with his views, his concepts and the standard by which he judges the society of capital and wage-labour, a certain change takes place...He who was previously the money owner now strides out in front as a capitalist; the possessor of labour power follows as his worker. The one smirks self-importantly and is intent on business; the other is timid and holds back.
>
> (Marx, 1976, p. 280)

Through education, however, Freire argued that the exploited or oppressed can reach a collective awareness of their situation as they become embroiled in the big picture struggle and seek true liberation and autonomy rather than seeking power solely for themselves. Marx wrote similarly, saying "The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. " (Marx, 1990, p. 20-21). However, Freire believed that there was a burden that came along with this; that is, the oppressed must liberate both themselves and the oppressors, as the oppressors are unable to liberate themselves (Freire, 2017).

According to Freire, the oppressors cannot find it within themselves to create their own freedom otherwise they would have already done so whereas the oppressed, as well as those who stand in true solidarity with them, are those who understand the significance of an oppressive society and consequently the necessity of such liberation. Freedom, according to Freire, is not a gift, but rather something which must be constantly pursued and sought out (Freire, 2017). Yet he argued that freedom is also unavailable to those who have adapted to the structure of domination and have resigned themselves to its power, as long as they feel incapable of facing the risks required in the search for freedom. This is the duality of freedom; without freedom, humanity cannot exist authentically, but people equally fear their authentic existence (Freire, 2017).

Marx sees this availability of freedom slightly differently, arguing instead that "man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and

actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself has created (Marx, 1992, p. 329). But Marx also acknowledges that, in a capitalist society, a worker "must sell himself and his humanity" (Marx, 1992, p.287). A person is both free to create themselves, and tied to sell themselves and their humanity as they labour - they have self-autonomy but not autonomy over their life. Similarly, Illich argues that education is the result of beliefs which are given meaning by an insufficiency of education. Supporting the views of Marx, he argues that educational rituals such as formal education are merely "reflected, reinforced and actually created belief in the value of learning pursued under conditions of scarcity (Illich, 2019, p. ix). Freire also argues that this internalisation of the voice of the oppressor (where people have sold themselves to their labour) means that most people are comfortable with living as a divided person - one who serves two masters - and the idea of serving only their authentic self is unknown and thus induces fear (Freire, 2017). Education, at its core, must therefore take into account the history of humanity. Formal education, Freire argues, is not a closed world from which there is no exit; instead, it is a limiting situation that we as a collective can transform (Freire, 2017). Some, like Couture (2016), argue that the current industrialised culture (which began with the Industrial Revolution) is at odds with child development, and that formal schooling as a system, which forces a child to follow capitalist rules and schedules, is in fact developmentally inappropriate (Couture, 2016). A solution to this, then, could be the introduction of unschooling. Unschooling is in juxtaposition to the myth and rituals of formal education, arguing that if learning happens autonomously and freely in society, away from the rules of formal education, then the education myth and consequently the schooling ritual never transpires, making society deschooled (Zaldívar, 2015).

A deschooled society, rather than a society without schools, is one where no one is obligated to attend school. In a schooled society, people are obligated by law or by the threat of unemployment, poverty, or exclusion from society, to attend an educational institution (Illich, 2019). Yet, if skill teaching was to become an open market as suggested by Illich, then those who have a skill would share it with others for free and without a prerequisite of other skills or certification, theoretically increasing educational autonomy. Open skill teaching then leads to a situation where a person learns simply because they have a wish to learn. As a result, it is theorised that education itself becomes lifelong and valued. Therefore:

> All people, would have many more chances to learn things and many more ways of learning them than they have today. It would be a society in which there were many paths to learning and advancement, instead of one school path as we have now . . . a path far too narrow for everyone, and one too easily and too often blocked off from the poor.
>
> (Holt, 2017, p. 108)

This is very similar to modern-day unschooling. Indeed, Holt (2017) defined a deschooled society as "a society in which everyone shall have the widest and freest possible choice to learn whatever he wants to learn, whether in school or in some

altogether different way” - that is, a society where people have autonomy in learning (Routray, 2012).

Illich supported this line of argument by postulating that the second major illusion of the school system was the idea that most learning is the result of teaching (Illich, 2019). People, he argues, actually acquire the majority of their learning outside of school; in fact, the illusion that learning occurs in school is the result of people being confined to that building for a significant amount of their childhood. For example, most children learn their first language casually, picking up words as daily life happens around them. If they decide to learn a second language, fluency is typically achieved through full exposure, for instance, in a country where the language is spoken, rather than the rote learning of school language teaching (Illich, 2019). However, if you ask most people how they learnt a topic, they will give you an example of something they learnt in school. Therefore, the myth that learning mostly occurs in schools is perpetuated. Furthermore, formal schools do not teach a person based on their interests and passions; instead, a person is forced to learn ‘age-appropriate’ knowledge at a time which is predefined by the curriculum. It is consequently almost impossible within a school to progress through the curriculum without following each predefined step (Holt, 2017). As a result of this argument, Illich summarises school as “the advertising which makes you believe that you need the society as it is” (Illich, 2019, p. 163). This is a schooled society.

Gintis provides an alternative background to deschooling, based on product orientation and the need to supply workers compatible with the capitalist system for production (Gintis, 1972). According to Gintis, the problems in industrial society are the result of institutional organisation; however, he argues that in negating society and the ideological representations within it, Illich, Freire and Marx do not go far enough. Instead, Gintis believes that synthesis is required in order to offer an alternative schema, although an example of a suitable synthesis is not provided (Gintis, 1972). Two decades later, Illich himself considered his criticism of schooled society and concluded it to be naïve because it did not consider the weight that educational discourse holds on the social mindset of modern-day people. Illich argued that, for many people, education is perceived as a basic human need, and this need exists to the extent that a person's sociological imagination cannot conceive of a world that exists without schooling (Bruno-Jofré & Zaldívar, 2012). Therefore, both Illich and Gintis suggest that extra thought is needed to conclude how society may overcome such negations (Gintis, 1972). However, Holt posits that such ideas are based on misconceptions regarding formal education, deschooling and what a schooled society is.

A schooled society, Holt argues, is a society where learning outside of school has been intentionally made difficult. It is also a society where learning and certification occur almost exclusively within the school building, and where, if one does not attend school, it proves almost impossible to gain credit or certification for the skills which one has acquired. A schooled, formally educated society has a lack of educational autonomy

(Holt, 2017). Indeed, if one does manage to learn outside of professional activity within this society, then this learning is often actively discredited by the institutionalisation of learning (Zaldívar, 2015).

One benefit of deschooling or unschooling then is that it allows children to pursue topics of their interest, no matter their age, or the topic they wish to study, allowing the child to flourish as they seek out subjects which enhance their understanding and the meaning of their life, without the restrictions of a formal curriculum. It could indeed be argued that this model of living is similar to the life led before formal schooling existed, and possibly the one which the nonconformists of 1814 and onwards wished to preserve. However, its form has evolved over the years, and without a regulatory system, it has become increasingly difficult to define. This next section will therefore discuss popular definitions of unschooling before developing a definition that will be used throughout this thesis.

2.2. Definition of Unschooling

Brighouse's concept of a flourishing life shares a number of characteristics with unschooling and provides an initial framework for the definition. According to the theory of flourishing life, for a life to be thriving, it must contain objectively valuable goods as well as be lived from the inside. The theory of flourishing life shares its ideas with that of Aristotle's eudaimonia, the translation of which is happiness or flourishing. According to Aristotle, there are differing opinions on what is best for humans, which the subject

of ethics attempts to resolve. Whilst there are easily compiled lists of what is good, such as having friends and being healthy, etc., the controversy arises when we ask whether some of the items are more desirable than others. Aristotle himself is searching for the highest good; that which is desirable for itself, not desirable for the sake of some other good, and for which all other goods are desirable. He posits that the dual terms *eudaimonia* (happiness, or literally 'well with divinity') and *eu zên* (living well) describe such an end as no one tries to live well for anything past *eudaimonia*. All other goals, according to Aristotle, are on the path to eudaimonia (Kraut, 2018). However, Brighouse (2008) is not certain that this results from formal education; instead, he highlights schooling's increasing focus on the national economy and preparation of students to contribute to this in the future. As discussed in the previous chapter, neoliberalism has served to increase formal education's focus on the economy and the preparation of students as workers, with numerous problems as a result.

Nevertheless, Brighouse does not fully oppose the role of economics in schooling. Instead, whilst he shares some concern that economics is receiving increased attention, overall, he argues that economic stability and prosperity are both factors which, up to a certain level, increase a person's wellbeing and happiness (Frank, 1999; Brighouse, 2008). Brighouse argues that, while economic stability is important, it must hold value outside of increased quality of life in order to be a warranted driving factor of education. With formal education's focus on economic readiness and stability, Brighouse argues that it is not sufficient to provide a pupil with a flourishing life. Indeed, a study into subjective well-being suggests that once income surpasses a minimal threshold, it makes a difference to the satisfaction of the individuals involved (Frank, 1999). Rather, factors such as family relationships, personal freedom and work are

more indicative of happiness. Therefore, for schooling to lead to a flourishing life, Brighouse argues that it should aim for these factors (Brighouse, 2008). Meaning in life is also one of the factors that John Holt focused on in his work within the unschooling movement. He argued that one benefit of unschooling is that it allows all children to autonomously pursue topics of their interest and flourish within these topics. This then augments their understanding, experience and constructed meaning of life, whilst being free from the restrictions of a formal, arbitrary curriculum (Holt, 2017).

In a similar manner to Brighouse, Holt does not see a point in economic growth if it does not meet people's needs. Instead, Holt asks, "How might we redefine some of these needs to make it possible to meet them at less expense? More importantly, how can we make it more and more possible for people to make themselves many of the things they need?" (Holt, 2017, p. 102).

For both Brighouse and Holt, flourishing in lifeinvolves people making sense and taking meaning from their lives and, therefore, for unschooling to lead to a flourishing life, it must be structured to bring about these outcomes. Unschooling, then, as a form of education that is not solely interested in the economic growth and competitiveness of the children it serves, could be a system which better serves to lead children to a happy, flourishing life as it attempts to link the search for meaning with lifelong learning.

A potential counterargument to this point is raised by Zaldívar, who argues that "It does little good to extend compulsory education to large portions of the populace if no one knows how much education one needs to live well." (Zaldívar, 2015, p. 104). With

reference to unschooling, then, it is hard to say that it is better suited to a flourishing life than formal education when one does not know how much education is needed for a flourishing life. If there is a limit to how much economic prosperity one has before it no longer affects their happiness, then the same appears to be true of the level of education needed, albeit an arbitrary measurement in itself. It is possible, of course, that unschooling does not provide the level of education required for a flourishing life, or that it provides too much. This is an area that the scope of this work cannot cover; however, it is certainly an area that needs additional research when considering the purpose and consequently the definition of unschooling.

In comparison to Brighouse, unschooling for Laricchia is a simpler concept. She believes that unschooling is simply the philosophy that learning is everywhere, not just in a school building. As a result, she contends that children will learn when the topic interests them, rather than when the curriculum says it is age-appropriate to do so (Laricchia, 2014). At its most basic, then, unschooling for Laricchia is:

> Learning without a curriculum, without a teacher-centred environment...it's not school-at-home, a re-creation of the school environment with a low student-teacher ratio around the kitchen table. And it's not about leaving your kids to fend for themselves, far from it. It is about creating a different kind of learning environment for your children.
>
> (Laricchia, 2016, p. 9).

Laricchia argues that, once one begins unschooling, it becomes a learning lifestyle. As a lifestyle, unschooling then becomes a place where child-rearers and children across the various forms of family autonomously explore their interests and passions, rather than using the system as a method of educating children. Laricchia places a strong emphasis on the fact that unschooling is about everyone in the family learning together; about it being a lifelong activity rather than simply a method for education (Laricchia, 2016). This means that unschooling is viewed, not just as an alternative approach to education, as it has been by both Illich and Holt, but as an alternative lifestyle in which parenting is non-coercive.

Dodd similarly suggests that unschooling should be a lifestyle, which is based on non-coercion, naming this theory 'radical unschooling' (Dodd, 2019). According to this theory, unschooling is an extension of attachment parenting past the age of weaning, with rules and discipline, but without a curriculum. The term unschooling is most often used to refer to the education of those who are school age and above; however, Laricchia also supports Dodd's argument that unschooling is simply an extension of attachment parenting, a term which can be applied to the lifestyle of parents with children of any age (Laricchia, 2013). A further example of this link between unschooling and attachment parenting comes from English, who interviewed parents who followed an attachment parenting approach and asked them questions mostly pertaining to the education of their child. In this research, English found that following the Attachment Parenting philosophy and choosing to unschool were deeply enmeshed decisions. (English, 2015).

In contrast to scholars, 'unschoolers', or those who have been unschooled, tend to define the movement through either positive or negative definitions. For Laricchia, for example, the definition of unschooling discussed above comes from a practical background and is based on the concepts which she earlier drew from attachment parenting. In her own experience of unschooling her children, Laricchia identified a difference between learning (defined here as knowledge which is understood and remembered) and memorising. For her, understanding a piece of knowledge meant that that information was connected to a person's existing experiences in life and made sense within their own metanarrative, and it is this which is provided by unschooling rather than formal education (Ricci, *et al*., 2011). For Desmarais, as a previously unschooled child aged 17, unschooling was "learning without forced teaching, without a lesson plan and without a forced curriculum" (Ricci, *et al*., 2011, p. 150). However, this changed as she grew into an adult. As an adult, however, Desmarais defined unschooling as follows: "homeschooling is putting the power over their offspring's education into the parents hand…unschooling…is putting the power of their education and life into the hands of the learner" (Ricci, *et al*., 2011, p. 151).

Echoing this definition, Ricci (2012) reasons that unschooling is ultimately an autonomous, learner-centred, democratic approach to learning, which means that the learner has ultimate control; they are the ones who choose the parameters of how they learn something (Ricci, 2012). Yet rather than viewing unschooling as a philosophy, or method of education, Ricci views unschooling as a worldview, later referring to it as a

lifestyle which is all encompassing (Ricci, 2011). He explains that unschooling "is based on the idea that all learners should be empowered and have a substantive say in what, when, where, and how they learn" (Ricci, 2012, pp. 45-46), meaning that, within this lifestyle, students are ultimately empowered to make their own decision, not only about their learning, but about the running of their lives as a whole and the spaces in which they exist (Ricci, 2011). Davis (2006) takes it one step further, defining unschooling as the "philosophy of letting the child decide each day what activities to pursue - or avoid" (Davis, 2006, p. 8), therefore putting further onus on the role of the child. In both Ricci and Desmarais' definitions, the role of the adult is to advocate for the young people and their need to be free to be themselves and follow their own passions, which in turn allows the young person's own internal motivation to develop. Alternatively, Davis views adults as the facilitators for the learning which the child chooses to complete (Davis, 2006).

However, Ricci is keen to balance this autonomy against the responsibility that comes to both a person's own self and their community. This responsibility, whilst not being externally imposed, is, Ricci argues, a natural development as a person pursues life. This allows unschooling to respect individuals "without ignoring communities" (Ricci, *et al.*, 2011, p. 142). Later in her article on unschooling, Davis (2006) describes the concept of unschooling as an autonomous and child-led mechanism of home-schooling, a link that is also highlighted by Riley (2020) who defines unschooling as "a variation of homeschooling where, instead of following a set curriculum, children learn through everyday life experiences" (Riley, 2020, p. 21). Riley goes on to provide negative restrictions on this definition, for example, unschooling is not school at home, there are no assignments, there is no direct teaching, etc. However, her initial definition also

stands well on its own. In addition to including links to homeschooling, the philosophy behind Riley's definition becomes more apparent when the negative restrictions are considered in suggesting that children learn through everyday life experiences that are free from assignments, direct teaching and other characteristics of formal schooling, Riley (2020) subscribes to the concept of negative freedom raised by Petrovic and Rolstad (2017) and Desmarais above (Ricci *et al.*, 2011). The child who unschools is therefore free from coercion and interference in their learning, and, in the case of radical unschooling, in their lives (Petrovic & Rolstad, 2017). This choice of phrase also indicates that Riley is sympathetic to Dodd's (2019) and Larrichia's (2013) view that unschooling is a lifestyle, and whilst she does not reference attachment parenting, it can be seen that Riley believes that everyday life is heavily involved in learning. By including the key features of the above definitions, Riley's definition gains strengths; however, there is one key feature from the above definitions that is not concluded.

Ricci's focus on 'democratic, child-centred learning', where the child directs their own learning and has ultimate control, is central to the primary type of unschooling; the willed curriculum. Without control of their own learning, children are still essentially being homeschooled, where a curriculum is followed at home. Therefore, I make the argument that, in order to differentiate from home schooling, unschooling must be learner-centred, a feature which also exists in most of the definitions above. Whilst Riley's definition includes a negation of a set curriculum, there is no specification as to how this would work (Riley, 2020). Consequently, this paper is going to combine parts of Riley's and Ricci's definitions to make a working definition of unschooling, which covers the key features discussed above: unschooling here is defined as 'a form of

unschooling in which children direct their own learning, which occurs through their everyday lived experience, rather than by following a set curriculum.

2.3. Conclusion

Unschooling and formal education are two distinct approaches to education. While formal education tends towards compulsory and arbitrary education, which is focused on preparing children for their future work in support of the economy, unschooling is often highly individualistic and autonomous, with learners being empowered to make and follow their own decisions regarding passions and learning experiences.

Unschooling has its roots in the secularisation of education as early as the third century C.E. (Illich, 2015). However, for many years, it was undermined by the education myth, which teaches individuals that formal education and hard work are the only ways to ensure meritocratic success in society (Reimer, 1971). By the 1970s, though, this myth was under attack; Marx (1978) suggested that meritocracy was not the reality of education, but instead proposed that hidden forces within formal education were working together to maintain the status quo within a society focused on means of production and the economic market. Writing from Brazil, Freire also emphasised the lack of autonomy within formal education by describing the dehumanising effects of society, and the ways in which formal education supports this (Freire, 2017). The work of Marx and Freire expressed the societal fear of true freedom and autonomy, which Illich (1971) suggested was reinforced by formal education.

As a result of this argument against formal education, both Freire and Illich turned to exploring the concept of a deschooled society, in which no individual is obligated to attend schooling. Illich's proposal of an open market of skills was also adopted by Holt (1972), who saw merit in increasing educational autonomy, believing that it would result in a society where education was valued and where it became a lifelong craft. Gintis, in 1972, proposed an alternative reason for deschooling society, seeing the problems within modern, industrial society as resulting from the organisation of institutions. However, Gintis felt that the work of his colleagues did not go far enough in remedying the situation and suggested that an alternative schema of education was required (Gintis, 1972).

The emergence of the unschooling movement, as opposed to concepts of a deschooled society, led to problems with defining the term 'unschooling'. Due to its changing form and lack of a regulatory system, there exist many different definitions across many different scholars and sectors. Brighouse (2008) saw the concept of a flourishing life as essential for happiness; however; he did not see this concept within formal education or a society with a growing focus on economics. Instead, he focused on the idea of a meaningful, flourishing life, encapsulating factors such as personal freedom and family relationships. This idea bears resemblance to Holt's concept of unschooling, which emphasised the need for children to pursue their own interests in order to increase their understanding and experience of life.

Yet Zaldívar (2015) raised an important counterargument to this point, expressing the idea that it is difficult to measure how much education is required for a meaningful,

flourishing life. It is possible, she explained, that either formal education or unschooling could provide the correct level of education; however, the amount required was beyond the scope of this paper (Zaldívar, 2015).

Laricchia (2014) suggested a simpler definition of unschooling, in which she argued that it is the philosophy that learning can occur everywhere, including outside of school. This, she states, means that children will learn when they are interested and, as such, will experience greater autonomy in education than if they pursued formal education. Viewing unschooling as a learning lifestyle, Laricchia emphasised the familial involvement in this style of learning, thus expanding the concept of deschooling that had been raised by Illich and Holt in the 1970s (Laricchia, 2014). The idea of unschooling as a lifestyle has been further explored by Dodd (2019), who sees unschooling as a non-curricular education; an extension of attachment parenting.

In contrast to this, however, those who have experienced unschooling exhibit a tendency to define unschooling according to either a positive or a negative definition. Desmarais, as quoted in Ricci (2011), found that her definition of unschooling changed as she matured. As a 17-year-old unschooler, she focused on the lack of forced learning within the unschooling system; however, as an adult, Desmarais concluded that unschooling was about placing educational power and autonomy into the hands of the learner. Ricci (2012) echoed this definition by explaining unschooling as a democratic and learner-centred approach to learning, which gives the learner full autonomy over their education, seeing the concept as a worldview rather than a method of education. However, Davis (2006) expands this concept by defining

unschooling as a philosophy in which the child has autonomy over all aspects of their day.

The link to homeschooling within the definition is also explored by both Davis and Riley, who use the concept as a contrast to unschooling within their definitions (Davis, 2006; Riley, 2011). Riley particularly uses the contrast to produce a negative definition of unschooling in which she explains that unschooling is a variation of unschooling which does not contain assignments or direct teaching, but in which learning occurs through everyday life (Riley, 2011).

In synthesising these definitions, the decision was made that the definition of unschooling for this paper should focus on a child's autonomy in their everyday life, particularly in reference to learning and with the avoidance of a set curriculum. However, in exploring autonomy purely in the form of its practical application to education, it is possible that some of the depth and detail of the term has been lost. As such, the next three chapters will consider three philosophical conceptions of autonomy and relate them back to education prior to creating a model of autonomous education at the end of the thesis.3. Positive Liberty (autonomy)

Before discussing the interplay between autonomy and education, it is important to discuss the various forms that autonomy takes within canonical figures in philosophy. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 will therefore discuss three seminal views of autonomy: the Kantian view of freedom as positive liberty, the Nietzschean and Foucaultian view of freedom as determinism and mastery and the Freierian view of freedom as liberation and humanisation, working in largely chronological order (Kant, 1788; Nietzsche, 1887, Foucault, 1977; Freire, 2017).

