> *And not in the name of humanism that always seemed to me to fall*
> *short, but in the name of an ignorance that tries to negate nothing.*
> (Camus, 1995, p. 73)

This last phrase provides a key element in Camus' thinking. "In the name of an ignorance that tries to negate nothing" can be read in different ways, and each offers a rich line of thinking when considering the ways in which humanism creates margins and attempts to negate difference. From a position of accepting that he does not know what it means to be human or to have a destiny, he offers that he is negating nothing, in that he is being open to everything; that he resists the call to define the future that is the essence of humanism.

However, faced with no meaning in life, Camus (1995) refuses to reject faith in a human spirit. "If, after all, men cannot always make history have a meaning, they can always act so that their own lives have one" (Camus, 1995b, p. 106). What does it mean to talk against humanism and yet to value some essence of being human? He explores the experience of nihilism that emerged in the replacing of God with Man in the will to power and the will to truth, regarding 'human evidence' as the thing to preserve us from a descent into nihilism (Camus, 1988). He was concerned that in the Nietzschean rejection of humanism, in the distancing of the übermensch from 'ordinary' beings, ordinary lives were constructed and then rejected as less poetic (Camus, 1995c).

> *For Camus modern politics is thus founded on what Lyotard has called*
> *a 'grand narrative' of human progress. Originating in an authentic*
> *effort to cast off the fetters of oppression and affirm the dignity of*
> *ordinary people, humanism, a liberatory idea, has ensnared modern*
> *man in prisons of his own creation, where he has become both victim*
> *and executioner.* (Isaac, 1992, p. 75)

The Enlightenment reduction of certainty about the world to a singular epistemological position was evidence of the problems of science and reason. Like Nietzsche (1979) and Heidegger, he regarded rationalism and scientific thinking as reasonably creative but ultimately limited – a chauvinistic representation of a world (Camus, 1991; Young, 2002). The concern for Camus was the nature of human experience in relationship to truth claims, most eloquently addressed in *The Myth of Sisyphus* when he reveals the ultimately poetic nature of science (Camus, 1991). In addition, his concern was the kinds of possible poetic resistance to the social and political borders that are constructed to harness the human spirit in the name of progress.

To consider Camus within the brief of thinking about difference in relation to early childhood education thinking is then to engage with his critique of modern politics, of a world where one appears forced to choose between extreme and totalitarian options, and to explore his concepts of the absurd and the revolt, knowing however that these are angles that Camus took in order to keep certain ideas of humanism, particularly that of freedom, in play. His refusal to align himself with sides (east/west; indigenous/colonial) left him in a space in between that is a productive space for thinking about education. That he was often despised and ridiculed for being in this space seems to me

to engender him as one of the few thinkers of his time worth seriously considering (see for instance Quilliot, 1962). Camus offers a space of resistance to the normalisation of humanist ethics that have contributed to the tragedies of 20th century; there are not any reasonable sides to take when the sides regard that there are no questions to ask, no differences to allow and no views to exchange.

Difference in early childhood education: The case of the sandpit

In this final section, Camus' thought is set into motion within the context of the sandpit. This section asks: how is the sandpit, in its educational formation, open to difference? The sandpit is a place where we spend our time; but in what ways, for what reasons, and under what conditions? The sandpit provides a central motif because the image of the child playing freely in the sand, seemingly connected to her space, her world, resonates with the outsider Meursault and his relationship to the beach. Meursault discovers that there is a moment at which his daily existence, his day-to-day purposelessness, is negated by his society.

The sandpit as an educational phenomenon has instrumental qualities that engender an early childhood setting *as* an early childhood setting in countries such as Aotearoa/ New Zealand. The presence of sandpits speaks to the meaning and purpose of being in early childhood education and as such speaks to the growth of early childhood as a disciplinary mechanism. The sandpit then is infused with a legitimating function because it appeals to certain beliefs regarding valued pedagogical practices and valued learning for young children. If we are concerned with the story of Meursault, with any story where we observe how the great social machinery spits out anything that deviates from the plan, we might step in to the sandpit in order to feel its ebb and flow in different ways. And, if we have learnt from the lessons of the 20th century, we might be careful to consider the ways in which difference is negotiated and not negated in the sandpit. The intention here is not to put a blot on the landscape of the sandpit, but rather to continue the project of critical pedagogy that responds to concerns regarding, for instance, the ways in which teachers may or may not notice heteronormative practices in such places as sandpits (see for instance Surtees & Gunn, 2010).