This chapter focuses on the work of Hume and Kant and their contributions to the philosophical discussion of autonomy. Hume's work, as a precedent to Kant, is vital in understanding some of the more compatibilist aspects of Kant's argument and allows a general introduction to the discussion of autonomy within the field of philosophy. In linking the concepts of free will and determinism, Hume also serves to introduce one of the key conflicts in the philosophical field, which is later developed by Kant as he introduces the four forms of freedom (McKenna and Coates, 2024; Kant, 2004). The four types of freedom then serve as a basis for understanding later philosophical developments in the field of autonomy, and for developing the model of autonomous education towards the end of the thesis.

3.1. Hume

Whilst Hume does not discuss autonomy explicitly, his work is seminal in developing the background understanding of the concepts of free will, freedom and necessity which are essential to the development of positive liberty. Central to the work of Hume is the argument that all human actions have causation and that humanity has freedom of action, albeit at a superficial level – an argument of compatibilism which aims to resolve the incompatibility found between the concepts of free will and the concept of determinism (McKenna and Coates, 2024). Believed to be influenced by the work of Thomas Hobbes, Hume's argument of compatibilism states that humanity mistakenly confuses the idea of causation with the idea of force and thus assumes that freedom must require the absence of such causation, as well as the absence of necessity. However, Hume postulates that causation and necessity are, in reality, required for both freedom and responsibility, and consequently, an individual can only be held responsible for an action if it was their own motives or desires that caused the action (Russell, 1995).

Beginning in the *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Hume initially discusses the problem of free will, liberty and necessity. Free will is introduced to the reader as part of the passions and sentiments that characterise human nature, but as an impression that an individual becomes aware of only as they express that will (Greco, 2023). Will, therefore, is based on inferences which work from an individual's motive to their action; seeing what has happened and consequently inferring what is likely to happen in the future before deciding to act appropriately (Wilson and Denis, 2018). However, will is

still no more than an impression, and as such, Hume claims that it cannot be further defined, and thus Hume proceeds to discuss the problem of necessity and its relation to liberty and free will (Greco, 2023).

In discussing necessity, Hume discusses two parts: the experience of a constant association between multiple perceptions, and the inference that occurs from one perception to another (Lustila, 2012). Based on this, Hume makes the argument that all matter, and the interactions between matter are caused by a necessary force which leaves no choice but for the consequential result to have occurred (Steinberg, 1993). Furthering this argument, Hume posits a parallel between necessity existing amongst the external bodies of matter and its existence within the human mind and thus, human action (Greco, 2023). This existence within the human mind is described as a necessary connection between an individual's beliefs and their actions, and an inference that this applies to all human beings rather than just to ourselves (Lustila, 2012). Human beings, then, will and regulate their behaviour based on the actions of others, as a result of the predictability of the universality of causal necessity. Such an expression of necessity is not meant to be viewed as a judgment of things; rather, it should be taken in light of Hume's determinism, which sees mental mechanisms as the manner in which individuals order experience according to such necessity. Therefore, rather than viewing necessity as a judgement of things, or the relationship between them, it should be compared to that of a cause (Greco, 2023). Cause, in this reading, is defined either as the reference to or constant conjunction between objects in reality, or as the inference that the mind creates between an object and another, and, as necessity and

cause are comparable, necessity can be defined in the same way (Greco, 2023). As a result of these definitions, liberty and necessity are seen to be compatible with each other because liberty is the ability to do as one chooses (to have free will) within reality (Lustila, 2012). As such, Hume concludes that natural and moral evidence are the same in nature - they both structure human experience from perception (Greco, 2023). However, Russell claims that this definition of causal necessity works to undermine that of liberty, discussed earlier. He therefore disagrees with the conclusion that Hume is using the argument of compatibility (Russell, 1995).

Russell instead argues that the compatibilist approach to free will is a rationalist understanding due to its focus on the logic of concepts and its argument that the problem of moral responsibility can be reduced to the problem of free will, that is, the compatibilist argument that being morally responsible is akin to being free (Russell, 1995). Yet Russell makes the argument that Hume is not approaching compatibilism from a rationalist; perspective, as he does not rely on logic or a reduction of the problem of moral responsibility; instead, Russell argues that Hume's discussion of liberty, necessity and free will comes from a naturalist perspective (Russell, 1995). Greco disagrees with this statement, arguing that whilst the reconciliation between human freedom and determinism may seem a contradiction, this is due to a misunderstanding of determinism, and a misunderstanding of Hume's definition of necessity. Greco instead argues that Hume's concept of necessity allows individuals to account for people's actions due to the link back to their characters; therefore, he argues that if necessity fails, understanding of human beings as free is no longer

possible and causes and human actions become chance rather than necessity (Greco, 2023). Contrasting this, Russell argues that Hume's understanding of causation is regularity rather than metaphysical, that is, based on perceptions rather than causal structure. This, Russell argues, means that Hume is providing an account of how the process of association functions rather than the direct causal path between two events and thus is naturalist rather than compatibilist (Russell, 1995).

However, Ayer argues that whilst the terms necessity, cause, and even determinism, can also be taken as equivalent to 'force' – that action A forces action B to occur, this is in fact an incorrect understanding, as there is a difference between causal and logical necessity. Logical necessity refers to inferences made by the brain – a believed connection between two events; however, causal necessity refers to a situation where the "effect is contained in the cause" (Ayer, 1954, p. 117). Hume here is referring to logical necessity, and consequently, with a correct understanding of the included terms, Hume's argument for compatibilism could be seen as correct.

Overall, Hume's understanding of autonomy is found in the belief that all of humanity has freedom of action alongside responsibility for action. This belief, as explored below, will later be developed by Kant and provides a strong starting point for the philosophical exploration of autonomy that will allow this thesis to develop a model for autonomous education.

3.2. Kant

Hume is a strong influence on the work of Kant, particularly in reference to morality. Indeed, Kant shares Hume's views that it is causal necessity which creates actions within the natural world. However, Kant does not believe that there are singular causative chains, especially related to problems of morality: if causal law is universal and deterministic as Hume suggests, then for Kant there is no autonomy because an action made without choice cannot hold moral worth. Instead, Kant identifies a phenomenal world where actions occur according to the natural causal law and which are therefore determined, and a noumenal world where humans have choice and are therefore free. He then brings in the argument of autonomy.

In this argument of transcendental freedom, Kant attempts to reconcile the deterministic view of nature with a libertarian view of freedom and moral responsibility (Pereboom, 2006). According to Kant, human beings see the morality of an action as being based on the motivation of the individual who is completing the action, which is a demonstration of autonomy (a positive sense of freedom) (Xin, 2016; Wilson and Denis, 2018). This means that the will is also good and that one has a duty to follow this. According to the idea of transcendental freedom, humans possess self-determination – an independent effect on causation which is free from the coercion of the senses and natural impulses. This is a negative sense of freedom as it views individuals as being unrestricted in choice and action, similarly to the definitions of unschooling in Chapter Two (Wilson and Denis, 2018). Due to the existence of self-determination, it can therefore be argued that one can hold a person responsible for their actions, as though they are free. This is despite the fact that such actions are the result of causal law, as

for Kant, with appearances (objects of possible experiences) requiring both causality of natural law (as discussed by Hume) and causality of freedom. From this, Kant deduces that there is an *a priori* moral law, which is in accordance with the morality of each individual (Xin, 2016). The argument of free will is then further developed in the *Critique of Practical Reason* by the introduction of autonomy.

Kant begins by arguing that every event in nature, including all actions, is causally determined by conditions that are temporally preceding, yet he maintains that some of humanity's actions are still free. Here, Hume's compatibilist solution is rejected due to the argument that the past is no longer under an individual's free will, which would render all events as determined by things which are not within an individual's control. Rather, Kant argues that only autonomy is capable of creating moral obligations (Pereboom, 2006). This is an example of freedom with a noumenal cause: the categorical imperative.

By defining will as the causality of rational beings, he argues that the will's ability to cause an event in the world, which other causes cannot determine, is a demonstration of autonomy (Wilson and Denis, 2018). This is an example of the positive aspect of practical freedom. However, this concept presupposes that there is a power which acts independently of nature in order to determine the actions of an individual, and thus the earlier concept of a law of morality and transcendental freedom becomes essential (Pereboom, 2006). In this argument, will necessarily has a law which governs cause and effect, and, because this cannot be heteronomous, it must be autonomous (Srivastava, 2024). Consequently, Kant argues that there is autonomy in morality.

However, Ayer highlights that if human behaviour is the result of causal law, then no action can ever be truly free as there is no way such an action could be avoided (Ayer, 1954). When one assumes that others work under the concept of freedom, then one must additionally apply the notion of freedom to oneself, and according to Kantian philosophy, because the law of morality is the law of free will, we would therefore all be bound to moral law and autonomous (Wilson and Denis, 2018; Kant, 2012). Kant argues that the will is free if it is necessitated by pure reason, a variation of Hume's argument that the liberty of action is free when necessitated by causal law. However, just because the argument of determinism does not fit all situations, it does not also mean that those who believe in free will are correct, as the action may still be accredited to chance rather than freedom (Ayer, 1954). The question here becomes, how did a person arrive at the apparent choice? It may be that it was an accident that they chose one action over another, and if this is the case, then the choice is really a matter of chance. Following this argument, though, if the apparent choice and resultant action were a matter of chance rather than free will, then the person cannot be held morally responsible for their decision. This then suggests that Kant's argument of autonomy is not an example of freedom (Ayer, 1954).

Similarly, modern philosophical thought contends that the concepts of freedom and free will are not identical. Alarcón (2010) suggests that the Kantian argument of freedom uses a restricted meaning of the term 'necessity'. Both Hume and Kant use the term necessity to refer to a deterministic link between cause and effect, yet this demonstrates a limited understanding of the term. Alarcón instead argues that

necessity is not bound by a deterministic or natural understanding of causality, but rather refers to that which cannot be changed at a metaphysical level; something thatlacks an alternative (Alarcón, 2010).

Part of Kant's argument is the power of free choice, which is not the same as transcendental freedom; instead, the power of free choice is a power to do, or not do, something as one wishes (Pereboom, 2016). However, increasing choice by itself does not necessarily allow more freedom. For example, if the increase in choice now includes options that are unpleasant to the person who is making the choice, that does not increase freedom, as those choices will never be chosen. Instead, freedom is reflected in the increase of choices which we would freely want (Alarcón, 2010). Yet even this does not fully reflect freedom, for if there is not an option to choose all the desired options, then the person making the choice is still restricted – diversity does not necessarily increase freedom either. In addition, if we already have that which we want the most, then being given the choice to lose it does not equate to freedom; instead, it reduces freedom. Alarcón instead argues that the more you want something, to the extent that it becomes something you want unconditionally, the voluntary choice to take something that you truly want begins to resemble autonomy. If you commit to something that you want, not just in the now, but in the future too, then you choose it less because it is the determination of your will – there is no real choice because you cannot live without it. This then becomes a metaphysical necessity, and metaphysical necessity is freedom. Free will, on the other hand, is potential freedom, as it requires contingency (Alarcón, 2010). As choice reduces freedom, the two cannot be

synonymous if one takes the full definition of metaphysical necessity discussed above. Yet Kant continues to argue that freedom does not exist in the contingency of an action, but instead in the spontaneity of that action.

Beginning in the mid-1750s, Kant sought to address the dichotomous problem of balancing freedom and obligation whilst also reconciling the universal laws of nature with the traditional religious ideas of moral culpability and divine power (Demenchonok, 2019). In doing this, Kant aimed to maintain as much of the idea of traditional free will as possible, while integrating the ideas of theoretical and moral judgement, which traditionally stand in tension with freedom (Kosch, 2016). Demenchonok says:

> He offers a resolution of the tension between understanding freedom as the determined rational inclination of the will and freedom as a capacity for morally culpable action based on a concept of the world that combines interaction and rational determination of the will with an ongoing worldly struggle, which has meritorious character.
>
> (Demenchonok, 2019, p193).

Kant referred to freedom in a number of ways, including transcendental and practical (as discussed above), as well as comparative and the freedom of rational self-determination. However his view of freedom can be split into four main claims: firstly

that an individual's actions are causally dependent on themselves rather than on preceding events and therefore could have been different from what they are, secondly that the natural world which we inhabit is based on a system whereby all events are causally dependent on the preceding events and could not be different from what they are, thirdly that the two previous claims would be incompatible if the natural world were the world as it is and fourthly, that the first two claims are actually compatible because causality (claim 1) and mechanical causality (claim 2) belong to different conceptual realms. This is the idea of transcendental idealism (Kosch, 2006).

3.2.1. Transcendental Freedom

The first claim about freedom, that an individual's actions are causally dependent on themselves rather than on preceding events, is an example of transcendental freedom, otherwise known as 'absolute spontaneity'. Kant defines transcendental freedom as

> A causality through which something takes place, the cause of which is not itself determined, in accordance with necessary laws, by another cause antecedent to it, that is to say, and absolute spontaneity of the cause, whereby a series of appearances which proceeds in accordance with laws of nature, begins of itself.
>
> (Kant, 2003:446)

In other words, it is an event which has occurred spontaneously. Hume, with whom Kant was in frequent contact, had previously argued for a compatibilist freedom in

which free action is compatible with causality on the basis that the origin of the causality has been exhausted by the preceding natural causal conditions. However, Kant rejected this view on the basis that if this were the case, then, as the past is no longer in a person's control, every action must be necessary based on grounds which are out of the person's control (Bobzien, 1988). This, Kant argues, is not freedom of action and therefore cannot lead to moral responsibility (Kant, 2004, p. 94). In order to be morally responsible, Kant argues that an action must therefore be causally sourced within an individual; the individual must have the ability to do, or to refrain from doing. However, Kosch argues that this leads to problems of compatibility with the second claim of freedom that was mentioned above, namely that the natural world is based on a system of preceding events where all actions and events are causally dependent on those events that preceded them. This therefore means that they cannot be different to how they are. Kant instead argues that transcendental freedom cannot be applied to the natural world, as this would otherwise mean that the causal laws would be irrelevant. If this were the case, the natural law would be lawless, which is not the case (Kosch, 2006).

3.2.2. Practical Freedom

For the second form of freedom, practical freedom, Kant claims that it:

> Presupposes that ...[an action's] cause in appearance was thus not so determining that there is not a causality in our power of choice such that, independently of those natural causes and even opposed to their power and influence, it might produce something determined in the temporal order in accord with empirical laws, and hence begin a series of occurrences entirely from itself.
>
> (Kant, 2004, p.534)

Negative practical freedom, therefore, is the will's power to act, free of the causal determination of the senses, and positive practical freedom is the will's power to act based on rational principles - a practically free will is one which acts according to motives represented by reason. This definition of practical freedom requires that an individual is able to act independently of natural causes, yet this does not amount to indeterministic causality or blind chance; rather, it relies on the concept that an individual has "the power of beginning a state of itself" (Kant, 2004, p. 95) - an intelligible or noumenal cause. In order to reconcile empirical determinism with transcendental freedom, Kant suggests that human subjects have an empirical appearance or character; that is, their law of causality is empirical; it is determined by the preceding natural conditions. But that this is compatible with our actions in the empirical world being produced by an individual who has an intelligible character, for we do not know that we are noumenal individuals who are transcendentally free (Bobzien, 1988). If one takes the reading of Robert Adams, who concludes that Kant allows that one is able to think noumenally, then this absolves the violation of Kant's

previous argument for the epistemic structure of the knowledge of causation (Adams, 1997). The free action is not simply an uncaused event, but rather it is an action caused by the individual of itself: it is an example of transcendental freedom.

It is this practical freedom, then, which distinguishes adults as morally responsible individuals from young children or animals who are not viewed as morally responsible. Yet practical freedom is based in transcendental freedom to the extent that a denial of transcendental freedom would involve the elimination of practical freedom - based on this, it appears that Kant is arguing that transcendental freedom is that which gives one practical freedom (Kosch, 2006). However, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant had previously argued for the view that practical freedom was compatible with the natural determinism to which he argued the world subscribes (Kant, 2003). It is possible that both the practical and transcendental conceptions of freedom require reason to be caused by the determination of will, with transcendental freedom also acknowledging reason as an uncaused cause; however, it is likely that, as the Canon was written earlier, the work in the Critique of Practical Reason represents Kant's later, more developed thought. Consequently, the discrepancy between the two pieces of work can be laid aside (Kosch, 2006).

However, this approach also leads to issues of compatibility between freedom and the objectivity of theoretical claims. Kant's case for objectivity relies on his view of causality. Here, he argues that it is impossible to use a priori reasoning to determine how something could be a cause or be a force; instead, he argues, one can only comprehend cause and force from experience (De Pierris and Friedman, 2024). Kant

argues that a *priori* reasoning is only capable of comparison when that comparison takes the form of identity or contradiction. The cause of an event fits in neither of these categories. Instead, the concept of a cause posits the existence of something other than that which is being reasoned. There is no contradiction here, for one thing does not cancel out the other, and the causal identity cannot be reasoned; merely identified by experience. Consequently, cause, force, and effect cannot be reasoned using a priori reasoning. Yet, the transcendental idealist position, which Kant tries to inhabit, acknowledges the possibility of spontaneous causality and, indeed, this part of Kant's account of will necessitates its existence (Kosch, 2006). If humanity existed only in the noumenal world, then this would not be a problem, as we would follow the categorical imperative; however, our phenomenal existence means that this does not always follow through (Korsgaard, 1996). This, therefore, creates a number of problems; firstly, there is no clear reason why a noumenal humanity would follow the categorical imperative when causality does not require it, and secondly, if we do obey the moral law anyway, then moral responsibility is illogical.

In order to avoid this conflict, Kant does not claim that one can know that they, as a noumenal individual, is transcendentally free, and Kant makes no attempt to argue that transcendental freedom is possible in our reality, only that it is logically possible. Consequently, according to Kant, it is possible to conclude that a concept is possible in reality when it is metaphysically possible for the concept to exist. However, an alternate reading lends itself to the argument that whilst the mind, the noumenal subject of an individual, is transcendentally free, it is not necessarily identical to the empirical,

phenomenal subject, who is causally determined (Pereboom, 2006). One can only know the real possibility of a concept through experience, particularly through sensible intuition, which means that an individual can only determine whether the conditions of something existing in real possibility are satisfied. However, this limits the individual to only being able to discern the real possibilities for objects of experience rather than for objects of noumena; therefore, it cannot be shown if transcendental freedom meets the conditions of a real possibility or if human beings are transcendentally free (Pereboom, 2006; Kosch, 2016).

Yet the fact that one can think noumenally allows one to have beliefs about causal powers. It is possible to have a subjectively sufficient but objectively insufficient conviction, based on empirical evidence. In this case, one's life may be guided practically by the belief and its content, and one would derive some practical benefit from such a derivation, even if the theoretical basis for the belief is inadequate - thus creating a dualistic view of the world. Alternatively, the theory of dialtheism maintains that two contradictory beliefs can be held in tandem, without the need for dualism or resolution. There is not scope within this thesis to fully explore this topic, but it is worth noting that contradictions, such as those that lead to a dualistic view, do not necessarily have to be resolved (Bonardi, 2021).

There is a danger here that this dualistic view renders the mind free and the psychological states (which are apprehended by inner sense) constrained to empirical dualism; however, despite being non-identical, the two exist within the same space.

Korsgaard (1996) argues that actions can in fact be both free and determined, arguing that intelligible causality is a practical conception, with our belief in it being a practical

faith. According to this view, the idea of intelligible causality was not meant to be used theoretically and cannot therefore be used to explain events. Rather, the positive conception of freedom creates the possibility of practical freedom, not theoretically but in reality; it is possible to act on practical freedom and see the positive freedom as a guide to a higher vocation. This then guides an individual to moral conduct, which allows the individual to adopt moral ends and avoid temptation. Therefore, the noumenal motivates the physical, and if we move physically towards the ideas of the noumenal, then the individual can be seen as free (Korsgaard, 1996).

According to Korsgaard, Kant proposes freedom as the solution to a problem; it is the link between rationality and morality and the key to why noumenal beings would follow the moral law. However, the connection between freedom and rationality is still troublesome (Korsgaard, 1996). Within Kant's work, there appear to be two arguments: one in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and one in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* Kant completes a deduction of the moral law where he links the concepts of freedom and reason through the capacity for spontaneous activity. He argues that spontaneous activity is shown through the creation of ideas, and shows that we are part of an intelligible world, which means we are free. However, in *Critique of Practical Reason,* Kant instead offers a credential for morality in which he acknowledges that "the objective reality of the moral law can be proved through no deduction" (Kant, 2004, pp. 47-48). Instead, Kant puts forward the idea that this credential is provided by the way freedom is deduced from morality. A solution to these contrasting ideas is not offered; however, it is clear from

both arguments that he views freedom as part of the resolution to this issue. Indeed, he explains that “if freedom of the will is presupposed, morality together with its principle follows from it by the mere analysis of its concepts” (Kant, 2004, p. 447). However, Sidgwick (1981) argues that this is based on a misunderstanding of freedom; that Kant is using one singular term where there should be two. For Sidgwick, freedom exists in two forms: moral freedom, where one chooses between good and evil, and rational freedom, where we act morally rather than giving in to passions or desires (Sidgwick, 1981). As Kant only uses the generic term of ‘freedom’, it therefore gives the impression that he is talking about a singular form of freedom, rather than the dual form of freedom, which would resolve the issue.

Yet both Rawls and Korsgaard believe this to be a misunderstanding of Kant’s intentions. Rawls highlights the distinction between a concept and a conception. Using this basis, Korsgaard therefore argues that the Kantian concept of free will represents negative freedom, and that the conception of freedom is more similar to this than to positive freedom (Rawls, 1971; Nietzsche, 2013; Korsgaard, 1996). This allows for a single concept of freedom, with moral law as the positive conception. Nonetheless, this still leaves the dilemma of why a noumenal humanity would choose to follow moral law when they have the choice not to. Making a choice, Kant states, is when you act under the idea of freedom; in making that choice, you are choosing to behave as if you are free. However, one could still be fully determined whilst believing they are free, for determinism, Kant argues, means the prevention of a decision rather than the doing of the action.

Having concluded that humanity has free will, it is then important to clarify what this is. Kantian free will is self-determining, a rational causality that is not affected by external factors, including the desires of the person. However, causality means it must also act on a law, as it is a practical reason which cannot act and choose for no reason. Kant named the principle of free will the categorical imperative. Whilst, at a moment in time, it appears that free will has not determined the reason behind an action, we claim spontaneity of action; however, Kant argues against the existence of free will within time, and so in his argument, spontaneity of action is no more than an illusion. Instead, he claims that respect for moral law is an incentive which helps to determine the options available to oneself at moments of apparent decision. Humans are faced with multiple incentives at any one time, meaning that the illusion of free will is not in making a free choice, but rather in being able to set an order of precedence for those incentives with which we are faced (Korsgaard, 1996). At this point, the only real choice is between the maxim of self-love and the maxim of morality (Srivastava, 2024).

Korsgaard argues that if one chooses the maxim of morality, then the only constraint is the universal idea of law, which contains no explicit content, therefore allowing free will to retain spontaneity. This means that the categorical imperative is the same as the law of spontaneity as discussed above (Pereboom, 2006). This is an easy choice to make, as choosing it requires no action to change one's beliefs. However, if one chooses the maxim of self-love, then one is forced to follow one's inclinations, which limit choice and remove spontaneity. As this requires an action, which would have no reason as no law has been chosen, then the maxim of self-love is unintelligible. This is called the argument from spontaneity (Korsgaard, 1996). Srivastava argues that absolute autonomy is only possible when the will is in its purest form; when it is devoid of

determining causes and instead is able to spontaneously determine its own actions. As such, an autonomous individual must adopt only the maxims that allow them to causally regulate their will (Srivastava, 2024).

Yet humans are not just noumenal beings whose rational will is unable to be tempted, we are also phenomenal beings whose inclinations can tempt us – an individual can be tempted by their phenomenal condition as inclinations in the phenomenal world are ruled by causal laws (Korsgaard, 1996). Following these would not be an action (as they would for our noumenal wills), but rather the passive acceptance of nature as we experience only the phenomenal world (Srivastava, 2024). This can lead to questions as to why one would choose to follow the noumenal will rather than the phenomenal condition.

However, although our phenomenal selves cannot know of the noumenal world in the way we know the phenomenal world *a posteriori*, we can conceive of ourselves as part of that noumenal world and thus our noumenal will, and its actions, can make a difference to the phenomenal world (Korsgaard, 1996). Equally, freedom cannot be known as it is intelligible and thus part of the noumenal world (Srivastava, 2024). Thus, by choosing to follow the maxim of self-love and passively accepting nature and the causal laws, one is in effect saying that an individual's freedom makes no difference, as all actions are accounted for by nature and causal law (Korsgaard, 1996). Yet the phenomenal laws of causality describe how an individual ought to act as an intelligible, if causal individual (Srivastava, 2024). Therefore, if one chooses the maxim of morality, then one can contribute through active will to the phenomenal world and make a difference (Korsgaard, 1996).

According to Kant, this intelligible existence in the noumenal world motivates our morality and makes it possible. In *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant argues that one who has chosen the maxim of morality cannot help but think of the differences they could make through practical reason (Kant, 2018). These differences are always, according to Kant, in line with the moral idea of the Highest Good, as without the Highest Good, moral law is "fantastic, directed to empty imaginary ends, and consequently inherently false" (Kant, 2004, p. 114). However, these actions may not always lead to their intentions, due to the existence of other noumenal beings and forces, and this can threaten the appeal of freedom, making it appear fraudulent in being. Consequently, Kant posits that God is the author of the laws of nature, ensuring that noumenal forces cooperate with good intentions and leaving moral interest in place. This theory raises issues for those who do not share Kant's belief in God; however, Bernstein (2009) argues that a secularist can still draw support from the work of Kant, but with a scepticism of religious belief. The scope of this thesis does not allow an in-depth evaluation of Kant's theories regarding God; however, it is acknowledged that this solution may be approached with a level of scepticism.

Kant believed that all human action has a purpose in that a human being will always act towards an end that is over and above the law. This is due to humanity's finite and sensible nature. In *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason,* he argues that humanity:

> Could have sufficient incentive if (as they should) they adhered solely to the dictation of pure reason in the law [...] yet it is one of the inescapable limitations of man and of his faculty of practical reason...to have regard, in every action, to the consequence thereof.
>
> (Kant, 2018, p.6-7).

In other words, one is not motivated by the objective necessity in law but rather for the sake of the end over and above this - one is motivated by duty. This, Kant believes, is what makes man an object of experience. As a result, freedom has to take on the form of a virtue, in this case, the seeking of moral ends. Where these moral ends are duties, there are also maxims that it is a duty to have which promote these ends (Bobzien, 2013). Therefore, by believing that there are moral obligations (as seen above), one must also believe that there are obligated ends.

The Supreme Principle of the Doctrine of Virtue then argues that practical reason cannot be indifferent to ends, for it is based on the maxim of actions. In addition, pure reason cannot command any ends unless they are duties. (Kant, 2017). These obligatory ends include things such as individual perfection, the happiness of others and the rational autonomy of others, as well as the Highest Good, which are all encompassed by the moral law (Bobzien, 2013). However, these ends create broad duties which may not be completed, as having an end does not mean that it affects all actions that a person does; instead, it means that an individual sees the world in a certain way. In addition, when one adopts an end, one performs an internal action which goes against other inclinations and incentives that one already has. As such, the

imposition of a change on the sensible nature (as is the case when one is prompted to change ends by reason) is a volitional act which occurs gradually and does not create an all-encompassing motivation. In other words, one cannot acquire a virtue just by wishing it so; instead, time must pass, whereby one's future self also chooses to adopt the virtue and act in this way. It is in this progress towards an end that Kant places virtue, as the sensible nature is recalcitrant (Korsgaard, 1996).

Korsgaard further argues that Kant views free actions and choices as unconditioned by time; if they were conditioned by time, then they would be restricted by the causal laws and thus not free. However, it must also be acknowledged that time is a condition of thinking and so, for unconditioned choice to exist, Korsgaard argues that they must be represented as choices which exist either prior to or post events (Korsgaard, 1996). Additionally, human beings are seen to choose their own nature and character. Yet, Korsgaard argues that in order for an individual to view themselves as responsible, they must attribute the adoption of fundamental maxims to a time prior to their birth; to designate them as innate (Watkins, 2004; Korsgaard, 1996). Nonetheless, fundamental maxims cannot be innate, for if this were the case, then they would be unchangeable, and one would forever live under the maxim of self-love, which would be determined rather than free. In order to be free, one must have the choice as to which maxim they work under and thus the duties which they are inclined to complete (Bobzien, 2013). The phenomenal appearance of freedom, therefore, becomes a virtue which one struggles to adopt whilst aiming to defeat the counter-acting inclinations of the phenomenal condition which make an individual human (Korsgaard, 1996).

As such, virtue becomes gradual habituation, and the choice to pursue this with gladness becomes the mark of success as one takes pleasure in the ability to pursue one's chosen end; the highest good (Korsgaard, 1996; Pereboom, 2006). These duties of virtue may therefore come from the internal, yet they are also duties which increase freedom of action in the external world (Guyer, 2016). As a result of this, adherence to a maxim is a harmonious action which unites the practical and pure reason as well as the will. Therefore, when the sensuous nature of the phenomenal condition is controlled through the progress towards an end, the phenomenal condition becomes as free as the noumenal mind, and there is no difference between free and determined action (Korsgaard, 1996).

On the other hand, in *Critique of Practical Reason,* Kant is seen to claim that the noumenal subject has produced all things that have determined free actions, including in the past (Kant, 2012). Pereboom argues that a credible explanation is to consider the existence of God. Divine providence means that God knows what every creature would choose in every circumstance in all of time, and therefore God can use this knowledge to direct the course of history, creating a plan so that the free choices of all beings fit together. This allows further reconciliation between noumenal transcendental freedom and phenomenal determinism whilst maintaining some form of one-world theory (Pereboom, 2006). Yet the existence of God as described above again raises the issues of over determinism from which we are trying to escape.

3.2.3. Rational Self-Determination

Transcendental freedom again shows strong resemblance to the previously discussed Kantian view of autonomy or positive freedom, or to one who is rationally self-determined. However, unlike being transcendentally free, a being which is free through rational self-determination may still be causally determined and thus not always morally responsible (Kosch, 2006). Kant reasons that there are two ways to be rationally self-determined; either one is a maker of judgments, or a willer of actions – they are theoretical or practical reasoners. In both *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant argues that anything which is rationally self-determining in thoughts is also rationally self-determining in actions; however, the argument is later dropped from his work (Kant, 2004; Kant, 2012). This argument of the two methods for rationally self-determining relies on the idea that theoretical rational self-determination contains transcendental freedom, yet this is not a necessity, as Kant himself argues at times. As such, Kosch proposes that there are two properties, rather than two methods of rational self-determination. The first of these occurs when the rational individual is behaving rationally and, in this case, freedom is rational behaviour. The second property occurs when rational individuals are behaving rationally and when they are not, providing that the capacity for rationality remains. In this case, freedom is the ability for rationality which continues despite variations in behaviour (Kosch, 2006).

3.2.4. Comparative Freedom

In further discussing the compatibilist approach, which was dominant among his contemporaries (such as Hume), Kant further speaks of the final type of freedom: the

concept of comparative freedom. Comparative freedom is put forth as the type of freedom held by those who do not have transcendental freedom, such as Liebniz's *automaton spirituale* (Liebniz, 1989). This concept holds that an object which does not complete an action from an external compulsion, such as the free motion of a clock's hands or the flight of a projectile after it has been propelled, is called free because the actions come from within (Liebniz, 1989). According to comparative freedom, then, an action is free simply because one has motivated oneself to complete it. So any being, even one without the ability to reason, can complete free actions (Kosh, 2006). It is important to note, however, that this is not the same as practical freedom, as practical freedom requires an individual to be subject to 'oughts', whereas comparative freedom makes no such requirement.

Kosch goes on to propose that, based on this distinction, comparative and transcendental freedom should be seen as competing accounts for the noumenal commitments made when we claim freedom (Kosch, 2006). However, I would propose that the two are, in fact, different concepts, with comparative freedom allowing us to ascribe freedom primarily to non-rational beings, and transcendental freedom describing the freedom that humans alone, as beings of both the noumenal and phenomenal world, and holders of rational thought, experience.

Therefore, according to Kant, one is free if one follows the maxim of morality (transcendental freedom), if one is internally motivated (comparative freedom), or if one acts according to rational thought (both practical freedom and rational self-determination), whether or not these actions appear to be causally determined.

3.3. Conclusion

Hume, as a compatibilist, argued that both causation and necessity are required for the existence of freedom and the existence of reality (Russell, 1995). By initially discussing the possible conflict between free will, liberty and necessity, Hume brought into question the common understanding of will, and later surmised that it was the inferences that come from an action from the individual's motive (Wilson and Denis, 2018). With regard to necessity, Hume separated the concept into two parts: the association between perceptions and inferences that occur between those perceptions, leading him to make the argument that a necessary force is the cause of these perceptions and interactions (Lustila, 2012; Steinberg, 1993). Ultimately, this leads Hume to postulate that individuals base the regulation of their behaviour and will on the actions of others and that this is possible due to the causal necessity of the universe, with both natural and moral evidence providing structure for the human experience (Greco, 2023). Russell's disagreement with Hume leads to the argument that Hume should be reclassified as a naturalist based on Hume's understanding of causation as linked to perceptions rather than causality, however Ayer's earlier work, in which he redefined Hume's use of the terms necessity, cause and determinism as equivalent to the modern understanding of force was used to retain Hume's position as a compatibilist (Russell, 1995; Ayer, 1945). As such, Hume's argument for compatibilism remained secure, and his understanding of autonomy as a belief in the existence of freedom of action and responsibility for action for all of humanity provided an initial understanding of the concept of autonomy.

Building on the work of Hume, Kant attempted to further the argument by altering the concept of singular causative chains. Kant believed that the argument for singular causative chains renders autonomy irrelevant, as it is the choice to complete the actions which holds moral worth. In regard to this argument, Kant then identified the phenomenal and noumenal worlds, with individuals possessing autonomy in the noumenal, but not the phenomenal worlds (Pereboom, 2006). Kant's discussion of autonomy is centred around the categorical imperative, and the will's ability to create an actionable event in the world that has not, and cannot be caused by other events (Wilson and Denis, 2018). This autonomy for Kant also exists within morality (Srivastava, 2024).

Ayer's discussion of autonomy highlighted a problem in which causal, human behaviour cannot be free, as such an action could not be avoided (Ayer, 1954). This argument, if upheld, would also have meant that morality was causal and consequently not free; however, Alarcón (2010) proposed a solution in which freedom was equivalent to a restricted meaning of necessity that was not restricted by a deterministic understanding but instead a fixed, metaphysical concept. The link created between freedom and free choice as a result of this solution, when more fully explored, also helped provide a solution to the work of Ayer. Alarcón concluded that freedom, free choice and free will cannot be synonymous as choice reduces freedom; however, the work of Kant argued differently, but referring to spontaneity of action as the form of freedom (Alarcón, 2010; Demenchonok, 2019). This argument on the importance of free choice and free will is going tobecome intrinsic to the discussion on autonomy within education and the creation of the model of autonomous education.It is here that a discussion of Kant's four forms of freedom became important.

Kant's argument of transcendental freedom held that the actions of an individual are not causally dependent on preceding events, but rather on the individual themselves (as described previously in the discussion on causative chains) (Kant, 2003). Kant linked this argument to the concept of moral responsibility, emphasising that, for him, an individual was responsible for an action if they had the ability to either complete or avoid the action (Kant, 2004). Yet Kant also emphasised that this argument could only be applied to the noumenal world as, within the natural world, the laws of causality cannot be broken (Kosch, 2006).

The argument for practical freedom thus claimed that the will, and therefore the individual, has the power to act outside of causal determination and that it will act on rational principles (Kant, 2004). This would, however, rely on the individual having a noumenal cause. This prompted Kant to propose that human beings are in possession of an empirical character, but that this is compatible with empirical actions due to a noumenal individual being unaware of their transcendental freedom (Bobzien, 1988). Importantly, this led Kant to surmise that young children were not morally responsible for their actions, which leads to questions regarding the responsibility of learners in education.

The third argument of rational self-determination showed strong resemblance to transcendental freedom; however, it allowed for an individual that is both free through rational self-determination, causally determined and not always morally responsible (Kosch, 2006). Such rational self-determination was claimed to be achieved through either making judgments or willing actions, although further detail on how this was

achieved was not given. Kosch (2006) surmised that rational self-determination was a form of freedom in which variations of behaviour do not reduce the ability for rationality.

The final form of freedom, as discussed by Kant, was comparative freedom, held by those who were not transcendentally free. According to this argument, an action is free if the individual has motivated themselves to complete the action, free of any 'oughts' that were found in practical freedom. Comparative freedom, then, is most useful when discussing non-rational beings.

Out of all of these forms of freedom, it is practical freedom and comparative freedom that prove most useful to the continued development of autonomous education and the argument behind it.

3. Determination and Self-Mastery

In contrast to the work of Hume and Kant, Nietzsche and Foucault approach the topic of freedom and autonomy from a determinist perspective. In taking this approach, they explore a side of autonomy in which the individual becomes the priority and where knowledge of the self is key. Both these factors are then intrinsic to the concept of autonomous education and its relation to the world as a whole. Foucault's work in particular allows for the exploration and critique of formal education as an institution, which is then used later in the thesis to highlight areas in which the model of autonomous education should diverge from institutional learning.

4.1. Nietzsche

When Nietzsche proclaimed that 'God is dead', he presented the option for both deifying the self and for fatalistic nihilism (Nietzsche, 2001; Shields, 2007). In contrast to European ideas of humanity and the self as a 'ludicrous herd animal', Nietzsche presented the idea of a man who is overwhelmingly affected by a sense of power and thus believes it to have come from himself, a deity. Man thus believes himself to be an individual who has spontaneous autonomy. However, Nietzsche also argues, at least in some of his texts, that the self exists as the sovereign individual who has a memory and free will, which functions to vouch for himself as future (Nietzsche, 1998b).

Nietzsche claims that freedom is having the strength of will to set one's own goals, and the sense of power to overcome any obstacles in the path of that goal (Nietzsche, 2008).

> Freedom is the will to be responsible for ourselves. It is to preserve the distance which separates us from other men. To grow more indifferent to hardship, to severity, to privation, and even to life itself. To be ready to sacrifice men for one's cause, one's self included. Freedom denotes that the virile instincts which rejoice in war and in victory, prevail over other instincts; for instance, over the instincts of "happiness".
>
> (Nietzsche, 1889, p. 88).

However, Nietzsche also claims that humans have freedom of will, or rather that humans are affected by a sense of power which is inconsistent with the power that they actually possess. This, Nietzsche argues, leads them to believe that their sense of power has come from themselves and that they are therefore some kind of deity with full autonomy (Nietzsche, 2020). Yet Nietzsche does not believe that this has come easily; instead, he argues that humans have been like animals since the prehistoric period and have been coerced and punished into a morality of custom. This cultural shaping, however, does not come without a price; the social straitjacket that this coercion and punishment bring about leads to a person who is exceptionally forgetful and dull. The 'blood and horror' which serves to give the human animal a sense of

responsibility is seen by Nietzsche to be the basis of all good things. Through this cultural achievement, man becomes a sovereign individual who, on top of the sense of power mentioned above, achieves freedom of will, autonomy and supra-ethicality (Nietzsche, 1998b).

This sovereign individual is seen as the height of humanity; an autonomous individual who possesses the privilege of responsibility for their actions and who is supra-ethical, that is, someone who focuses on factors that promote human flourishing, rather than adhering to a generic moral code (Nietzsche, 1998b). The sovereign individual's knowledge of their own responsibility is seen to give them a rare freedom and power over their own destiny (Sardo, 2022). This comes into fruition for those who were able to follow their own conscience rather than seeking the guidance of moral law and performing actions based on guilt (Constâncio, 2012; Lanier Anderson, 2022). Yet Oaklander argues that Nietzsche's concept of freedom is based on a defective view of the self, one where the self is indivisible and unchangeable through time (Oaklander, 1984). Indeed, Guay (2002) also argues that an account of freedom must take for granted that a person's identity is distinct from their attributes, acts and preferences.

Guay expands Nietzsche's argument on the cultural shaping of society by describing the ascetic heritage of constraint (Guay, 2002). Nietzsche himself recognised the importance of self-imposed constraint within the ascetic heritage, and also argued that the quest for freedom is ascetic within itself, for example, the ability to resist impulses or even convictions in order to reach one's goals or be true to oneself (Nietzsche, 1984).

Such ascetic restraint applies to both individuals and in social contexts, such as resolving conflict with others (Guay, 2002). Yet further than that, Nietzsche argues that such a distinction between impulse and self-determination is ascetic, for when one holds oneself responsible, there is always a need for sacrifice and painful defiance of oneself (Nietzsche, 1984). Yet he also offered two arguments which mitigate such asceticism with regard to freedom. Firstly, seeking freedom is not entirely ascetic; for example, morality sees things as authoritative purely because they renounce the self, but the ascetic ideal is more concerned with sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice rather than valuing something which requires sacrifice. Secondly, whilst self-imposed constraint is valued by asceticism, the attempt to escape from constraint is valued further (Guay, 2002). Nietzsche describes this as follows: "If one tethers one's heart very severely, one can give one's spirit many liberties" (Nietzsche, 1998b). In other words, if an individual constrains and suppresses their emotional attachments and desires (the heart), then they are able to free their spirit, which allows for greater freedom in intellect. Such constraints, it is argued, are in themselves expressive because they create content in a place where none has previously existed. This refers back to the Kantian insights on formal constraints, in which Kant observed that the description of necessary, formal constraints would lead to substantive judgements (Kant, 2003). Although departing from Kant's transcendental framework, Nietzsche still maintained a critical approach, albeit a less structured one - here he chose to seek the psychological context in which a constraint has force. He concluded here that a constraint can only be understood when seen through the lens of the person's relationship to the constraint, and it is only when this has been understood that one is

able to say something substantive about that constraint. This is also understood as the 'will to power' - that which gives meaning to actions (Guay, 2002).