The sandpit reveals certain social, political, cultural positions and obscures others as it reveals ideas about gender, age, play and more. The focus, however, is not on these elements, although it certainly relates to them, but rather on the ways in which discourses construct a certain kind of qualified adult. Think for instance of the ways in which sandpits determine 'childness' and 'adultness' – and not just any kind of adultness but the kind of adultness that we call a qualified teacher. Against the image of the qualified teacher, the non-teacher is, opposite the child, measured against evidence of what counts as good and bad, safe and risky, knowledgeable and ignorant, knowable and obscure. The untrained adult has no place in the educational sandpit.

A kind of psychopathologising emerges: the psychology of the unqualified adult is dangerous because it is unknown. This is a concern because of the ways in which a discourse on the benefits and strengths of taking an interest in and studying the ways in which we may support a child's play in the sandpit has become a border that calls difference a problem. More than this, the refusal to acknowledge this difference resists

a certain critical capacity that should be the very condition of being a qualified teacher. In other words, the critical pedagogue that can engage with the multiple and complex moments of learning in a sandpit, is not likely to be the kind of teacher who creates unqualified teachers as unwelcome 'others'. It might be that the most creative play in the sandpit comes from those adults whose teaching is rich in their own experience and unfettered by three to four years of trying to make sense of the implications of constructivism. This is not to devalue trying to make sense of constructivism, it is to argue that the responsibility of the teacher with this knowledge is not to regard people without this knowledge as 'less' because of this difference. It might follow then that there is a psychopathology to the qualified teacher. The qualified teacher in the sandpit is driven by expectations of certain kinds of performative functions related to developmental, sociopolitical and educational goals. The psychology is one of an obsession with measurement, as evidenced in the attention to making sense of a child's sandpit play in relation to, for instance, dispositions and/or funds of knowledge. This is *not* to say that these elements of a qualified teacher's behaviour are negative. The concern is with any assumed consensus in relation to the nature of this teacher and the ways in which she may be constructed. The problem is one of the negation that consensus makes possible.

Of course this kind of argument hits a rough terrain when, as Camus discovered, issues of freedom and rights are raised. We cannot negate *nothing*, the argument goes, because some behaviours and beliefs violate freedoms and hence must be negated. However, guided by Camus, this paper is not asking that *everything* is acceptable, but rather that any position we occupy in relation to early childhood education be one in which we accept that there are other positions, and that we engage with them.

Hence when the qualities of the qualified teacher are presented to us as essential to the quality of play, as non negotiable, we are asked to forget or avoid questions concerning the nature of the teacher, or the possibility of future questions that might come from alternate cultural positions in relation to childhood and education and so on. In this instance, the possibility that there might be different cultural approaches to the play of the sandpit becomes a problem. Camus's work asks us to resist these unreasonable polemic games, to critically reflect on its common sense, and try to negate nothing. And so the question he would ask is how might the spaces of early childhood education, the sandpit, in this instance, be more or less a poetic space? How might the sandpit disrupt its articulation as a non-negotiable space of consensual educational outcomes made possible by the presence of a qualified adult (Gallacher, 2006)?

For this paper then, the responsibility of the teacher lies in a poetic engagement with least two, perhaps interrelated relationships to her world. The first, explored above, is that of resistance. Camus (1995) articulates this as the dangerous game of the artist. His own life experiences revealed the challenge of putting to society a representation of the absurdity of its positioning. The second engagement is to play with the idea of the absurd. This is not unfamiliar terrain for any early childhood teacher who has spent some time, paused, to consider the qualities of the work of Dr Suess. Dr Suess began publishing his work in the 1930s at about the same time as Camus. Their work may have many interesting connections to their life experiences, their concern with

the condition of being human, and the relationship to difference, strangeness, and the absurd, however these are connections to explore in the future. This paper simply reminds the teacher of the poetry of Dr Suess's work. In a literary genre with a long history in moralising about how and what to be, Dr Suess challenged that for children perhaps what should be said is 'just be'. Look for instance at his second book, *The 500 hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*, first published in 1938. The boy fails to take his hat off to his king. His five hundred hats confound both him and his society. And why did he have five hundred hats? Well, we are told on the last page, it just 'happened to happen'. This play with the absurd creates space to reflect on just how we are enjoined in the grand social narratives of progress and a better life, to make some space for difference within these stories.