However, Ansell-Pearson (1991) claims that the sovereign individual exists in order to highlight a claim which Kant and modern liberalism have taken for granted: that a person encompasses both free will and conscience. Through the sovereign individual, though, Nietzsche explains that, in reality, free will and conscience are the product of culture. On the other hand, Leiter (2011) argues for a sovereign individual who represents the denial of freedom and moral responsibility (Leiter, 2011). By reading Nietzsche as a fatalist who believes an individual to have both psychological and physiological traits of which they have no control, Leiter argues that it is environmental factors, such as values, rather than autonomy that have a causal effect on a person's life trajectory. To reach this conclusion, Leiter argues that free will is an epiphenomenon, based on a process whereby consistent and temporally proximate actions and conscious thoughts are misunderstood to be causal in nature. In reality, though, Leiter views both actions and thoughts as being causally determined by non-conscious aspects of an individual (Leiter, 2011). Consequently, Leiter postulates that concepts of freedom and free will used in the text equate with neither the Humean idea of actions based on desires, nor with the Kantian concept of freedom as autonomous action which leads to moral responsibility (Leiter, 2011). Nonetheless, the sovereign individual is cited as being special because of the extraordinary privilege of responsibility that they possess, although this is later described not as the binding of societal moral demands, but rather as a form of self-responsibility - of mastery over

oneself. Ercole (2017) argues that this self-mastery takes the form of self-formation and self-overcoming through the mode of sacrifice. She postulates that Nietzsche does not believe in a fixed or pre-determined self, which therefore allows for the idea of the self to come under continuous formation - a becoming. As a result of this, self-sacrifice takes the form of disciplined refinement of the self (as opposed to the ascetic sacrifice of self to religion that Nietzsche saw in Christianity). It leads to a rejection of the self as both a master and a slave of morality (Ercole, 2017). However, little is noted within the writings of Nietzsche as to how this process would be enacted, particularly regarding the non-conscious elements of the self, and so the practicality of this is hard to assess.

For Lanier Anderson, the solution to the disagreement regarding the existence of free will and causality is to read responsibility in this way - with freedom coming from holding oneself responsible, rather than being held responsible by society (Lanier Anderson, 2022). An alternative proposition has been made by Acampora (2013), who suggests that Nietzsche intended the sovereign individual to be read as someone who transcends tradition and custom, rather than morality as a whole. This allows the sovereign individual to become a rational, autonomous subject who holds the capacity to honour promises, as well as to be a free and responsible individual (Lanier Anderson, 2022).

However, in his early work, Nietzsche argues for the idea that we have as little responsibility for our actions in reality as we do for those in our dreams, and by his later work, there is a complete denial of free will: “Formerly man was given a “free will” as his dowry from a higher order: today we have taken his will away altogether, in the sense

that we no longer admit the will as a faculty" (Nietzsche, 2018). Instead, Nietzsche claims that free will is a theologian's trick which exists purely to create in mankind a sense of responsibility (Nietzsche, 1969). Free will, then, is an error, one that should be abandoned, along with similar notions such as guilt, enemy, or sinner, as they all require the concepts of freedom and responsibility to be true (Nietzsche, 1995). Here Nietzsche also claims that "No one is accountable for his deed, no one for his nature, to judge is the same thing as to be unjust." (Nietzsche, 1984, p. 77), and later, in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1998a), Nietzsche argued that the will is neither free nor non-free. This argument is borne from a concern that the traditional, substantialist doctrine of freedom of will is internally inconsistent, as it suggests that one is both responsible and not responsible for one's actions, and therefore that one is also both punishable and not punishable for those same actions. Nietzsche argues that, in some situations (that is, when an individual has acted unintentionally), humans are not accountable for their actions and therefore those actions are not punishable (Sardo, 2022). However, despite agreeing that individuals cannot be held responsible for their free will actions, the argument of substantialist free will also argues that all individuals are responsible for the actions they commit with free will. This causes the contradiction (Gemes, 2009). Nietzsche's argument about the will of truth further supports these views. Truth, Nietzsche argues, is not something that can be discovered, but rather something which is created: a never-ending process in becoming conscious, just as freedom is a never-ending process of self-improvement (Nietzsche, 1995). Therefore, if freedom is held to be substantialist and involves a distinction between the individual and action, or a faculty of free will, it cannot exist.

In response to this, Williams (1995) ascertains that there is a difference between voluntary actions, which would lead to an individual being held responsible and responsibility for the self. There is a difference, it is argued, between holding someone responsible and taking responsibility; similarly, there is a difference between voluntary actions and compulsions. In this scenario, it would be possible for a will to be neither completely free nor completely non-free. Yet this could also lead to a concern that a voluntary action is neither necessary nor sufficient for individual responsibility (Lanier Anderson, 2022). One response to this is to propose that whilst an individual may complete an act which was unintentional, there is also an argument that they should have understood the action and are therefore responsible for the action.

Yet the ego is seen by Nietzsche as both the cause of all deeds and equally indivisible from the actions that it completes. This gives the impression that the individual (the doer) has a simple level of free will, allowing the ego to choose whether to complete or avoid an action independently of any action that has come before (Sardo, 2022).

Accordingly, the sovereign individual's autonomy initially appears to manifest in their independence; their freedom from morality, tradition and custom and their responsibility for their actions (Acampora, 2013). Nietzsche describes this individual as developing a memory of the will, which allows the binding of oneself to the values that they hold (Nietzsche, 1998b). This then allows an individual to say yes to themselves, and no to the morality of custom and tradition (Lanier Anderson, 2022).

As mentioned above, another characterisation of freedom according to the sovereign individual is 'the right to make promises' (Nietzsche, 1998b). Here, what distinguishes freedom is not choice but placing a lasting burden on oneself. The case of promise-making is especially clear: in making a promise, one commits oneself to do something whether or not one wants to (Guay, 2002). According to this reading, a person must be so committed to their constraints that they could not even consider changing them; as without this, it would be a spiritual fate that could not be revised without the pain of losing one's identity (Nietzsche, 1998b). This tension, where norms are explained as part of one's identity, but also in an objective form of self-origination, is inherent in an account of freedom (Guay, 2002). As a result of this, one could argue that Nietzsche's account of freedom does not promote a free life, but instead dictates the characteristics of a free life, if one were to achieve it. Instead, Mandalios argues that Nietzsche's formulation of freedom is based on the following three constraints: self-responsibility, sacrifice of one's own life for power, and mastery of instincts (Mandalios, 2008). Freedom for Nietzsche, therefore, is not freedom from necessity, but is instead the holding of oneself to one's self-imposed standards (Mandalios, 2008).

This further highlights links between Nietzsche's work on freedom and his views on asceticism. Nietzsche claims in the *Genealogy of Morality* that "in ascetic ideals, so many bridges to independence are revealed" (Nietzsche, 1998b, p. 3§7). Such ascetic ideals have, therefore, provided a framework through which self-relation can be seen in normative rather than causal concepts (Guay, 2002). Yet this also highlights two more issues with the Nietzschean account of freedom. Firstly, the ideals as described above

are general constraints; however, taking the example of chess, in order for constraints to create significant freedom, they must be so fundamental that they cannot be viewed as optional. Applying this to reality, the constraints which Nietzsche discusses would only create freedom if they were fundamental to life, yet general constraints and ethics are commonly viewed as optional, which then creates more confusion rather than more freedom (Guay, 2002). Here, Mandalios suggests that Nietzsche's will to power is, in actuality, the will to hold domination over both others and over oneself, creating a lifelong and inescapable affliction as such domination causes a bittersweet happiness edged with hurt at the endurance required (Madalios, 2008).

Secondly, there is an issue with the rigour of constraints, as such constraints exclude almost everything that is not self-originating, which Nietzsche views as almost everything (Guay, 2002). Yet, the burden of self-determination is such that if one denies everything, including the things which one has historically already denied, then one is actually saying yes to things (as a double negative creates a positive). And therefore, by denying everything, one eventually affirms one's own actions. One is therefore left with the question: which constraints lead to freedom? Or, more relevant to Nietzschean philosophy, how do we know which constraints would be self-imposed? Nietzsche himself states:

> A virtue must be our invention, our most personal need and self-defence; a virtue in any other sense is merely a danger. What is not a condition of our life harms it: a virtue that stems purely from a feeling of respect for the concept 'virtue', as Kant would have it, is harmful. 'Virtue', 'duty', 'the good in itself', the

> good with a character of impersonality and universal validity – all phantasms in which the decline and final exhaustion of life, the Königsberg Chineseness, expresses itself. The most basic laws of preservation and growth demand the opposite: that everyone invents his own virtue, his own categorical imperative.
>
> (Nietzsche, 1998b, p. 1§11)

Whilst this can be viewed as a call to subjectivity, Nietzsche, in contrast with Kant, denies the reciprocity between morality and freedom (Oaklander, 1984). Morality, after all, is an external constraint, as was argued regarding ethics above. Yet for Nietzsche, a decision must be self-imposed as moral law and universal law lack reflexivity and so cannot be part of a free self-determination (Acampora, 2013). It is here that Guay (2002) refers to the common claim that Nietzsche is a nihilist. According to nihilism, nothing proves successful as a basis for self-direction, and so, in emphasising the lack of success of moral laws and schemes, of the ethical immediacy of mythical nobles, and of the ascetic ideals described above it is possible to interpret Nietzsche's views as nihilistic for they leave us with no source of external authority in life (Guay, 2002). Here, then, we reach the "enigma of liberation" (Nietzsche, 1984, Preface §7) - it is not possible for one to know which constraints are self-imposed without an awareness of what freedom consists of, yet one can only know what freedom consists of through self-imposed constraints.

Nietzschean freedom, therefore, is that which has been invented and that which structures our way of life, which is revised by our own self-determination (Guay, 2002). In order to be free, one has to listen to those *a priori* demands which Kant defines as the categorical imperative, yet one must also create those demands and incorporate them into one's way of life. This is also the discovery of, and the creation of meaning, so that any directed activity takes on meaning. Meaning then also has a role in freedom, as it is connected to our ends and our ideals - it is our self-understanding, and this simultaneously delimits our freedom and offers constraint and the ability to maintain objectivity in ethical judgement. Meaning has taken on a dual role; it is that which is created, yet the subjectivity of this meaning leads it to be a created part of the self simultaneously, and that which is external to the self, for one can discover the meanings of others. The existence of a community leads people to come across the meanings held by others through dialogue and a life lived among other individuals. This then leads to a discussion of meanings and compromise between conflicting values and ideas until a shared ethical code comes into being. The meaning that one denotes in one's life must become incarnate, for it is just as important to be aware of one's own intentions as it is for others to be able to understand them and to understand the effect that these intentions create in order for society to run smoothly and without excessive conflict (Nietzsche, 1984). Consequently, freedom has to be established in the public sphere so that it is found and not just made.

Independence and autonomy, then, according to Nietzsche, come in the form of self-control and self-governance: "For what is freedom? That one has the will to take responsibility for oneself" (Nietzsche, 1889: 9§38). In relation to education, this could take the form of gradually increasing choice, whereby the student has support and time

to practice making their own decisions (such as in unschooling) and also, therefore, taking responsibility for their own learning journey.

4.2. Foucault

Whilst Nietzsche is renowned for heralding the death of God, Foucault's philosophy comes from the heralded death of man; an event seen to be so cataclysmic that it will reignite the possibility to think, for the modern concept of a sovereign individual has, according to Foucault, merely oppressed and normalised the individual (Wisnewski, 2000; Zhao, 2012).

Responding to the work of Nietzsche, Foucault thus placed freedom within the realm of political theory and consequently redefined freedom as an act of sovereignty of the self and care of the self (Dumm, 2002; Batters, 2011). This creation, and further governmentation of the self, requires continuous introspection and simultaneous awareness of the reality of one's surroundings. The self is created, Foucault argues, through our experiences and our ethical code; it is only when the self is viewed as a changeable form, rather than purely a substance, that it can be opened up to the practice of liberty (Batters, 2011; Zhao, 2012).

Yet whilst it appears on the surface that Foucault is here agreeing with Kant regarding the need to release oneself from 'self-incurred tutelage' in order to experience freedom, for Foucault, such freedom and autonomy is no longer the result of an independent subject, as is the case in Kant, or indeed Nietzsche to an extent, but rather is left as the responsibility of an abstract and somewhat uncontrollable realm

(Wisnewski, 2000). Indeed, in his discussion of ‘power’, there comes an implication of a notion of liberation, which Taylor (1986) sees as rendering Foucault’s position unintelligible. By reading Foucault in a manner which sees truth as dependent on its regime, Taylor argues that it is not in fact possible to be liberated from power. Therefore, the liberation previously described can be nothing more than a subjugation to an alternative power (Taylor, 1986).

Like Foucault, Althusser rejects the existence of human will as a function independent of the superstructure, metaphorically building on Foucault in his rejection of humanism which leads him to ‘kill the man’. For Althusser, however, this is the result of the concept of ideology, which he believes is the mental reflection of man’s beliefs about his interactions with reality. Man here is living as if in Plato’s allegory of the caveYett Althusser sees no chance of freedom, for man is an ideological animal who is bound to remain subject to ideology in the same way that Foucault sees man as bound to the subjugation of power (Althusser, 2014).

Batters (2011) argues that individuals have a tendency to view autonomy as a method in which they can test power relations; they see freedom as coming before power, with power in turn coming from localised sources that impose specific limits. However, Foucault offers an alternative explanation in which power is everywhere, existing as the very language that is spoken and the discourses employed. It is woven into every area of thought and society and, as such, cannot be avoided or removed. Power, and power relations, according to Foucault, are unavoidable; however, it is in losing freedom to these power relations that one comes under a state of domination (Batters, 2011).

Resisting power, therefore, is a form of power itself, and as such, one can be liberated from a form of power, but one cannot be liberated from power itself (Wisnewski, 2000). Indeed, Foucault states that:

> The risk of dominating others and exercising a tyrannical power over them arises precisely only when one has not taken care of the self and has become the slave of one's desires. But if you take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know ontologically what you are, if you know what you are capable of, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen of a city... if you know what things you should and should not fear, if you know what you can reasonably hope for and, on the other hand, what things should not matter to you, if you know, finally, that you should not be afraid of death – if you know all this, you cannot abuse your power over others.
>
> (Foucault, 1987, p. 301)

This thus returns us to the Nietzschean view of freedom: an individual can never truly remove themselves from the effects of power; however, autonomy can be found in the choices made whilst under the restriction of freedom that results from the effects of power.

Foucault has here adopted the Nietzschean premise that the self is (and must be) of an individual's own making - with freedom existing in the form of the invention of the self (Theile, 1991). However, for Foucault, this freedom occurs within the social and

political realms as it is possible to find freedom in the activity of self-invention, and in the struggle to remain free from definitions and a prescriptive aim of life. It is in the clash of productive power, and the resistance to it, that allows the construction of the concept of self-albeit one which remains forever "enmeshed in webs of power" (Thiele, 1991, p.280). Therefore, as social and political realms fluctuate, and the clash between productive power and its resistance wavers, the self continues to change throughout a lifetime; it is a dynamic rather than static process of discovery.

According to Foucault's argument, institutions within society can hold power over an individual when they dominate an aspect of that individual's identity, that is, when a person is required to sacrifice an element of their identity or their freedom to that institution in an act of subjugation, for example, when an individual offers a company a portion of their time, in return for money, or when the company requires information regarding the individual before they get the job (Batters, 2011). People, according to both Kant and Foucault, display a willingness to abandon themselves to the rule and governance of others; to hand over their identity and freedom to the institution without thought or ethical consideration (Fillion, 2005). But in the same way, freedom is also part of society and its institutions; that is, true freedom can only occur when one does not have to subjugate one's identity to society. Freedom, therefore, comes when one is willing to break away from this abandonment of the self and see the truth of one's situation within power relations and within discourse. An individual must acknowledge that they are able to step outside of this situation - that the abandonment and subjugation of the self to institutions and society was self-incurred and continued - but that one also holds the power to step away from such a situation and reclaim sovereignty of not only the discourse of one's life, but one's identity within it.

If one remains tied to the subjugation of identity, then that person has mistaken social order for natural order (Lansing, 2003). Instead, Foucault suggests that an individual must form their own identity and individuality through their own experience and ethical code, just as a Nietzschean sovereign individual is formed through the following of their own conscience (Batters, 2011). In an expansion of Nietzschean thought, Foucault states that, in recognising the role of society in limiting one's identity, an individual is able to begin to build their *ethos* - a concrete form of freedom formed by working on the self, by the self (Foucault, 1987).

However, scholars such as Rorty call into question the proposal of public autonomy suggested by both Foucault and Nietzsche. Rorty argues that autonomy is not something contained within a person, which society can then release at the cessation of oppression, but rather views autonomy as something that is sought by only a few people, and achieved by even fewer (Rorty, 1986). He here makes the distinction between avoidance of cruelty and pain (freedom from oppression) and a desire for autonomy (freedom), framing Nietzschean and Foucauldian views of freedom as a misunderstanding of the liberal desire to avoid cruelty and pain (Rorty, 1986).

It is important at this point to be reminded of the earlier discussion of the role of discourse according to Foucault; nothing is outside of discourse - all rules, forms of power and power relations exist within the very same discourse from which one constructs one's own identity. The individual is created within the discourse of power and knowledge, and power and knowledge are also created within, and from, the individual - both are creating and editing each other. Equally then, one must proceed with a view of autonomy as a concept that is facilitated by, created and edited by

discourse, as much as it facilitates, creates and edits the discourse itself. It is not the result of a singular individual and therefore is also not the process of a singular individual, but rather of the group as a whole - a public entity (Wisnewski, 2000). Autonomy does not exist in a vacuum and is not attainable in isolation, as one cannot step out of the discourse. It is therefore not an individualistic notion.

Unlike the previous philosophers, Foucault also referred frequently to schools and education, although not extensively; therefore, this next section will consider Foucault's writing on autonomy and education in light of the question 'To what extent can we have autonomy in education'.

One of the key themes highlighted by Foucault is that of modern schooling as an institution wherein blocks of capacity, power and communication are formed by the relations and mutual support of power and knowledge (Deacon, 2005). Indeed, Foucault refers to schools as prisons, stating, "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (Foucault, 1977, p. 94). In this situation, the human capacity to manipulate, adjust, and instil selected values in others becomes a regulated system via the communication and processes of power. This, however, requires reciprocal power relations between those who exercise power within the institution, the mechanics of surveillance and the people over whom power is exercised, which is hard to identify (Deacon, 2005).

Ball, however, proposes an alternative reading of Foucault whereby he emphasises the tendency to interpret Foucault based primarily on his early and middle work as a philosopher of oppression. The effect of this, according to Ball, is that theorists focus

on the problem of power and the 'means of correct training' and the application to schools and education is centred on surveillance, classification and exclusion as Deacon has done above (Ball, 2019). Yet this bleak view of Foucault, and indeed of modernity, does not acknowledge his later work. Foucault was, according to Ball, a philosopher of contestation and difference - he sought to undermine self-evident truths and open discourse to the possibilities of acting and thinking differently both in relation to ourselves and to others (Ball, 2019). In addition, Foucault's self-stated intention was not to record the methods through which individuals become subjugated, but rather to open the discourse and criticality of self-formation, which allows them to focus on a horizon of freedom:

> My role – and that is too emphatic a word – is to show people that they are much freer than they feel, that people accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment during history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticised and destroyed.
>
> (Foucault, 1988, p. 9)

According to Ball, Foucault encouraged the re-thinking of education and self-formation, not as a repeated attempt of previously failed methods, but as a complete dismantling of the structure of formal education and all that this entails (Ball, 2019). For it is not possible to create, or even conceive of a new system, whilst still bound up in the discourse of the old - discourse and epistemic rules constrain our ability to imagine

outside of what we are in; as Foucault said "'I think that to imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system" (Foucault, 1987, p.230). Indeed, Deacon speaks of Foucault's work as an alert to the increased state control that has become a feature of education - a call to reconsider the system and question whether a school was in fact the inspiration for other disciplinary institutions (Deacon, 2005). Nonetheless, Ball also warns against the familiar need to seek a foundational metaphysics, a metanarrative for the change, instead encouraging the thinker to both resist the rational, philosophical discourse and embrace the power of strangeness (Ball, 2019).

According to Ball (2019), Foucault's assertion that the relationship between critique and action cannot be simple is based on his understanding of negative ethics, that is, that we do not discover what we are, but refuse that which we are. In this case, an individual focuses on the care of the self and of others and balances the cultivation of the self as defined by discourse with the practice of living well and relating to others; it is a compromise of the self as defined by the dominant discourse in favour of a life well lived (Ball, 2019). In fact, an individual is tasked not with relying on pre-existing moral codes, but with "creatively and courageously authoring one's ethical self" (Foucault, 1977, p. 154). And so, in order to self-actualise, one must be open to the re-politicisation of everyday life by questioning all discourse and denaturalising the categories that one relies on to organise and define the experience of the world, a difficult expectation and one which, similarly to Nietzsche's sovereign individual, few would be expected to reach (Ball, 2019). However, the completion of this task in isolation comes with a risk of cynicism and removal of the self from community, alongside the possibility of a fragmented self-image and problems with mental health.

As such, the process is best worked slowly and under the supervision of those who have already embarked upon the process.

Foucault's theory continues to dismantle formal education's approach of creating obedient workers ready for the labour market. Instead, it encourages schools to aid students in dismantling their own identities and become critically informed, resistant and oppositional individuals who have the ability to creatively reimagine the discourse of society through continued resistance to oppression and domination (Ball, 2019).

Yet there is a hidden question here of how, in a typical pedagogical relationship, one could circumvent the danger of domination. As Foucault has previously ascertained, there is no way to step out of power relations; if one is to leave the current power relation, they step immediately into an alternative (Foucault, 1987). Relations of power within education are intertwined with pedagogical side effects such as obligation, guilt, achievement and dependence on others. For example, Foucault described this in his comparison of lectures and seminars: a lecture is based primarily on non-reciprocal and unequal power relationships, yet is equally more honest about the relationship (Deacon, 2005). Indeed, Foucault posits that if a lecture is tentative about its claims to truth and engages thoroughly in a critique of the ideas proposed, then the imbalance of the power relations may be neutralised as they become more visible. However, in a seminar, the expected discourse may serve to disguise power relations, leading students to uncritically assimilate the views and opinions of the person in power (Foucault, 1971).

Furthering this discussion, Leask highlights three elements of Foucault's work that could be translated to educational practice; fostering experimentation-focused

learning environments, enabling critical self-awareness, and encouragement of critique (focused on dispositions); doing so, she argues, would create a classroom as a space of freedom, a curriculum of curiosity and a pedagogy of parrhesiastic encounter where any person, with power or without, can speak their truth. (Leask, 2012). Ball expands on each of these elements, beginning with the learning environment. Self-formation, he argues, requires spaces where the students are respected; where they are given attention, where their responses are considered with care and where they are respected enough for a considered response to be given. In this space, contestation and failure would both be valued, and the educational process slowed in order to give these opportunities time to flourish (Ball, 2019). This argument is further discussed by Medina (2011) who posited that such an education would aim to make "the past come undone at the seams", allowing students to see the past, not as a singular path which can be studied as a succinct timeline, but rather as a "heterogeneous array of converging and diverging struggles that are still on going and only have the appearance of having been settled" (Medina, 2011, p. 16).

In relation to this, then, stands the curriculum of curiosity, for if one is to remove the sterile and tidy presentation of the past, then one must also become concerned with the matter of knowledge. In contrast to formal education within modernity, where the question of the classroom is 'what is true', a Foucauldian education requires the curriculum to focus on the how of truth; knowledge must be re-presented as a problem rather than content (Ball, 2019). Similar to the premises behind Illich's deschooling, Holt's unschooling and Ricci's Willed Curriculum, Chokr presents such a curriculum as the basis of 'unlearning', that is, the encouragement of students to approach the world with an attitude of criticality; to dislocate and decode the metanarrative, and the

assumptions and propositions that lay behind it, rather than to 'bank' arbitrary knowledge as presented to them by the person of authority (Chokr, 2009). Foucault suggested that such an alliance with curiosity would aim to cultivate

> A readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way ... a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental.
>
> (Foucault, 1980, p. 328).

Yet curiosity alone cannot produce the self-formation so valued by both Foucault and Nietzsche; a disposition to critique is also required. It is important, argues Medina, that teachers and learners alike acknowledge their own fallibility and are thus open to change and to the process of critiquing their own commitments (Medina, 2011). By working to both recreate the world and the self, the 'ethic of discomfort' challenges students and teachers to embrace vulnerability, the ambiguity of the self as a production of discourse, and the dependence of each person on another (Zembylas, 2015). Discomfort needs to become productive rather than paralysing. Modern formal education pays lip service to such a notion with the repetition of the zone of proximal development, as developed by Vygotsky in 1978 (Vygotsky, 1978). However, the model put forward by Ball takes this further than a pedagogical tool to further basic skills: within a Foucauldian model of education, the student must be comfortable with

discomfort and content to sit within uncertainty, using their skills of criticality and self-awareness to deconstruct the very basis of the knowledge with which they are presented (Ball, 2019). Yet this is a task which is time-consuming at best and emotionally challenging and draining at worst, and comes with the reality that formal education already requires the balance of many different elements across the period of schooling an individual. As such, the question must be raised as to whether it is possible to introduce such practices whilst maintaining the commitment to allow all children access to education. Nonetheless, under this Foucauldian model, education ceases to be an arbitrary bundle of knowledge and skills, but instead, Ball argues, becomes a formation of moral subjectivity wherein one is activated in the ability to carve out one's own identity and to create a world and discourse that reflects this (Ball, 2019). Rather than liberation, Infinito views this as ethics in action; social praxis - with value placed on the plural nature of experience and voice, but with the continued acknowledgement that power, conflict and strife are an inevitable part of society and therefore life, which may not ultimately be overcome (Infinito, 2003).

4.3. Conclusion

Nietzsche's claims on freedom are situated in his beliefs that humanity find themselves in a battle between self-deification and reverting to the herd animal from whence they came (Nietzsche 1998b). Freedom, he therefore claims, is found in an individual taking responsibility for their own life and goals, and having a sense of power that is sufficient to allow them to meet such goals, overcoming any obstacles that are found along the way (Nietzsche, 2008). However, Nietzsche also makes claims regarding freedom of

will, in which individuals are affected by a sense of power which is not consistent with their possessed power (Nietzsche, 2020).

For Nietzsche, an individual who overcomes the need for self-deification, or for a reversion to the form of a herd animal, could achieve the title of sovereign individual; a person who is able to avoid or reject cultural shaping and instead use their power to achieve freedom of will, supra-ethicality and autonomy (Nietzsche, 1998b). This sovereign individual possesses knowledge of self-responsibility, which gives them freedom and power over their future self and allows them to follow their own conscience in lieu of a generic moral law. This argument is then expanded by Guay, who acknowledges the importance of the self-imposed constraint that was emphasised by Nietzsche but distinguishes it from asceticism (Nietzsche, 1984; Guay, 2002). For Nietzsche, this restraint then allows the individual to free their intellect.

An alternative reading of the sovereign individual was, however, posited by Leiter (2011), who used a fatalist perspective to argue that such an individual represents a denial of moral responsibility and freedom. Leiter, in this argument, viewed both thoughts and actions as a non-conscious but yet causally determined aspect of an individual, and this led him to postulate that Nietzsche's ideas are separate from those of both Hume and Kant. Returning to the argument of the sovereign individual, there is debate as to the form of responsibility that is held. On the one hand, Ercole's argument of self-mastery allows for change in the self over time, yet Acampora and Lanier Anderson argue for individual self-responsibility in a sovereign individual who transcends tradition and custom (Ercole, 2017; Acampora, 2013; Lanier Anderson, 2022). Problematically,however, Nietzsche argues in his early work that humanity holds

little responsibility for their actions, claiming free will as a trick of theologians. Instead, he posits that the will is neither free nor non-free (Nietzsche, 1998b). This then causes a contradiction in which individuals cannot be held responsible for their actions whilst simultaneously being responsible for actions that were completed as a result of free will (Sardo, 2022). In response to this conflict, Williams (1995) detailed the difference between voluntary actions and responsibility for the self, arguing for the difference between taking responsibility and being held responsible for actions. However, Nietzsche's view of the ego as indivisible from actions and the cause of all deeds suggests the overall existence of free will (Sardo, 2022).

A further characterisation of the sovereign individual then saw a focus on the promises which highlighted that freedom is not a choice for Nietzsche. Instead, it occurred when an individual placed a long-term burden on themselves. This returned the argument to the topic of constraints, which, according to this theory, must be committed to completely in order to avoid losing part of one's identity (Nietzsche, 1998b). Consequently, Mandalios (2008) proposed that Nietzsche's view of freedom required an individual to hold themselves to self-imposed standards and constraints. Whilst issues were then raised regarding the format of such constraints and the rigour of the constraints, Nietzsche ultimately added no more detail to the topic, and so the answers to the questions were unavailable (Guay, 2002). These led to the conclusion that autonomy was found for Nietzsche in the form of self-governance and self-control.

Foucault later furthered the arguments of Nietzsche by redefining freedom as an act of self-care and self-sovereignty (Batters, 2011). The self, as viewed by Foucault, is created through ethics and experience and requires acceptance of a changeable form

(Zhao, 2012). It would be possible based on this to view human will as separate to society; however, this was rejected by both Althusser and Batters on the grounds that power relations are unavoidable (Althusser, 2014; Batters, 2011). Instead, Foucault focused on the importance of resisting power as a method of liberation (Wisnewski, 2000). In the same way that human will cannot be separate from society, Foucault also saw the invention of the self as situated within the social and political realms, with resistance to productive power allowing the resistance mentioned above (Thiele, 1991).

Whilst Foucault acknowledges that institutions can hold power over an individual and their sense of self, he also identified that this was a sacrifice on the part of the individual (Batters, 2011). Freedom, therefore, comes when an individual is willing to defend their sense of self and see the truth of the power relations found in society. This then allows an individual to build a concrete form of freedom (Foucault, 1987). On the other hand, Rorty questioned the proposal of public autonomy, claiming that both Nietzsche and Foucault had misunderstood the liberal need to avoid pain and cruelty (Rorty, 1986). Yet the role of discourse, according to Foucault, covers all rules and all power and allows the creation of individuals through the discourse of knowledge and power (Wisnewski, 2000). Autonomy for Foucault simply cannot exist in isolation and is not an individualistic notion.

Regarding the importance of society and institutions in developing an individual, Foucault also wrote on the interactions between power, knowledge and modern schooling (Deacon, 2005). This encompassed an encouragement for the re-thinking of education through a complete dismantling of the current system (Foucault, 1987). In conjunction with this, Foucault encourages the courageous and creative authoring of

one's own ethics, which can lead to self-actualisation, calling on schools to aid students in this path (Foucault, 1977). Yet this guidance would come with a risk of domination due to the overarching nature of power relations (Foucault, 1987). This, he posited, could be avoided through the use of seminars and discourse (Foucault, 1971). Further to this, education could also foster learning environments that are focused on experimentation, enable critical self-awareness as mentioned above and encourage students to critique their learning (Leask, 2012). As such, a Foucauldian education would focus on critically unlearning metanarratives and the assumptions behind them, something which will be a focus of the model of autonomous education later in the thesis (Chokr, 2009). Therefore, as Wain (2007) states, "For both Nietzsche and Foucault, ethics, as the work one does on oneself and education are one and the same thing" (Wain, 2007 p. 167), and freedom is found in self-discovery and self-control. However, this places the focus of autonomy on an individualist understanding of the concept, whereas in both formal education and unschooling, there is much more of a focus on collective living. As such, the next chapter will move to consider a more collectivist understanding of autonomy by considering the idea of autonomy as liberation and humanisation.

5. Liberation and Humanisation

Put in the simplest terms, one might say that a democratic society is a free society because it is a self-determined society, and that a member of that society is free to the extent that they participate in its democratic process. But there are also individualist applications of the concept of positive freedom. For example, it is sometimes said that a government should actively aim to create the conditions necessary for people to be self-sufficient or to achieve self-realisation. Freire argued for the role of autonomy in both individuals and the collective, emphasising its use in overcoming oppression and transforming the world (Freire, 2017). Adding more practical reasoning to the arguments previously raised by Hume, Kant, Nietzsche and Foucault, the work of Freire is fundamental in exploring how autonomy can be applied to education and to what extent autonomy is possible within the field of education as a whole.

5.1. Freire

Freedom, Freire argues, is the ability of humanity to become beings for themselves, otherwise known as conscientization (Freire, 2017). Used in two ways, conscientization refers to the method of education that allows a person to develop consciousness as opposed to the memorisation of facts and information, and the description of a perpetually dynamic learning process which is consistently inquisitive and exploratory

(Ryan, 2011). According to Freire, this method and learning process occurs through an individual's growing awareness of their reality, and their own becoming as a result of exposure to a culture of reflection and the completion of positive tasks of transformation (Freire, 2011). It begins with a critical comprehension of how humanity exists, both in and with the world. It is humanity alone, according to Freire, who is able to transform the world through its naming and codification. Existence for humanity therefore requires transformation, production, decision, creation and communication and this, in its entirety, is freedom (Freire, 1998).

However, Freire acknowledges that this does not come to all of humanity. Instead, some individuals are unable to remove their adherence to the world and live life merely in contact with the world and beings as a temporal immersion. According to Freire, such individuals are reduced to determinate beings who cannot consider liberation, and so to escape this, one would require a consciousness of, and the completion of action on reality, which can develop transforming action (O'Brien, 2011). This consciousness allows these individuals to cease mere contact with the world and instead become beings of relation (Freire, 2008). However, that process of transformation can lead to humanity's dehumanisation, as well as its humanisation. Instead of freeing a man, it ensnares him and his ability to choose and can result in oppression (Freire, 1998).

Oppression, according to Freire, occurs when the oppressor takes overwhelming control and dehumanises people using alienation and domestication as tools in this

process. This leads the oppressed to internalise the views of their oppressors and begin to espouse them as their own ideas (Pouwels, 2019). Oppression in this form transcends boundaries of class, economic status or race and encourages the oppressed to oppress others (Dale and Hyslop-Margison, 2010). Formal education, according to Freire, is an example of this alienated cultural process which dehumanises and reduces students to an alienated subject, disconnected from reality, action and authentic thought (Giroux, 2010b).

In order to change this oppression, Freire therefore claims that a change is required in one of three major oppressive factors: behaviour, world views, or ethics (Freire, 2017). However, enacting this requires an understanding of the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor. Freire argues that oppressors hold a possessive consciousness, where they believe that "to be is to have" (Freire, 2017 p. 32), that is, they believe that to be human is to possess things and to aim to possess more. However, the oppressors are unable to see their monopoly of 'having' as a privilege that dehumanises others, and one which slowly dehumanises themselves (Freire, 2017). This means that the oppressors require a reflective process of humanisation as much as the oppressed - they need to develop confidence in peoples' ability to think, to want and to know (O'Brien, 2011). Hegel's master-slave dialectic is similar in which both the master and the slave are dependent on each other. Here the master's enjoyment of life, and their autonomy is based on the fact that they depend exclusively on the labour of the slave, and the slave's survival is dependent on their attachment to the master (Potamias, 2024).

However, Freire also postulates that the oppressors fear authenticity and freedom as much as the oppressed, meaning that they require the oppressed to free them. Such liberation, as sought by the oppressed for both themselves and the oppressors, could be seen as an act of love for the oppressors as it would free both groups. Yet, Freire warns that a likely result of such a revolution would be additional restrictions on the oppressors (Freire, 2017). Such restrictions would, in theory, be no more than those restrictions cast on all people as a result of the revolution, but freedom is a comparative feeling in this circumstance. The oppressed in such a scenario would feel additional freedom as they had cast off restrictions to reach the new, middle ground; in comparison though, the oppressors would be under further restrictions in order to come down from their place of oppression to a place of equality. As a result, the oppressors would be more restricted as a result of the revolution, even whilst the oppressed would experience additional freedom.

Another problem with a revolution intent on the transformation of the oppressed would be the uphill struggle that the oppressed would face in order to enact this. To be oppressed is to be under, that is, to be emotionally dependent on the oppressor, and this, according to Freire, leads the oppressed to attack other individuals instead of their oppressors. This is an attempt to imitate such oppressors (Freire, 2017). Thus, in order to enact a revolution, the oppressed must seek to humanise themselves - to seek change rather than passively accept their struggle. According to Freire, oppression is therefore a result of behaviours of imitation and fear; a restricted world-view which sees oppression as an immovable status quo, complete with ethics of exploitation and possession. These factors exist in both the oppressor and the oppressed (Freire, 2017). So then the question is raised as to how liberation can be achieved with both parties

trapped in their struggle? How is it possible for them to become aware of their own situation?

For Freire, the key to liberation is education. However, he is quick to highlight that the discovery of liberation cannot be an entirely intellectual process: it is instead reliant on the inclusion of action (Freire, 2017). Praxis in this scenario refers to a dynamic process in which action and reflection are intertwined (Joldersma, 2001). Freire argues that reflection without action is no more than thinking, but equally, action without reflection can easily become activism; instead, reflection and action must come together to allow reflection on the content of humanity with the historical version of humanity (Freire, 2017). Knowledge here is developed through the process of thematisation where reality is categorised by an individual and thus becomes unveiled. Occurring through intentionality, this method requires a conscious or knowing individual to identify objective features of reality and critically recreate knowledge of the world (Joldersma, 2001). Freire claims that by intentionally educating teachers and students, oppressor and oppressed together; by bringing them alongside each other to unveil reality and critically recreate knowledge, both groups will come to the realisation that they are permanent re-creators of knowledge who are responsible for the creation and transformation of the world and humanity as a whole (Freire, 2017). However, Roberts warns that such a process may be unfeasible; the feasibility of education as a method of transformation and liberation in an individual situation must therefore be determined through reflective communication with others (Roberts, 1996).

Roberts emphasises that some forms of praxis are in fact dehumanising (Roberts, 1998). For example, Freire himself distinguishes between revolutionary, liberating

praxis as described above, and the praxis of the dominant group. The first form- revolutionary praxis - is humanising; however, the second form of praxis - that of the dominant group - is dehumanising (Freire, 2017). The difference between the two is dialogue (Roberts, 1998).

Freire argues that to speak a true word is to transform the world. Whilst inauthentic words experience a dichotomy between action and reflection (culminating in either activism or isolated reflection), “true dialogue is an encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world” (Freire, 2017, p. 61). Thishe claims, is an existential necessity as it is the way in which people achieve significance as human beings.

Human beings are communicative beings who live in and create a social world, and part of this existence is therefore the process of recreation, both of the world and of each individual themself (Roberts, 1998). Action and reflection here become closely related with dialogue as the intermediary between them (Roberts, 1998; Freire, 2017). Dialogue in Freirean thought requires each party to search for truth; it is not the act of one person depositing ideas on another, and equally it is not a superficial exchange of ideas, instead, it is a continual act of creation and re-creation which encompasses profound love for people and the world, humility, community, faith in humanity and the vocation to be fully human (Freire, 2017). Intrinsic to dialogue is a hope with which each person and group involved fights for the transformation and liberation of the world (Lawton, 2022). In situations where dialogue occurs alongside praxis, praxis becomes humanising and the resulting humility allows people to have faith in each other (Freire, 2017). There are, of course, some who wish to change the world, but Freire warns that

those who want change often want to change the consciousness of the oppressed rather than the situation that oppresses them. As such, these people often instinctively react against any policy which stimulates the critical faculties of those they are leading (Freire, 2017). Nonetheless, liberation and, therefore, freedom and autonomy, cannot occur through the act of alienating people. When efforts to act responsibly are frustrated, or when people find themselves unable to use their faculties, dialogue breaks down, and the individuals within the situation suffer (Freire, 2017). As detailed above, the oppressors cannot lead society to freedom, for they are more trapped than the oppressed; instead, Freire argues that transformation can be brought about through a series of educational projects which slowly replace the systems of the oppressors (Freire, 2017).

A teacher's job in education is to organise and regulate the way in which the world 'enters into' the student. However, in formal education, this is missing the fact that it is dialogue which gives his meaning (Freire, 2017). Freire explains that a teacher's thinking is authenticated by the authenticity of their students' thoughts - they are a reflection of each other. Therefore, if the teacher can trust the student and their creative power, they can partner with their students. This would allow the teachers and the students to create thoughts which generate action upon the world, which generate transformation (Freire, 2017). Yet formal education does not take this form. Instead, Freire describes formal education as "banking education" (Freire, 2017, p. 50); a dehumanising form of teaching where the teacher is seen to know everything, and the students know nothing (Joldersma, 2001).

In a banking model of education, the goal is to indoctrinate students and train them to conform and adapt to the existing social norms (Dale and Hyslop-Margison, 2010). It is education "suffering from narration sickness" (Freire, 2017, p. 57). Banking education for Freire is based on the assumption that there is a dichotomy between the world and humanity, with humanity existing merely as a spectator which leads to a situation where good students are simply those who are receptive to the depositing of information (Freire, 2017; Joldersma, 2001). Within this form of education, there exists a misunderstanding of knowledge. Knowledge is assumed to be a package which can be neatly presented as objective and complete and which can therefore be deposited into students, who are seen as passive recipients (Joldersma, 2001). This is in direct contrast to the form of dialogue which Freire previously described as reflective and action-based. Joldersma explains that when knowledge is portrayed as objective and complete, it suggests a world which is unchanging and unchangeable and suggests that those in authority will perpetually hold more knowledge than the individual who is seeking education (Joldersma, 2001). This dehumanises the individuals who are within the institution and prepares them for a life in which society is divided between the oppressors and the oppressed (Freire, 2017).

Dialogue as constant communication increases both the chances of prosperity and victory in a situation, and also challenges social realities by reposing them as problems which can be addressed through critical analysis and reflection. For Freire, dialogue is not just about the deepening of understanding on a topic. However, it is instead a necessary part of creating change in the world, for it enhances community, builds social capital, and ultimately, therefore, leads to societal justice and individual flourishing (Freire, 2017).

At a basic level, Freire's method of problem-posing education sees the teacher present material to the students for consideration, followed by the teacher re-considering earlier considerations as the students present their own reflections. This type of education, where students are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves, will see the students feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge (Freire, 2017). This is because viewing challenges as interrelated to each other results in critical comprehension of the whole; challenges evoke new challenges, and new understanding follows as reality is transformed in the mind of the learner.

This view is echoed by hooks (1994), who maintains that teaching in a respectful and soul-caring way is necessary for learning to begin at the most deep and intimate levels. However, as hooks acknowledges, teaching in this way places extra demands on teachers and other educators with regard to authenticity and commitment to self-actualisation (Specia & Osman, 2015). Yet Freire argued that such an act of knowing cannot be reached without authentic dialogue, which unites the learner and the educator as two subjects through the cognition of a knowable object.

Consequently, to achieve liberation, Freire argues that, instead of the banking concept of education, we need problem-posing education which provides a consciousness of consciousness (Joldersma, 2001). Additionally, Ricci argues that school education is not preparation for life but rather, busy work, which is disconnected from the world and not relevant to those learning it. Instead, Ricci argues that real-life learning happens through real-life experiences. He thus advocates for a system of learning where "all

learners should be empowered and have substantive say in what, when, where and how they learn" (Ricci, 2011, pp. 45-46).

Education, therefore, does not have to follow the format of the banking system. Instead, whilst educational practice requires a theoretical stance from the educator, this stance does not have to match the reality to which one has become accustomed. Orientation within the world is the result of sense image, thought-language and a combination of both subjectivity and objectivity, with the aim of transformation (Freire, 2000). Individuals, as opposed to animals, have a sense of purpose rather than instinctive routines:

> We presuppose labor in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of the bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.
>
> (Marx, 2007, p. 198)

Freire's work on education, therefore, builds on Marxist principles such as that quoted above.