Conclusion

Camus writes from within a modern, humanist horizon. However, this horizon is ruptured for him in his attention to other ways of engaging the world and understanding one's presence in it (see for instance Sugden, 1974). He and philosophers around him, including Heidegger, were similarly expanding the European thinking project through a turn to the philosophies of the Asian continent and alternative ways of rethinking a human presence in the world. This paper has explored questions that have concerned humanism and post-humanism to develop a manifestation of the sandpit as a space where we might consider the politics of early childhood education in relation to difference. Policies and research often strategically skirt around the deeper philosophical questions in the interest of expedient realisation of shared goals. However, the assumption of these goals and the necessity to force upon us an idea that we have a definite purpose, that we have defined the future of education and now just need to work towards it, leaves me wondering where talk about creativity and poetry might appear? My purpose is not to reject teacher education but to challenge any totalising positions in relation to teacher education. Camus' work provides an important source for teachers and teacher educators to consider the nature and impact of these total, singular, positions, as well as encouragement to think beyond them.

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Tauhi vā, Spinoza, and Deleuze in Education

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Abstract

In this paper, we argue that it is now time to weave the cultures of the Pacific into the mat of early childhood education (ECE). *Te Whāriki*[1] represents two cultures: Māori and Pākehā[2]. Tongan and other Pasifika people relate to weaving as a metaphor for education, since they, like Māori, identify with and differentiate various types of weaving. However, they have different types of weaving, and different types of *fala* (mats). Pasifika *fala* involve different techniques, patterns, sizes, different types of materials (pandanus or flax), and are used for different occasions and purposes. What type of *fala* would Tongan ECE teachers want to weave for the Tongan children here in Aotearoa/New Zealand? What potential exists for non-Tongan teachers to weave a *fala* that supports Tongan children? We propose a wider understanding of *Te Whāriki* through the Tongan concept of *tauhi vā*, which could be seen as one of the structural bases of a Tongan version of *Te Whāriki* . It is only one strand, but an important one, and perhaps the basis for weaving an understanding of a more inclusive early childhood education in New Zealand. We introduce a lesser known strand of European thought to show how, from their own philosophic and cultural heritage, European teachers might be able to think about their practice in a way more consonant with *tauhi vā*.

Introduction

New Zealand is a multicultural nation in fact if not in policy. Of a total population of 4,500,000, approximately 565,000 are Māori. Pasifika people constitute a significant group of minorities, but do not have, as Māori do, a constitutional presence in the country. Based on the 2006 census (Statistics New Zealand, 2007), the total Pasifika population is about 300,000 of which Samoans comprise about 50%, Cook Island Māori and Tongans constitute around 20%, while Niueans, Fijians and Tuvaluans account for about 10%. A common characteristic of all these people is that they are young: over one-third of Pasifika people are under 15. Consequently, it would seem to be of great importance that New Zealand should have an early childhood education system that is sympathetic to the needs and aspirations of Pasifika parents and children.

We argue that it is now time to incorporate the cultures of the Pacific into early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Te Whariki* represents two cultures:

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1   *Te Whāriki* is the curriculum framework for early childhood education in New Zealand. The literal meaning of *Te Whāriki* is 'the woven mat'.

2   A New Zealand-born person of European descent.

Māori and Pākehā. Tongan and other Pasifika people relate to weaving as a metaphor for education, since they, like Māori, identify with and differentiate various types of weaving. However, they have different types of weaving, and different types of *fala*. Pasifika *fala* involve different techniques, patterns, sizes, different types of materials (pandanus or flax), and are used for different occasions and purposes. This paper explores different possibilities in the 'weaving' of the educational mat and what this might mean for early childhood education.

What type of *fala* would Tongan ECE teachers want to weave for the Tongan children in Aotearoa/New Zealand? What potential exists for non-Tongan teachers to weave a mat that supports Tongan children? In this paper, we propose a wider understanding of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) through the Tongan concept of *tauhi vā*, that could be seen as one of the structural bases of a Tongan version of *Te Whāriki* . It is only one strand, but an important one, and perhaps the basis for weaving an understanding of a more inclusive early childhood education in New Zealand. The lesser known strand of European thought that is explored in the second half of the paper shows how, from their own philosophic and cultural heritage, European teachers might be able to think about their practice in a way more consonant with *tauhi vā*.

The metaphor of the mat is important to this discussion and will be used as a structural element in the paper. The spatial dimensions of the interwoven mat provide an interesting space in which to explore the borders and boundaries of education. The mat, for the purposes of this discussion, is the pedagogic space in which different cultures can meet through shared notions of relationality and connectedness to others. The first half of the paper is dedicated to the weaving of a Pasifika, and specifically Tongan, notion of education that incorporates the spatial and relational concept of *tauhi vā*. The second half of the paper continues with the exploration of a spatial and relational view of education through the ideas of Spinoza and Deleuze. The juxtaposition of these two radically different philosophic and cultural worlds and approaches in this paper is deliberate. Both strands of thought, we believe, extend the metaphor of the educational mat as an educational space that is in the *process* of becoming. As such, *tauhi vā* and Spinoza and Deleuze represent in this argument different *fala* or mats that complement each other as different ways of weaving an educational philosophy that privileges the relational space and spaces in education.

Part One: Biculturalism and Pasifika in education

The 1989 Education Act opened possibilities for Pasifika education through the formation of learning institutions with a defined character, be this religious, cultural, or indeed curricular. However, we argue that while the Act provides space for the actual creation of a culturally specific school or early childhood centre, it seems not to allow a great deal of flexibility in the procedures, content or context that fit the special character of a sympathetically Tongan style of education. While *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) is celebrated for introducing Māori concepts and terms to early childhood education settings, little allowance is made for cultural concerns that are not identified with those of either of the New Zealand Treaty partners, Māori and Pākehā.

The focus of New Zealand education policy, to the extent it accommodates

difference at all, has been on biculturalism. We believe it is unclear where Tongan ECE providers should position themselves within the context of educational policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As teachers and parents in Tongan preschools experience the impact of education policy in general, and *Te Whāriki* in particular, the reality of early childhood education is that everything is pre-defined in a bicultural context as stipulated in the policies and regulations set out by the Ministry of Education.

Much of the work Tongan early childhood teachers must grapple with involves an understanding of policies, regulations and curriculum that they must then transfer to the context of Tongan language and practices. Biculturalism, the official position in New Zealand, represents the relationships between Māori and the western culture. Tongan early childhood programmes and settings are not bicultural. Rather, they have to be understood as multicultural because more than two cultures overlap one another. These cultures encompass western world views, alongside Māori, Tongan and other Pacific ethnicities. Increasingly, Tongan people marry into other ethnic groups and Tongan ECE providers, therefore, need to accommodate families with mixed heritages.

The bicultural construction of 'the child' in *Te Whāriki* is a response to the demands of governing in New Zealand (Duhn, 2008). The document is politically driven; it is not neutral, rather it is a cultural artefact, which expresses aspirations, desires, and ambitions for the child as future contributors to society from the viewpoints of powerful people. Duhn also suggests that to some extent *Te Whāriki* homogenises Māori languages and cultures. The document fails to recognise the differences between tribes, Māori language, cultural differences, and Māori identities. Rather, it assumes that language and *tikanga* (customs) are universal, which in turn creates a Māori/Pākehā binary that excludes other forms of language and customs. Duhn makes the observation that Pasifika early childhood centres are less focused on the curriculum, which in turn is less focused on them. This is aptly portrayed in the way Pasifika early childhood centres are ambiguously discussed within *Te Whāriki*.

> *Groups of migrants from the Pacific Islands have established early childhood centres to keep their different cultures and languages flourishing in their communities in New Zealand. Because of the diversity of Pacific Island cultures, there is no single Pacific Island curriculum, but there are historic links in language and culture, and there is a common geographic heritage. Examples suggested in this curriculum, while focusing on Pacific Islands early childhood centres, also demonstrate possible models for other ethnic groups who wish to support their cultural heritage within the early childhood curriculum.*
> (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 12)

Although Pasifika language and culture are briefly discussed within the curriculum, there can be no misinterpretation of *Te Whāriki* as a multicultural document. Descriptive material from within *Te Whāriki* clearly states that the weaving of this mat consists of social, cultural, political and theoretical perspectives on childhood from Pākehā and Māori culture (Duhn, 2008). Tongan culture and language is not mentioned and neither are the numerous other cultures and languages that comprise the social fabric of New

Zealand. The bicultural agenda refers to the specific and special relations of Māori people and Pākehā power structures; yet *Te Whāriki* is the early childhood education curriculum that pertains generally to all providers and consumers of ECE. We can see a difficulty in generalising the specific bicultural agenda of *Te Whāriki* to other ethnic groups. For instance, in terms of the notions of 'quality', Tongan communities may very well have different understandings of the term from that proposed in *Te Whāriki* or crystallised in Education Review Office reports (Pau'uvale, 2012).