Freire (2000) argues that any educational process, including teaching adults to read and write, requires this theoretical background to be effective; that is, the teacher must have the theoretical knowledge before they can enact their skills in reality. Whilst

teachers in formal education have been reduced to 'technicians' with no control over their practice or classroom, Freire argued that the act of teaching is not the passing on of a technical action, but an instrument of men which leads towards their orientation in the world. It is an act of knowing (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 2010b). For Freire, action is not work because of the physical effort that is used; it is work because of the consciousness of the subject with relation to his effort (Freire, 1998). Indeed, Specia and Osman argue that education, when it takes the form of a practice of freedom, is a form of teaching which is available for everyone to learn, especially those who view the profession in a way as sacred. This method focuses not only on the sharing of information, but also the sharing of intellectual and spiritual growth (Specia & Osman, 2015).

Education, however, cannot occur in isolation, or through the lens of individualism; rather, it requires the learner to engage in community and dialogue. Freire argues that without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there is no education (Freire, 2017). Liberating education is therefore found in acts of cognition rather than in the arbitrary transfer of information. Pedagogy is, for Freire, an ethical enterprise and one which can right the problems of injustice (Joldersma, 2001). However, education in this format needs to be careful to turn dependence into independence rather than attempting to instil independence within a learner. For independence cannot be bestowed upon someone as a gift, instead it can only occur as the result of the process of transformation (Freire, 2017). Instead, dialogical relations which allow people to co-operate in perceiving an object, and which encourage them to teach each other whilst being mediated by reality, allows problems to be posed in order to re-form reflections. Problem-posing education demythologises reality and allows the

oppressed to view their oppression as limiting and challenging, rather than viewing it as an unalterable, fated situation. This is then what truly allows a person to gain knowledge and achieve conscientization, ultimately leading to humanisation (Freire, 2017).

In agreement with Freire, hooks (1994) regards literacy as a method by which those who are marginalised and discriminated against within society are able to obtain a critical consciousness. She argues that a teacher who is able to acknowledge their own authority, and the limitations of this authority, removes the risk of the classroom being used as a space of domination and thus allows both teacher and student to learn together (hooks, 1994). A counter-cultural move, such as diffusing the hierarchy, leads to the creation of a sense of community and allows the classroom to become a place that is both mind-expanding and life-sustaining. This dispersal of the power hierarchy and the authority that goes along with it, can then be seen to permeate the culture of the classroom and the institution in which the teacher is situated. By acknowledging the limits of their authority as an 'other' to the group, the person who traditionally retains the power in the scenario (nominally the teacher) may at first be seen to attenuate their authority. However, the process actually augments the power of the individuals in the group and brings all to the same level. It is empowerment, rather than demotion (hooks, 1994). Aronowitz (2008) argued that:

> Few of even the so-called educators ask the question: What matters beyond the reading, writing, and numeracy that are presumably taught in the elementary and secondary grades? The old question of what a kid needs to become an

> informed ‘citizen’ capable of participating in making the large and small public decisions that affect the larger world as well as everyday life receives honorable mention but not serious consideration. These unasked questions are symptoms of a new regime of educational expectations that privileges job readiness above any other educational values
>
> (Aronowitz, 2008, p. xii)

Freire (2017) postulates that whilst illiterate individuals know that peoples’ actions can transform, they have been overcome by the myth of silence, which has led them to believe that their own actions are inferior and do not possess the power of transformation. They have been told that they have no voice; that their own work does not belong to them (Freire, 2017). Yet knowing, as described above, requires a dialectical movement from action to reflection and back again, and so any individual who wishes to become literate must engage in abstraction in order to orient himself in the world which he critiques. For knowing is not simply an objective task, but a subjective perception of reality (Freire, 1998).

In comparison, hooks (1994) theorises that in order to teach students how to be free, and how to transgress against issues of boundaries, whether racial, sexual, class, or some other form of oppression, the teacher must also be aiming for such freedom; to join the students on the path to self-actualisation and freedom rather than leading them on a path that the teacher has not themselves followed. Transgression for hooks

is empowerment – by employing "pedagogical strategies that create ruptures in the established order, that promote modes of learning which challenge bourgeois hegemony" (hooks, 1994, p. 185). This leads teaching to become a performative act which brings into the classroom a 'safe' space for spontaneity; for change and invention and shifts in thinking which act as a catalyst to draw out unique elements of each classroom and allow the students to open their minds, engage in critical thinking and study rigorously, free from indoctrination or ideology (Specia & Osman, 2015). Whilst hooks and Freire disagree about whether the practice of freedom in education can exist within a traditional, formal classroom setting, they both agree with the foundational thought that education is about opening the mind to reality, rather than restricting it to the hegemonic ideology of the time. This leads the educator and the learner to become equally knowing subjects; they know only their perception of the world. Literacy should, in this way, prepare an individual for a self-managed life where he is able to self-reflect, know himself and be able to set conditions for producing a new life through the transformation of nature and himself (Aronowitz, 2009). Freire, in this way, is viewed as a foundational thinker for critical literacy, which focuses on a concern for both human and non-human others who are in a vulnerable social position and the ways in which such social inequities are bound to the use of language (Takaki, 2021).

Freire (2017) argues that in this movement, the individual achieves freedom. However, oppression does not only apply to the individual; instead, society and culture must also distance itself from the dominators at a superstructure level. This means that the

learners must discover that wider culture is the reason behind their attitudes and move to remedy this through the dialectic of overdetermination (Freire, 2000). Education, and the freedom it brings, should offer a way to think beyond the present, to engage in a critical dialogue with history and imagine a future different to that of the present (Giroux, 2010b). Thinking, Adorno states, "is not the intellectual reproduction of what already exists anyway. As long as it doesn't break off, thinking has a secure hold on possibility." (Adorno, 1998, pp. 291-292). Culture, therefore, including media culture, is also pedagogical and should be viewed as a teaching machine. Freire argues that "authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it" (Freire, 2017, p. 80).

However, Nicolaides and Fernandes (2008) contend that the English understanding of Freire's work is based on a mistranslation where "freedom" should, in reality, be translated as autonomy. Furthermore, the Brazilian understanding of autonomy, on which Freire's work is based, is subtly different to the British understanding of the term. According to the Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais, autonomy is the:

> Capacity to take sides, elaborate personal projects and participate comparatively in collective projects, be aware, get organized in terms of chosen aims, self-govern, participate in the management of collective action, establish criteria and elect ethical principles etc. In other words, autonomy deals with a relationship, wholly integrated with different life dimensions, which involves intellectual, moral, affective and social political aspects.
>
> (Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais, 1997)

Thus, when Freire discusses education as freedom, he is not aligning himself with individualism as typically understood, but rather with a form of autonomy whereby the person is aware of the group which their actions affect; where one should act independently, but also be responsible for how their choices affect the others in their group. It is individuality with awareness. Freedom, therefore, as expressed in the English translations of Freire's work, is to behave freely but within the limits imposed by responsibility (Nicolaides & Fernandes, 2008, p. 7).

5.2. Conclusion

Freire's argument for freedom holds more practical discussion than the philosophers who have come before, with clear links to education and real-life applications of his ideas. Freire argued for freedom as humanity's ability to become beings for themselves, a process which he named conscientization (Freire, 2017). This process relied on developing a method of education which allowed an individual to develop their own consciousness and also described the state of inquisitiveness and exploration in which an individual was perpetually engaged in a dynamic learning process (Ryan, 2011). Freire, therefore, believed that lifelong learning, as emphasised in unschooling, was an essential part of freedom for an individual.

However, Freire also acknowledged that such freedom was not something which came to all of humanity, as some individuals would be unable to escape their attachment to the world and, as such, could not consider liberation (O'Brien, 2011). Rather, such

individuals may find themselves dehumanised and oppressed (Freire, 1998). This oppression then leads to a situation in which the oppressed internalise the view of the oppressors, much like that of formal education, where students mould to the view of their teachers (Dale and Hyslop-Margison, 2010). Freire argued that changing this oppression required a change in one of three factors: ethics, worldview or behaviour, although he also acknowledged that in order to enact this, the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed would have to be understood (Freire, 2017).

According to this understanding, the oppressors would be unable to see their own role in the oppression and dehumanisation of others and consequently, they would require a process of reflection and humanisation in order to seek liberation (O'Brien, 2011). At the same time, the oppressed would have to seek to liberate both themselves and their oppressors, as Freire held that the oppressors would fear authenticity and freedom (Freire, 2017). Yet freedom in this situation would not be without problems - the oppressors, in order to be made equal to the oppressed, would have to surrender to greater restrictions on their freedom; additionally, the oppressed would have to seek both humanisation and unity in order to achieve liberation successfully (Freire, 2017).

Freire here saw education as the key to such liberation via the process of praxis - an intertwining of action and reflection (Freire, 2017). Such education would require knowledge that was developed through thematisation and would be best enacted if the oppressed and the oppressors could be intentionally educated together. However, this would rely on the creation of dialogue between the two groups, where individuals could encounter each other through the mediation of the world and, at the same time, name the world (Freire, 2017). This dialogue would serve as the intermediary between action

and reflection and, when it occurred alongside praxis, would become humanising and allow for liberation (Roberts, 1998; Freire, 2017).

Accordingly, Freire believed that a teacher's job was to regulate and organise how such knowledge of the world is absorbed by the student. Within formal education, he saw that the required dialogue was missing, describing instead a banking model of education in which information is merely deposited within students through rote learning and memorisation (Freire, 2017). Additionally, formal education, according to Freire, has misunderstood the concept of knowledge, seeing it as an objective and complete package to be presented to a student rather than a dialogue to be held. Instead of this system of formal education (Joldersma, 2011), Freire argued for a problem-posing version of education in which material is presented to students for consideration in dialogue with the teacher. This version of education will go on to provide the framework of the model of autonomous education at the end of the thesis and sees students posed with increasingly challenging problems relating to themselves. This, according to Freire, leads to a new understanding of reality and a transformation of the mind of the learner, and ultimately leads to liberation (Freire, 2017; Joldersma, 2001). As a result, pedagogy, according to Freire, is more than just self-improvement; it is an ethical enterprise (Joldersma, 2001).

However, Freire warned that such education should not occur in isolation, as this negates the role of dialogue. Additionally, he warned educators to avoid attempts to instil independence in the learner, emphasising that it could only be achieved through the process of transformation (Freire, 2017). hooks (1994) continued to develop the ideas of Freire by expanding his criticism to the power structures of the classroom.

According to hooks, a teacher should be able to both acknowledge their authority in the classroom, as well as acknowledge the limitations of that authority, with the resulting space allowing the student and teacher to learn together rather than becoming a space of domination (hooks, 1994). The emphasis that both Freire and hooks place on community and equal power is central to the concept of schooling as described further in chapter six.

Turning to literacy as part of education, Freire posited that illiterate individuals have been overcome by a myth of silence, which has convinced them that their actions and voice are inferior to others (Freire, 2017). Literacy then teaches individuals how to transgress against such boundaries, empowering people to challenge the oppressors and allowing transformation and liberation for those who were previously silenced (hooks, 1994). As a result, literacy was seen to prepare an individual for a self-reflective and self-managed life in which the individual achieves freedom, although steps must be taken to ensure that society also distances itself from oppression and domination.

Consequently, freedom for Freire is achieved through free action, but actions which are limited by responsibility.

6. Autonomy and Education

Autonomy has therefore been defined in several ways. Hume first defined autonomy as freedom of action, paired with responsibility for action, for all of mankind. This is very similar to the understanding of freedom held by Freire, who argued that freedom is achieved through free but responsible action. In direct contrast to this, Nietzsche and Foucault both saw freedom as a form of self-governance and control, in which ethics and education, alongside personal transformation. Standing alone, Kant offered a more complex definition of freedom in which an individual is free if they are internally motivated, rational and following the maxim of morality.

This chapter will now synthesise the knowledge gained about education from the first two chapters, with the different forms of autonomy discussed above as preparation for the creation of the model of autonomous education in the following chapter.

Petrovic and Rolstad (2017) suggest that the starting point for conscientization, such as that proposed by Freire, should be the pursuit of self-love, in order to combat formal education's focus on self-preservation among massification, closely followed by the love of others. This focus is argued to enhance personal autonomy and also benefit the collectivist autonomy of society (Petrovic & Rolstad, 2017). The concept of collective autonomy within the work of Freire also reflects this idea, as the term autonomy in this usage reflects both individualism and an awareness of the effect of individual actions

on the group. This means that autonomy is both individualist and collectivist in effect (Nicolaides & Fernandes, 2008).

This also echoes the work of Ricci (2012) on unschooling, who argues that unschooling, and the autonomy that is an intrinsic part of this, is based on respect. Respect, according to this theory, manifests not only in society respecting the learner but also in the learner respecting those with whom they interact (Ricci, 2012). As such, Ricci argues that actions should be understood in the communal context in which they occur, allowing the learner to experience reciprocal love, trust and respect with the communities that they belong to, and with which they interact (Ricci, 2012). This respect is then demonstrated through an awareness of one's actions on the people that surround oneself and a care and compassion for others, where flexibility and fluidity are practised daily (Ricci, 2012). Such processes are actively encouraged in unschooling. However, Ricci argues that within formal education, respect does not appear to be as common.

In 1997, Craig and Pepler found that an incidence of bullying happens every 30 minutes in classrooms across Ontario, and every 7 minutes in schoolyards (Craig and Pepler, 1997). According to Ricci, this lack of respect between students could then be seen as a reflection of the lack of respect shown by adults for children within formal education (Ricci, 2012). Instead, Ricci (2012) proposes that unschooling nurtures an environment where respect and self-direction are encouraged, and therefore, there is less potential for bullying. Ricci acknowledges that respect is not a process which has an end; there are, of course, moments where disrespect seeps through; however, he claims that the

difference in unschooling is that these incidents are not dealt with through anger and coercion, but through understanding and redirection. In formal education, the nature of the setup means that children's voices are often not respected; if a child chooses to opt out of an activity, then their feelings are not acknowledged, discussed and respected, but instead they are forced into the activity or punished for their choice. Holt writes on the same topic:

> Suppose you are a student at a school and want to learn something they are not teaching. One day, you find that some other school is teaching it. You say, "I want to go to this other school and learn this thing they are teaching. Will you give me credit for it?" In almost all cases, their answer will be No. The other school probably wouldn't let you learn the thing they are teaching anyway. They would say, "If you want to learn something here, you have to be one of our students and learn all the other things we are teaching." Learning, in short, comes in packages—four-year packages, sometimes twelve-year packages. You may have a choice of packages, but you always have to buy a whole package, or get nothing. A strange procedure. Obviously, it has more to do with merchandising than with learning.
>
> (Holt, 2017, p. 107)

This is partly due to the institutional belief that schools exist for children to learn, and to learn, they must comply (Ricci, 2012). In contrast, Ricci claims that rules in

unschooling, where they exist, are often learner-centred in as much as it is the community of learners and educators which proposes and challenges rules, and all individuals are encouraged to take part in this process (Ricci, 2012). With the rules being a community experience, rather than hierarchically handed down through a power structure, the breaking of these rules would theoretically be felt more severely, and so they are less likely to be broken. Issues when they do arise do not then need to be dealt with using autocracy, coercion and violence, but rather can be resolved with deep democracy and respect. This means that these systems are modelled consistently throughout the unschooling experience.

As discussed in the previous chapter, hooks (1994) views respectful teaching as a necessary component for learning, and alongside that, argues for the importance of deconstructing the power hierarchies within the classroom. Similarly, Laricchia (2014) talks of moving away from systems where adults exert power over children in order to control them, which she argues, allows unschooling to flourish. Laricchia proposes that, in order to solve this problem, it would be better to remove age distinctions from our vocabulary, although she does not mention solutions for other forms of power hierarchies within the classroom. In removing age distinctions from use, she postulates that the concept of power is not in itself troublesome as power is simply a representation of things that we can achieve – it is theoretical action - however, by engaging in age distinctions she claims that individuals allow the generic concept of power to be corrupted by the concept of power over others (Laricchia, 2014). Whilst Larrichia acknowledges that adults do have more power than young children, as they

have more experience and often more physical capabilities than young children in particular, she does not believe that adults should have power over children. Instead, this experience and capability should be used in a supportive manner where all members of a group bring their own experiences and abilities to work as a group in support of each other (Laricchia, 2014). However, this transfer of power relies highly on the existence of trust, both of the child and of the adults tasked with the child's care. Additionally, the argument regarding the transfer of power is in contradiction with Nietzsche's view of man, whom he regards as a ludicrous herd animal, overwhelmed with a god-like view of his own power (Nietzsche, 1998b). Power here is seen as a positive characteristic; it is one of the characteristics of the sovereign individual, and Nietzsche praises the individual who is able to escape cultural shaping and instead achieve freedom of will, power, autonomy and supra-ethicality (Nietzsche, 1998b). According to this theory, then, the power to stand alone and to disregard the shaping of culture and authority is a strength which leads to freedom, which is in direct contrast to the arguments of unschooling above.

According to Gray and Riley (2015), trust within unschooling is high, with 76% of the unschooling parents that they studied claiming that they either did not deliberately monitor or guide their child's learning, or that they chose only to facilitate learning brought to them by their child. Indeed, even the 24% of parents who fell outside of this figure were described as having an educational goal for their child which did not require specific learning. In other words, the parents expressed a desire, but it was not enforced according to the self-report. In these cases, Gray and Riley claim that the

parent has empowered their child(ren) by acknowledging the limits of their own authority (Gray and Riley, 2015).

Ricci refers to the experience of Desmarais, a previously unschooled child, who places the role of the adult into advocacy. This takes several forms, including advocacy for young people, as well as advocacy for their need to be free, for their individuality and their passions, and their right to follow those passions. She defines the entire lifestyle as a transfer of power: "homeschooling is putting the power over their offspring's education into the parents' hand [...] unschooling [...] is putting the power of their education and life into the hands of the learner" (Ricci, et al., 2011, p. 151).

Nietzsche (1998) described an individual who was overly affected by a sense of their own power and thus viewed themselves as a deity, raising similarities to adults previously discussed who take excessive oppressive power within formal education. Similarly, Foucault spoke of "the appearance of a new modality of power in which each individual receives as his status his own individuality" (Foucault, 1979, p. 99). Such power, according to Foucault, is everywhere, and is unavoidable; it is the ability to maintain freedom whilst experiencing such power relations, then which liberates one from the effects of exaggerated power (Batters, 2011). In order to maintain freedom despite power relations, it is therefore argued that an individual must spend the time to fully know themselves and the things that can be hoped for (Foucault, 1987). Maintaining self-reflection throughout education could therefore be seen as an antidote to excessive power - it is not as important to take power from others, as described by Desmarais. However, instead an individual should know their own individuality and be

able to stand securely in that in the face of a power struggle. This is another strength of unschooling.

Unschooling, particularly as described by Ricci (2012), works to empower individuals to follow their own interests and desires and to trust themselves with such decisions. Whilst self-reflection is not an explicitly described component of unschooling, the emphasis on a learner-centred approach suggests that it is important for a student to not only know their interests and passions, but also to be able to express these within the learning environment.

Kant's view of freedom and autonomy is also clearly embedded in the idea of sovereignty, which includes the ideas of sovereignty over oneself and one's own decisions, a critical self-reflection of one's own actions, and the ability to review oneself in pursuit of 'good'. Yet Kant also raises the issue of duty; the right to one's own choices and own decisions is balanced by one's responsibility to others (Weinrib, 2018). Kant's understanding of human beings as moral beings led him to claim that human will is good, and as such, individuals each have a duty to follow this (Wilson et al., 2018). These duties, Kant explains, should be held above any desires that one may have, and it is only such duties that hold moral worth (Hill, 2021). Whilst unschooling is not an advocate of duty over desire (due to its focus on learner-centred education), respect and trust are central to its philosophy, and these can be seen to have some factors in common with Kant's concepts of sovereignty and duty. In relation to this, Ricci (2012) reasons that unschooling is ultimately a learner-centred, democratic approach to learning. For him, this means that the learner has ultimate control; they are

the ones who choose the parameters of how they learn something (Ricci, 2012). Rather than viewing unschooling as a philosophy or method of education, Ricci views unschooling as a worldview, later referring to it as a lifestyle which is all-encompassing (Ricci, 2011). He explains that unschooling "is based on the idea that all learners should be empowered and have a substantive say in what, when, where, and how they learn" (Ricci, 2012:, p. 45-46), meaning that, within this lifestyle, students are ultimately empowered to make their own decision, not only about their learning, but about the running of their lives as a whole and the spaces in which they exist. (Ricci *et al*., 2011). However, Ricci is keen to balance this freedom against the responsibility that comes to both a person's own self and their community. This responsibility, whilst not being externally imposed, is, Ricci argues, a natural development as a person pursues life. This allows unschooling to respect individuals without ignoring communities (Ricci, *et al*., 2011).

Of the four forms of freedom discussed explicitly by Kant in 1785, it is his concept of practical freedom which seems most relevant to the arguments of unschooling. Practical freedom, claims Kant, exists in two forms: negative and positive. In negative practical freedom, one is able to will an action independently of natural causes: one is able to be the beginning of a state itself, free from interference from previous cause and effect. Positive freedom, in contrast, describes a will that acts based on rational principles – the actions that this individual begins are not created by blind chance, but by logic, reason and consideration (Kant, 2017). However, it could be argued that positive freedom is not entirely relevant as, for Kant, it is this ability which separates young children and adults: we hold adults to be morally responsible, yet we do not afford children the same respect. For example, in the United Kingdom, a child can be

tried as an ‘adult’ by a criminal court from the age of 10, this is the age at which British society has dictated that a child becomes responsible for their actions, at which it is assumed that their actions have not occurred by chance but through a process of reason and consideration (Epstein, 2007). It is in this context that comparative freedom may be more beneficial, as Kant applies this concept to those without rational thought, such as a young child. In this case, an action is free if one has motivated themselves to complete it, and this form of freedom is not subject to the categorical imperative. Following this belief, though, could lead to a situation where someone who is viewed as rational is able to exert power over someone who is viewed as immature or non-rational.