The significance of 'relationships'

While differences may exist in the ways in which *Te Whariki* is understood and enacted, an aspect that we believe Māori and Pasifika students share is the importance of meaningful relationships in the educational space. As Bishop, Berryman, Cavanaugh, and Teddy (2009) emphasise, one of the most significant factors contributing to educational success for Māori and Pasifika students is the quality of the relationships between the student and the teacher. The salience of this assertion is derived not from the achievements of exceptionally well-socialised teachers in the form of highly successful students, sadly, but in the form of the absence of such socialisation, and its consequences in poor achievement among Māori and Pasifika students. Most likely it has consequences for New Zealand European and Asian students as well, but since these students are often supported by other factors, and are possibly more culturally attuned to the teachers' lack of attention to relationships, they seem not to suffer to the same extent.

   We offer a brief *caveat* as to the origin of this now-accepted educational finding: it is derived from a phenomenological investigation of the views that students, their families, their teachers and their principals held about the reason for their educational success or lack thereof (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007, 2009). Understandably, few of the teachers gave this reason (poor relationships between teachers and students) for poor academic achievement, but many of the students, parents and principals did. This may reflect the easiest target, rather than considered views, but nonetheless indicates a worthwhile avenue to explore in research concerning the academic attainments of Māori, and specifically in this paper, Pasifika students.

   Given that teachers should improve the quality of their relationships with students, what intellectual resources can they draw on? We argue that European teachers (who are the majority) do not have a philosophical viewpoint readily available to them which assists them to a thoughtful improvement in their relationships with students. To the contrary, official discourses can be directly inhibiting of cordial relationships between teachers and students. Our suggestions for a philosophic resource for rethinking the role of teacher in relation to students come from the Tongan principle *tauhi vā* and the ideas of the European philosophers Spinoza and Deleuze. We will first discuss *tauhi vā* as an important resource in understanding relationships, and what this would look like in education.

Tauhi vā and education

The concept of *tauhi vā* plays a significant role in the Tongan culture and the identity of Tongan people. The word *tauhi* refers to "maintaining, looking after, tending, or to keep or adhere" (Churchward, 1959, p. 463). Definitions of the word *vā* refer to "distance between, distance apart, feeling, and relationship towards each other" (Churchward, 1959, p. 528). Ka'ili (2005) describes *vā* as the social or relational space connecting people, suggesting that the Tongan notion of 'space' places more emphasis on the spaces that link and join people together. An in-depth understanding of *vā* refers to the space between two or more parties and their inter-personal relationships (Tu'itahi, 2005). *Tauhi vā* literally refers to maintaining and looking after reciprocal relationships connecting spaces between people genealogically or among groups who are related to one another in various ways (Ka'ili, 2005; Thaman, 2002; Vaioleti, 2011).

The concept of *tauhi vā* is one of the core values that underpins the cultural identity and sense of belonging of Tongan people. *Tauhi vā* is nurtured from birth and it can be expressed through either formal or informal practices within the home and in the community. The birth of a child, one of the most significant occasions in the lives of Tongan people exemplifies the operation of *tauhi vā* through the roles and responsibilities of each member of the family and the *kāinga* (extended family). For instance, the father's side always has the obligation of naming the child, especially if it is the first child, and both the maternal side and the paternal side have certain obligations in raising the child. These *fatongia* (obligations) are practiced as a way of reaffirming and reinforcing their *vā* or relationships.

There are also cultural values of '*ulungaanga* (behaviour) that strengthen the process of *tauhi vā*. In order to maintain harmonious relationships, certain behaviours are expected and require the assuming of specific *fatongia,* or roles and obligations. One must know what these roles and duties are if relationships are to be sustained. These behavioural expectations include establishing reciprocal relationships in the form of *ofa* (love), *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *fetokoni'aki* (helping one another), *melino* (peace), and *toka'i* (empathy). '*Ulungaanga* characterises the *vā* that binds us within the collective and does not focus on the individual, but is embodied in these practices. Thus, the practice of *tauhi vā* promotes the ultimate purpose of peaceful and harmonious relationships within the collective (Ka'ili, 2005; Teisina, 2011; Tu'itahi, 2005).