Laricchia, however, raises the issue of an overcompensation for the traditional power hierarchy, whereby parents give up too much of the power and leave children feeling entitled regardless of the situation that they are in. Such a move does not resolve the us-versus-them mentality, but rather perpetuates it in a new form; in a similar vein to Freire’s concern regarding the oppressed becoming the oppressor if transformation of culture does not occur (Freire, 2017). Both Ricci (2012) and Laricchia (2014) postulate that only the child knows what they need and indeed, what they desire with regards to their passions. A problem occurs if they are not trusted to have knowledge of this; then the power remains firmly with the adult. Equally, if the adult is not trusted by the child to listen to and respect the child’s knowledge, then the child will not disclose the information, and the empowerment of the ‘other’ within the unschooling context cannot occur (Laricchia, 2014).

Laricchia acknowledges that in such a situation, children are going to hold less power to contribute than others in the group, which is natural as they have not experienced as much in life; however, by valuing everyone's contributions, unschooling as a family unit allows all group members to see that the group is more powerful together than apart (Laricchia, 2014). If this thought process can be expanded to the local and then the global community, this reduces the us-versus-them distinction and creates a more equitable power distribution throughout society. However, such a concept seems highly ideological; people are not going to agree at all times, and it is at times of disagreement that power struggles often surface. This is particularly pertinent if the disagreement is over contradicting needs rather than contradictory wants.

Laricchia suggests that, in the case of unschooling, a democratic environment resolves a number of these potential conflicts that exist within our lives, in times of true conflict where needs cannot be met equally, situations often have to be passed to a more powerful individual to make a judgment on the best way to proceed. However, Laricchia later refers to the importance of maintaining an open mind, and maybe this is an addendum that needs to be considered when one works to redistribute power amongst a group (Laricchia, 2014). There are inevitably times when conflict will arise as a result of contradictory needs, yet if all parties can maintain an open mind to the possible resolutions, there is a much higher chance that a decision can be reached which is accepted by all parties. Indeed, in such a situation, discussion can often reach a resolution without any one person feeling overruled or ignored. The power distribution can be maintained.

Freire also comments on the fact that society and education are not fair or just; they continually side with whoever has more power in the situation. In the current capitalist system, the oppressor tends to benefit the most from the decisions which trivialise and burden the oppressed (Freire, 1986). At the time of Freire's writing, this system was particularly evident in Brazilian education. Whilst in the UK, the class system sees the majority of learners disadvantaged, in 1970s Brazil, working-class and poor citizens were not just disadvantaged, they were completely excluded from higher-level schooling, college, university and professional jobs and careers (Mendonca, 2020). This clear inequality, created and perpetuated by the hegemonic upper-class minority, makes an argument for why Freire's own social commentary focused on the effects of social justice on education, especially when one considers the detail of his arguments regarding the need for literacy and education to achieve conscientization. Without education for the working class and the poor, these people, who are among the most oppressed in capitalist society, have no access to education, no access to literacy and therefore no ability to gain the conscientization required to break free from their oppression. The injustice of the situation has not only removed the freedom of the people, but it has also removed their ability to gain this freedom through the process of meritocracy (Mendonca, 2020).

Young argues that both a person and their individual identity are formed by their affinity with groups and with others. We as individuals, therefore, are a sum of our experiences and the experiences of those with whom we interact; we are a sum of the parts of our society. As an alternative to justice, then, Pavlich and Ratner (1996) suggest replacing

grand narratives, including justice, with local narratives which reflect local rationalities.

Young (1990), Pavlich and Ratner, and Freire all acknowledge that overlooking difference leads to the marginalisation of the disadvantaged, it also allows groups to become hegemonic, which is then further perpetuated by the belief that such groupings are neutral and natural, rather than seeing them as dependent on social context. Whilst Freire argues for unity of the oppressed groups, overlooking the difference between the oppressed and the oppressor maintains the status quo of domination and reduces the chances of liberation (Freire, 2017).

Ultimately, such beliefs lead to the current socio-political landscape where advantaged hegemonic groups are viewed as normative, and are able to perpetuate and legitimise their advantage through oppression and the devaluing of the other. Whilst all those who are oppressed are inhibited in their ability to develop and exercise their natural needs and capacities, the method and experience of oppression is not the same for everyone. The same has to be true of schooling; formal education, to a large degree, treats everyone as if they are the same. In this way, it follows the concept of universal justice, but people have never been the same.

Formal education, according to Freire, is an alienated cultural process which dehumanises and reduces individuals to an alienated subject, disconnected from reality, action and authentic thought (Freire, 2017). By assuming that all children have the same needs and the same learning requirements at the same time, and by following an arbitrary curriculum, justice is not done within education and freedom is not

achieved (McEneaney and Meyer, 2000). Whilst these students may well experience equal treatment, and possibly even equal opportunity, without their education experience being tailored to them as individuals, this 'one size fits all approach' disadvantages more students than it benefits. Students who are more able than the level of teaching fail to meet their potential, and students who are less able than the level of teaching fail to progress. Instead, it is only the 'Goldilocks' students, who possess exactly the same ability as the level of teaching, who truly benefit from this system (Nash, 2007). In contrast to this equality-based approach, unschooling follows a more just course of action.

By acknowledging that every individual is at a different place in their life path, and that they therefore possess different abilities and have different needs, unschooling follows an equitable path of distributive justice, where resources are allocated according to the differences in the group (Morrison, 2007). In addition, due to the smaller number of students in unschooling as opposed to formal schooling, and the tendency for unschooling to occur in family groups, the groups that are allocated resources are often much smaller than the standard 30-35 students per class in the British education system (Gray and Riley, 2013). This theoretically ensures that each student has a much higher, if not complete, chance of taking part in an education experience that is tailored to them (Sánchez Tyson, 2019). This system, therefore, allows both individuality and social groupings to thrive and promotes the importance of freedom within the educational context, in a way that formal education simply cannot. However, this could raise issues if a system such as unschooling was adopted by a larger scale grouping; whilst individual education is possible in small-scale, individual settings, once applied to a larger group, the need to meet multiple needs at the same time would make this a

challenging endeavour and one that would be beneficial to consider in future research on the topic.

Kant's argument for the power of free choice is particularly pertinent here. Linked to freedom and autonomy, Kant emphasised the importance of the power to do or not do something in alignment with one's desires (Pereboom, 2016). Unschooling also places more emphasis on student choice and democracy in learning. Again, assisted by the smaller numbers in the uptake groups, but also due to the philosophical context of unschooling, students in this situation experience participatory education, where their decisions and even their preferences make a difference to their experience (Ricci, 2012). In contrast, formal education makes little more than a nominal 'nod' to the input of its students, with any choices that the students do have being socially constrained and stratified (Callender and Dougherty, 2018). Unschooling's focus on student voice not only increases the actual choices available to students, and the individuality of their educational experience, but it also increases their feelings of validity, justice and individuality in society as they frequently witness the effects of their opinions and choices, and the trust which adults have in their ability to express and make these choices (Holt, 2019; Laricchia, 2014). In these situations, care and compassion allow the learner to be led away from the self-focus that can be problematic if one is directing their own learning. Instead, by thinking about the community and others, the learner becomes more aware of the learning that can occur from others. Ricci also argues that it helps learners understand the importance of the global 'us' and the provision of moments of kindness. However, it should also be acknowledged that, as described in the chapter on Kant, choice is not always beneficial. Some choices, for example, would be unpleasant for the individual involved, and the inability to choose all of the desired

options would also decrease apparent freedom. In both these examples, not all choices are equal, and so there is a reduction in the apparent freedom; thus, choice as described above is not akin to freedom (Alarcón, 2010).

A concern that is often raised with regard to unschooling is how to avoid a situation where children do not learn key skills such as reading and writing. Ricci defends unschooling in this regard and suggests that "reading in a print culture happens naturally, seamlessly and holistically" (Ricci, 2012, p. 48). That is because we live in a digital, multimodal culture, where print is a common experience. When a learner begins to want to learn things that are not accessible through the knowledge of those around them, they must learn to read in order to access that material. Therefore, reading and writing are learnt because otherwise, their interests are inaccessible to them. However, this does not take into account the number of adults within modern British society who cannot read. According to the Literacy Trust, 18% of 16-65 year olds within England have very poor skills in literacy, and this therefore leads to questions regarding Ricci's claim that children will learn literacy through exposure (National Literacy Trust, 2024). Whilst these skills are taught in schools, arguably in more detail, students are not necessarily internally motivated to learn them, and so they are less likely to be understood and fully learnt. Turning instead to unschooling means that a child will learn these skills when they are ready, or when they need to. This means that they are more likely to enjoy their learning rather than seeing it as a chore and are therefore more likely to retain the information learnt than through an externally imposed curriculum. In addition, unschooling is not about children learning in isolation; it is about relationships

and community, where sometimes a person is the learner and sometimes they are a teacher. It is a system based on flexibility and fluidity; it does not deny that people need others to help them learn (Ricci, 2012).

Grades reduce a person's success to only academic subjects; they ignore their successes in other areas and reduce them to a letter or a number, impacting their self-image and evaluating them on a set of narrow and arbitrary criteria (Kohn, 2011). Children and adults develop skills at different speeds, and Ricci argues that it is important that this is remembered - that gaining a high grade does not mean that a person is better than others. Instead, when approached with care and compassion, competition within schools can be managed successfully (Ricci, 2012). Whilst formal education may make token steps towards this ideal, such as differentiated tasks, student-centeredness and the importance of play, true learner-centeredness is not possible if the learning has been planned before the teacher has met the learners. Generic teaching, Ricci argues, is never learner-centred: mandated curricula do not take into account the needs of their learners (Ricci, 2012). Freire (2017) then utilises an alternative framing regarding unity by proposing a deschooled society.

Unity, he argues, is not an outdated concept. Rather, it is essential to allow smaller groups to work towards a better situation by joining forces against oppression. Without unity, small groups or individuals would find themselves lacking in social power and in conflict with similar groups, rather than united against an oppressive force (Freire, 2017). Yet Freire does not argue that this unity occurs spontaneously; instead, he argues that such minority groups must mature to a point of collaboration in order to become effective. Maturity here refers to growth, found in seeking multiculturality and

working together to enable the smaller groups to have a dialogic relationship with the hegemonic groups in society. This practice is similar to the arguments of Laricchia and Pavlich and Ratner above: that is, the argument that within a family, or small schooling group, all members must have equal power, but Freire goes further in developing the method for this found in the description of unity above. Additionally, Freire emphasises that unity does not occur naturally; instead, it must be artificially created and worked upon by each individual to ensure that empowerment occurs for all within the group (Freire, 2017). To a large extent, then, individual justice and freedom are, according to Freire, secured through the rejection of individualistic thinking (Rozas, 2007). In contrast, within unschooling, this concept of unity is found in a focus on democracy and community.

Ricci (2012) suggests that in order to learn, even at a very basic level, one relies on those who create the material from which they learn. That is, the website maker, the author, the cameraman for the documentary or the toy maker. Learning almost never happens in isolation. Furthering this argument, Ricci compares the learner/teacher relationship to yin and yang, where every learner is a teacher and every teacher is a learner. Such a relationship is proposed to remain powerful, providing that the learner is in control of the process, as that is when the learner is most appreciative of the help that is being received. This mutually constructive experience occurs both locally and on a larger scale (Ricci, 2012).

An example of this occurs in the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, where, by focusing on developing a child's intellect through symbolic representation, the system encourages young children to explore both their environment and themselves through all their

languages - expressive, cognitive, ethical and relational (Reggio Children, 2010). The aim here is to celebrate achievement in personal expression and the reflection of one's pattern of thinking using multiple modes of communication (Edwards *et al*., 2011). In Reggio itself, educators frequently refer to 'civil', with children believed to have rights to civility, civilisation and civic consequence: a far cry from the societal view of children and teenagers in both America and the United Kingdom. The high civic community is further demonstrated by the relations which bind the citizens together: instead of the hierarchical and vertical relations which bind most Western societies, the citizens in Reggio Emilia are bound by horizontal relations such as cooperation, reciprocity, and social solidarity. In a system which resembles the ideals of Functionalism, mass organisation, cross-class meetings to solve social problems and an emphasis on protagonism as a form of democracy are popular traditions, creating a society with strong collectivist tendencies. This is reflected in the educational vision and mission of the area, which favours participatory democracy and civic community (Edwards *et al*., 2011). Yet, Reggio Emilia is still a formal educational system rather than a group of unschoolers. This therefore begins to suggest that autonomy in education may be possible within institutions as well as in less structured groupings.

In relation to identity and community, Freire theorised that:

> Awareness of the world, which makes awareness of myself viable, makes unviable the immutability of the world. Awareness of the world and awareness of myself make me not only a being in the world, but one with the world and with

> others. It makes me a being capable of intervening in the world and not only of adapting to it.
>
> (Freire, 2004, p. 15).

There is always a connection between history, the world and a person's identity; it is difficult to argue that one's identity is not in some way produced by experience and context. Yet whilst identity is a social production of discourse, if the discourse to which you have been exposed is a progressive, liberal discourse rooted in mutual respect and removal of oppression, then Freire argues that this active citizenship and exposure to ideas has allowed the discovery of true interests. We as individuals are both the object and the subject of history (Freire, 2004). It is then the active pursuit of these interests, rooted in respect and dialogue, that allows freedom at an individual level. If all people are then afforded this freedom, that freedom becomes societal, and unity can be achieved, not only between groups of the oppressed but between all groups in society (Freire, 2017).

As previously discussed, in the current postmodern context, individual choices and needs are not viewed as authentic but instead as a social production of discourse (Foucault, 1987). Consequently, if unschooling aims to enhance personal autonomy, then one must question if, in a postmodern society, this is a plausible objective. Accordingly, if ideas are socially produced rather than an authentic expression of the individuals, then unschooling's focus on encouraging individual passions could be seen

to legitimise the results of social discourse. However, whilst we are all implicated in each other's identity. Consequently, our personalities are a reflection of our lived experiences, this does not necessarily mean that we are not authentic and unique. For each person's identity is still an amalgamation of their unique lived experiences, and this will informtheir ideas and passions. Working on these topics, Freire argues that there exists a unified and essential subject whose experience of freedom is that of freedom from a distorted view of reality; that is, from the meanings intended by others. In this case, Freire argues that this freedom allows the individual to discover their own interests through active citizenship (Freire, 1998). As a result of this, all knowledge is seen as inconsistent and questionable, as having historicity. Accordingly, this means that rote learning, spoon-fed education and 'education of answers' are ineffective as they do not lead to the development of curiosity as a cognitive process (Freire, 1998). Instead, Freire promotes teaching of inconstant, approximate knowledge, which forces the students to engage with the text via a conflict lens (Shor and Freire, 1987). For if a teacher, who possesses the knowledge that they wish to pass on, simply dictates this knowledge in its entirety, then this is no better than rote learning. Instead, by producing information at a slower and inconstant rate, the students are able to engage with the knowledge, critique it and engage in dialogue with the teacher and the other students to further everyone's understanding of the topic. When education is based on dialogical relationships between the reader and a text, it encourages the same relationship between individuals. This is particularly applicable to the context of unschooling as a community, such as that which is proposed by Ricci above. Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as a state of willingness to take charge of one's own learning process, as well as the capability to determine and evaluate content, objectives,

methods, and procedures of learning. He argued that autonomy is an ability that can be acquired in two distinct ways: deliberately and systematically through formal and institutionalised learning, or otherwise by more 'natural' means. In Holec's view, learner autonomy is a powerful emancipatory tool used to increase awareness and strengthen an individual's ability to transform their environment. Similarly, Little (1991) posited that autonomy is the capacity to make decisions and take independent action. In the context of education, it enables an individual to critically reflect upon their learning and develop a relationship between the process and content of learning. To this author, autonomy implies taking sole responsibility for the process of learning and acknowledging that any level of success depends on the individual rather than a larger system. However, rather than being a burden to the learner, this responsibility is driven by a fundamental intrinsic motivation to understand their surrounding world (Little, 1991). Therefore, it could be argued that a learner becomes more autonomous as they develop the necessary skills for self-directed reflection and motivation, and that the more autonomous the learner is, the more efficient and effective their learning is. (Sánchez Tyson, 2019).

6.1. Conclusion

Petrovic and Rolstad initially suggested combining the idea of conscientization and the pursuit of self-love in order to enhance personal autonomy within the collectivist society. This argument, which was reflective of the work of Freire, led to the concept that autonomy is both an individualist and a collectivist notion. Connected with this was the work of Ricci, particularly regarding respect, which he maintained was central

to autonomous education, especially as it reduces bullying. Ricci highlighted that rules within unschooling are often a community experience and, as such, they are less likely to be broken (Ricci, 2012).

hooks (1994) and Laricchia (2014) also discussed the importance of respect within the classroom, where Laricchia claimed that age distinctions were not important. However, this was in contradiction to Nietzsche's view of man as a herd animal who places too much emphasis on his own power. Within the concept of the sovereign individual, power was viewed as a positive aspect as it enabled the individual to defend their self and disregard the attempts of authority and culture to shape their moral standpoint (Nietzsche, 1998b).

Gray and Riley (2015) focused instead on the notion of trust within unschooling, referencing their own study into facilitators of education and finding that parents empowered children to acknowledge the limits of their power. Supported by Desmarais, who argued that the role of adults in unschooling was that of advocacy, this also linked closely with the work of Nietzsche and the deification of humanity (Ricci *et al*., 2011; Nietzsche, 1998b). Additionally, Foucault referenced the new modality of power, which he claimed was unavoidable in life. Instead, he postulated that it was the ability to maintain freedom despite power relations that led to liberation and autonomy (Batters, 2011). Regarding education, it could therefore be seen that self-reflection could be an antidote to excessive power.

Unschooling as an empowerment for individuals was discussed by Ricci (2012), who related self-reflection to the focus on learner-centred education, knowledge of self and the ability to express and defend oneself in the community. This was seen to hold similarities to the work of Kant, in which sovereignty was seen both as sovereignty over oneself and as the ability to be critically self-reflective and review oneself. Kant's concept of duty was also raised here, although it was acknowledged that duty was not part of the notion of unschooling. It was, however, postulated that freedom and autonomy should be balanced against responsibility. This was reminiscent of Kant's concept of practical freedom, which saw autonomy as the ability to will an action independent of other causes and the ability to act based on rational principles (Kant, 2017). However, Kant also restricted practical freedom to those who were rational, claiming it did not apply to young children or non-human beings. As such, Kant's comparative freedom was discussed, although it was acknowledged that this could be used to rationalise the exertion of power over another.

Laricchia (2014) then discussed the overcompensation of the traditional power hierarchy in which a child is given too much power and thus feels a sense of entitlement. Freire warned of similar issues within society if the oppressed gained too much power over the oppressor (Freire, 2017). It was acknowledged that children would hold less power within a group scenario, and a resolution of education based on a democratic environment was proposed. It was argued that only the child can know what they need or desire and that the child should be trusted to make such decisions (Ricci, 2012). However, Freire warned that neither education nor society was just or fair

and as such, education was needed for the working class and the poor to allow them to access literacy, humanisation and liberation (Mendonca, 2020).

This led to a discussion on the importance of individuality with Pavlich and Ratner (1996) suggesting that grand narratives should be replaced with local rationalities. Overlooking differences was posited as leading to marginalisation of the disadvantaged and. as such, Freire argued for the importance of unity between oppressed groups to increase the chances of liberation and autonomy (Freire, 2017). Freire also argued that formal education was a process which dehumanised and alienated people due to its assumption that children all had the same needs (Freire, 2017; McEneaney and Meyer, 2000). The acknowledgement of individuals was seen as a benefit of unschooling, although concerns were raised that this could not be maintained if unschooling became more popular. Linking this to Kant's power of free choice, unschooling's focus on student choice and student voice was seen as preferable to formal education's lack of student input. Yet a concern was raised that unschooling could not guarantee basic literacy skills, especially as 18% of adults within the United Kingdom have very poor literacy skills (National Literacy Trust, 2024). Whilst Ricci suggested that children would learn when they were ready, there was no way to document the effects of this suggestion.

Regarding unity, an example was given of the schools of Reggio Emilia, where personal expression and communication, as well as trust and respect, are celebrated (Edwards *et al*., 2011). However, it was noted that Reggio Emilia was a formal education system,

and so it had to be acknowledged that, at times, formal schooling could lead to autonomous education. Foucault highlighted the link between individual choice and authenticity, which Freire postulated would allow the individual freedom to discover their own interests (Foucault, 1987; Freire, 1998). In education, Freire promoted the teaching of approximate knowledge in order to encourage students to engage with the knowledge in a critical manner. When combined with dialogic teaching, this was argued by Holec to increase learner autonomy (Holec, 1981). As such, it was seen that the learners became more autonomous as they developed skills of reflection and motivation, and this will be used in the next chapter to develop the model of autonomous education.

One question that was raised within this chapter is whether autonomy can exist within a formal education system. Within Reggio Emilia, it appears that this is possible as the focus of institutional learning has been placed, not on knowledge banking and grading as in the United Kingdom, but instead on civilisation, civility and civic consequence. It would appear from this example that it is possible to create a formal education system in which autonomy is more deeply embedded; however, as Foucault discussed in Chapter Four, it would not necessarily be possible to change the education system in the United Kingdom without first completely dismantling it. For this reason, unschooling remains the favoured option by which individuals in the United Kingdom can experience an autonomous education. Yet, the model of autonomous education described in Chapter Seven has been created so that it functions in both educational settings, allowing for the fact that autonomy within formal education may still be possible.

7. Creation of a Model of Autonomous Education

Within *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1968) gives a detailed example of how his educational system would work regarding an English language programme in an area of low literacy. In creating the model for autonomous education, I have also adapted this example to give a demonstration of how the model may be applied to a schooling or unschooling situation. In his original example, Freire uses the term 'investigators' to refer to those who control the process of learning; in order to better utilise this example in the context of unschooling, I have changed this role to be that of the learners. This also reflects the previous writings of Freire, where the learner is the one with autonomy within their lived experience and conscientization.

7.1. Freirian model for education

Freire's initial model, as mentioned above, is an attempt to detail an English language learning programme in an area of low literacy. Whilst there is little detail as to how the model would be enacted, steps are laid out to demonstrate what would be required within this programme. The steps are as follows:

1. Discover self as the host of the oppressor
2. Critically recognise the cause of oppression
3. Objectify reality
4. Commit to transformation

5. Take transformative action

6. Expel old order myths and embrace the pedagogy of all people.

As can be seen above, Freire begins with a call to discover the self as the host of the oppressor. The oppressed, he claims, suffer from duality in which they discover that freedom is essential for an authentic existence, but that they also fear the authentic experience which they so desire. In this belief, Freire therefore claims that the oppressor and the oppressed are the same due to the oppressed having internalised the consciousness of their oppressors. Consequently, the oppressed are faced with a choice in which they can become their authentic selves or remain divided between the thoughts of themselves and the thoughts of their oppressors (Freire, 2017). In order to seek liberation, Freire then explains that the first step in achieving autonomy is to acknowledge and accept this duality and achieve awareness of the oppressors' consciousness within their own "divided, unauthentic beings" (Freire, 2017, p. 22). Freire acknowledges that this will be a painful process, comparing it to childbirth, but explains the solution of such a contradiction as the emergence of a new individual who is no longer oppressed or an oppressor.

At the same time as reaching this discovery, Freire calls for the individual to critically recognise the cause of the oppression. Freire explains this cause as the dehumanisation of the oppressed at the hands of the oppressors, explaining that the oppressed must "from their stifled humanity, wage for both the struggle for a fuller humanity" (Freire, 2017, p. 21). However, he also acknowledges here that, as described in the previous step, the oppressed have resignedly adapted to their domination (Freire, 2017). Here, Freire also creates a link to freedom, claiming that it is not an ideal which

is outside of man, nor a myth, but rather an “indispensable condition for the quest for human completion” (Freire, 2017, p. 21).

The third step then requires the individual to objectify reality. Here, Freire claims that “a fact which is not denied but whose truths are rationalised loses its objective base” (Freire, 2017, p. 26). Consequently, he implores the oppressed to critically confront reality whilst simultaneously objectifying and acting upon it, as without this, Freire claims that there can be no transformation of the objective reality. However, Freire also issues warnings associated with this stage. Firstly, he warns that the oppressor will be aware that revolution or intervention is not in their favour as the interest of the oppressor lies in maintaining the oppressive reality of the oppressed (Freire, 2017). Secondly, he warns that it is not possible to explain to people the objective reality; rather, it is important to dialogue with the oppressed about their actions so that they may be an active part in the transformation of reality. “The pedagogy of the oppressed…” he concludes “…which is the pedagogy of the people engaged in the fight for their own liberation, has its roots here” (Freire, 2017, p. 27).

Step four calls for the oppressed to commit to the transformation of the world. Freire describes this as the first stage of the pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 2017). In this step, the changes that have occurred in how the oppressed perceive their oppression create confrontation with the oppressors, and as such, it must confront the problem of the oppressed consciousness and the consciousness of the oppressor. This, Freire claims, will eventually lead to a situation in which “the reality of oppression has already been transformed…through the expulsion of the myths created and developed in the old order” (Freire, 2017, pp. 26-27)

Once commitment has been made, step five encourages the individual to take transformative action. Freire explains that, as humanity has created the social reality of oppression, the transformation away from this reality is a task for all humanity. However, the initial transformative action lies in the hands of the oppressed. The oppressed, Freire claims, are functionally experiencing the domestication of a consciousness submerged in oppression, and therefore, to escape this oppression, they must engage in praxis, which requires both reflection and action (Freire, 2017). Fiori explains that "liberating action necessarily involves a moment of perception and volition. This action both precedes and follows that moment, to which it first acts as a prologue and which it subsequently serves to effect and continue within history" (Freire, 2017, p. 25). Action here then must be tempered with reflection which allows perception and encourages volition for "true reflection - leads to action" (Freire, 2017, p. 40).

The final step, referenced briefly in step four, requires the individual to expel old order myths and embrace the pedagogy of all people. Whilst Freire is not specific regarding the details of the old order myths, the rest of the chapter mentions topics such as the oppressor's belief that "to be is to have" (Freire, 2017, p. 32), the fatalism that religion encourages in the guise of docility, and the self-deprecation of the oppressed. Freire emphasises that the oppressed have found themselves subject to dehumanisation because their oppression has reduced them to things. Therefore, "in order to regain their humanity they must cease to be things and fight as men and women" (Freire, 2017, p. 42). This, according to Freire, allows the oppressed to recognise their own situation and the propaganda and manipulation that have brought them here. In contrast with their current position, Vieria Pinto explains that being with the world is the

essence of consciousness and, as such, consciousness is a method which allows an individual to escape this position (Freire, 2017). Freire therefore explains that reflecting and acting on this knowledge of reality,where the old myths have been expelled, allows the struggle for liberation for both the oppressed and the oppressors (Freire, 2017).

Whilst this model provides an idea of the steps suggested by Freire, the lack of detail provided, especially regarding method, leads the reader to absorb the information on a purely theoretical level. Consequently, this thesis aims to provide a detailed model which provides a framework for autonomous education within either formal education or unschooling settings. The model below is a synthesis of the work of Freire, and the considerations given to autonomy, formal education and unschooling previously in the thesis and aims to provide a practical answer to the question 'to what extent can we have autonomy in learning?'.

Kant's concepts of practical and comparative freedom bring an important element to this model as they suggest that an individual is free, and thus possesses autonomy, if they act according to rational thought and if they are internally motivated to do so (Kant, 2004). The concept that human beings may act free from causal determination means that an individual has the ability to begin a chain of actions that are separate from previous causal chains. As such, when choosing topics for study, or when investigating a novel topic, this form of freedom explains and validates a student's ability to make their own, rational decisions as to how to proceed. Comparative freedom affords young children the ability to be free without considerations of oughts (Kosch, 2006). This justification is important in expanding the model to children of younger ages and also

explains the importance of internal motivation in making free, autonomous choices. Based on this theory, Kant's discussion of autonomy could mean that formal education would not be seen as free according to comparative freedom, as it does not afford students choices based on their internal motivation. Whilst some students may be internally motivated to learn in general, the model below takes into account the importance of internal motivation according to Kant and allows students to make multiple significant choices throughout the process.

The work of Hume, however, brought a more challenging aspect to the creation of the model. The work on necessity conducted by Hume suggests that, once a choice has been made and enacted, there was in fact no other choice available to that individual than the one which occurred. This is due to the constant associations between perceptions and the inferences that occur between them and the conclusion that Hume reaches, in which he argues a parallel necessity exists between external matter and perception of this within the human mind (Lustila, 2012; Greco, 2023). If, in reality, there was no choice other than the one that was made, then one could not claim that human beings are free, and consequently, there would seem little point in affording students choices within their education. However, Greco (2023) proposed that necessity should be seen as a cause rather than a judgment of things or their relationships, which allows compatibility between liberty and necessity.

Another useful concept for the creation of the model was Foucault's focus on the importance of self-knowledge, particularly with regard to education. The act of self-actualising, according to Foucault, includes the need to author one's own ethical self, alongside the need to care for the self and others in order to experience a life that is

lived well (Foucault, 1987; Ball, 2019). Whilst one of the more minor theories addressed in the thesis, it was important in the model to encourage students to make their own choices and to be able to express these as a reflection of themselves. This, alongside Foucault's criticism of formal education as a process of preparing obedient workers, provides justification for the knowledge of self that is required in order to apply the model to real life (Ball, 2019).

However, a more challenging aspect was Nietzsche's work on the sovereign individual, particularly with regard to the discussion on self-restraint (Nietzsche, 1984). The balance of resisting impulses or convictions in order to reach a goal, with the ability to know oneself as described by Foucault above, is a hard line to find. It is also a difficult concept to express within a model of education, and yet constraints, alongside taking responsibility for one's own actions, are mentioned by Nietzsche, Freire and Kant (Nietzsche, 1984; Freire, 2017; Kant, 2003). Nietzsche claims that it is constraints which free the intellect, yet he gives no examples of constraints which also make application of this work more difficult (Nietzsche, 1998b).

7.2. Model of Autonomous Education

The model itself is based on investigative learning and is split into four sections: work to be completed prior to an investigation; the investigation itself (which can be repeated with more detail each time a topic is revisited in the educational process); work to be completed following the investigation, and reflection activities. It is advised that each time a new topic is introduced to the learners, the four steps are followed completely and in order. In the case of recap or revision, or in the case of a more detailed revisiting of a previously explored topic, the process can begin at section 2 (the investigation).

7.2.1. Section 1: Prior to an investigation

1. Learners determine the area of study (topic)
2. The learners seek out secondary sources in order to gain contextual knowledge of the topic.
3. The learners meet with those who are to act as guides for the learning experience (normally, but not exclusively, this role is undertaken by adults, either parents or adults with previous learning in the area (facilitators)), and discuss:
    1. The reasons for investigating the topic
    2. How the primary investigation into the topic will be carried out
    3. The intended use for the new knowledge
    4. The ongoing need for mutual understanding and trust

This does not need to take the form of a formal discussion, but each point should be covered in order for the learning experience to be effective.

This initial section is based primarily on steps one and two of Freire's model of education described above. However, alterations have been made both to reflect the move to use this model within modern education and to allow for inspiration from other academics and philosophers, as previously discussed in the thesis. Whilst step one of Freire's model of education calls for the discovery of the self as the host of the oppressor, the section above calls for the learners to discover themselves, which is

more reminiscent of the work of Foucault on self-knowledge (Freire, 2017; Foucault, 1987). Foucault's focus on the importance of knowing oneself supports the focus of unschooling on a learner-centred approach in which the child chooses which desires and passions to follow (Ricci, 2012). This encapsulates Kant's argument of free choice as a form of freedom, in which the will holds an ability to create an event that is not caused by another, that is, spontaneity of action (Alarcón, 2010). However, this section also acknowledges that the learners will likely be organised into groups rather than individuals (especially given the focus within both formal education and unschooling on the importance of community) and consequently makes space for the existence of a learning community. In this situation, a group discussion should be used to determine the area of study, enacting the principles of democracy and power relations discussed in Chapter 3.

7.2.2. Section 2: The investigation - to be completed each time that the topic is revisited

1. If there are multiple learners, then the learners split the topic into sections according to areas that interest them. These are then analysed, with a focus on the interactions between the sections.
2. The learners draw up a brief report which evaluates the topic as they have explored it thus far. This is then shared with any other learners and the facilitators.

3. All involved in the investigation reflect on and reconsider their own perspective of the topic, based on the reports of the facilitators and any others within the group.
4. Learners keep notes of contradictions raised in the understanding or perspectives of the topic.

This second section correlates most with step three of Freire's model of education - objectify reality. This step sees the learners analyse the topic, producing work which reflects their new knowledge and sharing this with others in the group. In doing this, the learners are enacting methods which encourage both dialogue and reflection, which was highlighted as important by both Freire (2017) and hooks (1994). Such reflective dialogue allows the learners to engage in praxis in which they are able to both reflect and complete actions based on such reflections, but also opens up learner understanding regarding alternative norms and values within the world, encouraging a more pluralistic understanding of the world (Freire, 2017; Levinson, 1999).

In working as a group, this section also implements the work of Nietzsche and Hume on the need for responsibility for self and the imposition of constraints (Nietzsche, 1984; Russell, 1995) . Working with others requires compromise for both the individual and the group, and the ability to create self-constraints to allow the work to be completed in a timely manner, as discussed by Ricci (2012).

7.2.3. Section 3: Following the investigation

1. The learners identify the contradictions in views on the topic.

2. Learners create a list of tasks which enable them to tackle the contradictions. For example, they may use the contradictions raised to create visual aids for analysis, which are based on the non-abstract experiences of the investigation.

3. The learners take it in turn to present their work on the contradictions and ask the others to 'decode' the created work (it is important to take care at this time to ensure that the decoding is not immediately obvious, but also that it does not devolve to a guessing game).

Section three is a new addition that is not necessarily reflected in Freire's model of education but instead reflects the information discussed in chapter four on Foucault and the importance of discourse, especially with regard to power relations. Foucault postulated that freedom comes when an individual is willing to see the truth of power relations in society, as well as when they are willing to defend their sense of self (Foucault, 1987). In identifying and presenting contradictions that are found within the learning of the previous step, the learners here are practising the kind of critical reflection which enables them to see and challenge power relations, as well as practising the ability to defend both their ideas and their sense of self to others. Additionally, Foucault encouraged the use of a seminar format (which allowed for discourse) over the use of a more traditional lecture format in order for critical self-awareness to be developed (Leask, 2012). This is reflected in the group discussion of work stated in section three, step three. Finally, Foucauldian education was seen to focus on the critical unlearning of metanarratives, which could be enacted at this stage

as learners begin to identify areas where their learning and metanarratives contradict (Chokr, 2009).

7.2.4. Section 4: Reflection

1. Learners take it in turn to listen to and challenge the other learners - posing problems based on the situation and responses of those involved.
2. Ideas from the previous discussion are presented to the facilitator, or preferably, a specialist in the area.
3. The facilitator or specialist breaks down the topic into fundamental parts, based on the presentations of the learners and makes suggestions as to questions which should be answered.
4. The learners prepare didactic material based on the problems posed in step 1, and the questions from step 3. For example, they may find articles to discuss, or write an essay on the topic.
5. Those involved (facilitators, specialists and learners) analyse the didactic materials and answer the following questions: why is the material the same/different to other presented material? What do we want to know next?

This final section of the model of autonomous education correlates roughly with steps four and five of Freire's model of education. Reflection as part of praxis allows for transformative action to be taken and for old, unsupported ideas to be challenged and cast aside (Freire, 2017). In completing dialogic reflection, the learners are able to build a subjective perception of reality which constitutes new knowledge (Freire, 1998). This,

Freire claims, is also a transformative, humanising action, such as is found in step four of his model of education (Freire, 2017). The role of community is once again emphasised in this step as the learners partake in dialogue and problem-posing education, which helps to demythologise reality, and this further reflects the importance that unschooling places on community regarding the redistribution of power relations (Freire, 2017; Laricchia, 2014).

7.3. Evaluation of the Model

Through this model, the educator and the learner can critically analyse the objective through codification, to construct a knowledge of reality (Freire, 2017). Codification occurs when themes which have been previously identified are transformed into symbolic representations. Themes which are codified in this way may be individual but are also able to encompass groupings of time from generations to epochs. Once codified, these codes are concrete and take the form of representations such as artefacts, images, movements and stories (Lawton, 2022). Codification in this way produces a two-fold response; firstly, mediating between the objective and subjective knowledge of reality, but also mediating between educator and learner who both approach a codified item as a knowable object (Freire, 2017). At the surface structure, learners gather a description of the knowable object. However, they then move to the deep structure of the dialectic between categories and the unity between the two levels. This requires analysis, where learners constantly re-construct their previous reality and through practice of this analysis, the learner becomes aware that their own imitation of their dominator's oppression is a result of the myth-making, furthermore,

they realise the myth of the superiority of the oppressors and the distance they need to create to be removed from their power (Freire, 2000). However, the model does have a number of limitations.

Firstly, it must be acknowledged that, as previously discussed in this thesis, each learner will have their own individualised needs, interests and strengths. As such, the question must be raised as to whether there can ever be a model of education which will suit all learners and allow them to follow their own interests. Whilst this may not be entirely possible, a strength of the model of autonomous education is that it can work with groups of almost any size, with each learner being able to study independently, or in a larger group as required. As such, there is a possibility for the model to be adapted and differentiated to allow it to suit the specific requirements of the relevant educational setting and the learners. A second limitation is found regarding the model's similarity to methods already employed within formal education. Although learning through investigation may be more popular in the sciences or in schools which prioritise individualised learning (such as the Steiner schools discussed previously), this model may still be argued to lack uniqueness in its perspective. On the other hand, the model above is distinguished from the standard use of investigations through its four-section method, and its grounding in literature based not only on formal education but also on philosophy and the concept of unschooling. As such, the model of autonomous education synthesises multiple approaches, taking knowledge from each area and combining it into a new, more detailed and refined method which can be applied across differing educational settings. Finally, a more general limitation references a key point that has been repeated throughout this thesis: that one cannot change education without changing society as a whole. Foucault (1987), Freire (2017), Illich (2019) and

Holt (2017) all argued that society must change in order for education to be reworked, especially as education exists primarily to prepare children for an adult life within society. Whilst the reworking of society is beyond the scope of this thesis, a strength of the model lies in its adaptability to a number of educational settings. As such, it can be seen that the model is of use without a complete readjustment of society and is able to be utilised at the present period of time.

Conclusion

This thesis has shown the steady decline of autonomy within formal education alongside the growth of unschooling, a learner-centred version of education which is focused on autonomy for its adherents. Whilst the philosophical understanding of autonomy is complex, the thesis worked through the ideas of Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, Foucault and Freire. It pulled out key ideas on the topic, such as free will, responsibility, dialogue and self-improvement (although the work of both Foucault and Freire also highlighted the collectivist version of autonomy), before synthesising the ideas on education and philosophy to create a model of autonomous education.

The first chapter worked through the history of formal education within the United Kingdom, emphasising the changes in autonomy as policies were introduced across time. This was then held in comparison to Chapter Two, which primarily discussed the history and definition of unschooling, a learner-centred version of education. Common features within the definition of unschooling included learning outside of an educational institution, increasing the power of the learner and allowing the learner to follow their desires and passions. Chapter Three saw a shift in the thesis to analyse the philosophical conceptions of autonomy. Beginning with Hume, it discussed the notions of free will, liberty and necessity and the conflict between them before exploring the work of Kant. The conclusion was reached that practical freedom and comparative freedom proved the most relevant to the discussion of autonomy in education.

Chapter Four moved to explore the idea of autonomy as determinism and self-mastery, beginning with the work of Nietzsche. The work of Foucault was also important to the topic of autonomy, as determinism and self-mastery, as he wrote on the link between education and the development of the self-encouraging a complete dismantling of the current system in favour of education, which allowed self-actualisation through a process of seminars and discourse. This would, in the following two chapters, become essential in creating a model of autonomous education. Chapter Five then discussed the concept of autonomy as liberation and humanisation, primarily through the work of Freire. It was here that Freire saw education as particularly pertinent via the process of praxis. With pedagogy taking on the role of self-improvement and ethical enterprise, Freire highlighted the importance of both literacy and community within both education and autonomy. Chapter Six saw the knowledge from the previous five chapters synthesised into one discussion before Chapter Seven began with a summary of Freire's model for education and an explanation of the model of autonomous education. The model was then briefly evaluated, including a discussion of a number of limitations and strengths of the model.

Overall, it was concluded that it is possible for there to be a higher level of autonomy within education than is currently the case within the United Kingdom. Through the application of the model created in Chapter Seven, it is hoped that educational facilitators in any setting will be able to work with learners to increase their autonomy and their overall experience of education.

Whilst this model is based firmly in philosophical and academic theories, it is acknowledged that it has not been possible to test the model in order to judge its effectiveness in bringing autonomy to learning. This, therefore, means that at the time of the writing, the applicability of the thesis remains purely in the theoretical realm. As such, it is hoped that future research will be completed, which will be able to bring this model into the practical space and apply it to educational situations in a variety of formats. This will allow the validity of the model to be assessed, alongside its usefulness across a range of educational settings, which will only serve to improve the quality of the information available on this topic.

Additionally, this thesis has only evaluated formal education as based within the United Kingdom and as such, would benefit from future research which expands the cultural background of the work and acknowledges the differences that arise from varied educational settings. Education systems vary significantly across different countries and cultures. These variations mean that in some areas, the governmental education systems will include greater autonomy (for example, in Reggio Emilia, Italy, as mentioned in Chapter Six), whereas in other areas there will be less autonomy than within the United Kingdom (for example, in Brazil, as mentioned in Chapter Five). As a result, the research area would benefit from greater distinction regarding the formal education systems that are available across the world in order to increase the applicability and representativeness of the work within the thesis.

Finally, this thesis only had the scope to explore three philosophical conceptions of autonomy, as such future research could be done into additional notions of autonomy from philosophers such as Rousseau, who explored the concept of collective

autonomy from a political viewpoint, John Stuart Mill, who saw autonomy as an object of value and Habermas, who explored the topic of autonomy, justice and democracy (Neuhoser, 2011; Christman, 2020). This would increase the breadth of support for the model of autonomous education and expand the definition of autonomy beyond what has been possible in this thesis.

It would similarly be possible to investigate each philosophical area in more depth, in order to truly draw out and appreciate the nuances in the work of the key philosophers. Whilst a detailed exploration was made of each area of philosophy covered in the thesis, this has not been sufficient to completely evaluate the conception of autonomy as discussed by Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, Foucault or Freire. As such, it is recommended that further analysis be completed on these conceptions and that their application to the model be considered further than has been possible within the scope of this thesis.

The doctoral journey for me has not been simple; the period of writing this thesis saw the unexpected deaths of both my biological parents as well as my step-father, plus a divorce, two house moves and a change in jobs. As a result of this, I have developed greater resilience, persistence and organisational skills as I navigated the challenges of research and writing during times of significant upheaval. Following on from this difficult period came the space to focus on skills such as critical thinking, analysis and time management, which were essential for completing the thesis to a high level. The format of the thesis has also allowed me to develop greater skills in synthesis of theories, as well as the confidence to develop my own model of autonomous education and to explain the thought process behind this model. Overall, the doctoral journey has

been challenging, but hugely beneficial, and I have become a substantially stronger researcher as a result of the journey.

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