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) advocates the importance of relationships. One of the foundational principles states that "children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places, and things" (p. 43). The focal points of these relationships are: communication; providing 'scaffolding' for the children's endeavours; and opportunities for social interaction with adults and other children. For Tongan education, 'reciprocal relationships' may not be the equivalent of what is meant in the bicultural context of Māori culture. There are layers of relationships that only Tongans would understand and perform. Even though it is an advantage to be able to refer to *Te Whāriki*, some of the principles do not match the 'substance' that each Pacific culture represents and this is true in the case of Tongan culture. Tongan culture is described in the lived experiences of Tongan people and how they live. It is in the context of *tauhi vā* as a way of upholding the Tongan social structure that we place the

reciprocity of relationships outlined in *Te Whāriki* .

In relation to the educational leadership within a Tongan context, *tauhi vā* also develops strong relationships between the community and staff, to ensure there is a solid foundation that connects the teachers to the work they are doing. Møller (2007) agrees that "it is through the relationship among teachers, students, and the leadership team that the school obtains educational purpose" (p. 41). Consequently, *tauhi vā* is a core value essential to becoming a successful site of learning through leadership. The reciprocal nature of *tauhi vā* enables teachers, parents and children to come together and build strong relationships that will provide a secure foundation for education (Ministry of Education, 2012).

What does this mean for participants in early childhood education? A site for learning that embraces the concept of *tauhi vā* will be more than one that provides a safe and productive learning environment for Tongan children and their families. It will also support a number of behaviours that will make the sharing of the ongoing community life of the centre more pleasant for everyone. Learning about *tauhi vā* continues in the everyday living of the '*api* (home and family), then the schools, church and other contexts in the community. Cultural values of '*ulungaanga* (behaviour) place significant emphasis on *tauhi vā*. In *Akoteu Tonga* (Tongan language nests or early childhood centres), the practice of '*ulungaanga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way of behaving) is one of the major components in the learning and development of Tongan children.

Acknowledging and incorporating *tauhi vā* provides useful tools to rethink ways of understanding and operationalising a fundamental Tongan concept that we believe will contribute to the enhancement of relationships and curriculum that will be meaningful for Tongan and other Pasifika communities. This acknowledgement has the potential to be particularly important in mainstream institutions that serve the needs of Pasifika students and their families. Moreover, non-Pasifika, whether teachers, parents or people in other roles associated with early childhood education are likely to find themselves warmly welcomed when their respect for and contribution to the *vā* is perceived. In this space that connects, it is possible to find both common ground and differences, which, respectfully discussed, could enable critical and adaptive development in pedagogies, curriculum, administration and policy.

Part Two: Enlightenment and resistance

Part of what makes New Zealand such an interesting place to live, philosophically speaking, is that both the European Enlightenment, and resistance to it, are played out in dramatic form, especially in education. The neoliberal 'reforms' of education in the 1990s can be seen as the extreme political expression of a particular reading of (neo-classical economic) liberalism; but at the same time, there are significant communities, not all of them non-European, who resist both politically and theoretically the attempt to render all persons intelligible in terms limited to those of consumer choice. Our interest in Spinoza and Deleuze lies in the possibility they will have something to add to this resistance in a way that complements the discussion of *tauhi vā*. The purpose of this second section is to provide a western philosophic alternative to the above discussion that non-Tongan teachers might be able to incorporate into their teaching practices in

early childhood education.

Spinoza, like Descartes and Kant, was a foundational figure of the European Enlightenment, but the ideas of Descartes and Kant have become naturalised. The common view is these Enlightenment views constitute 'common sense', particularly through the traditions of liberal and neoliberal thought. A large part of Spinoza's purpose is to argue against Descartes, as a large part of Deleuze (and Guattari's) purpose is to argue against Freud and Lacan. Consequently, these writers, it seems to us, have two enormously important points of interest: they argue from within the western tradition against some of the most restricting and pervasive ideas of current European thinking. In that resistance, it is possible to find points of similarity with thinkers from outside the western tradition altogether. Importantly, these points of convergence with non-Western thought link the spatial dimension of *tauhi vā* with the relationality espoused by Spinoza (and later Deleuze) through a common critique of individualism.

Spinoza gives an account of mind and body that does not divorce the two, but positions them as inextricably linked.

> *The human body, as a highly complex composite of many simple bodies, is able to act and be acted upon in myriad ways that other bodies cannot. The human mind, as an expression of that body in the domain of thought, mirrors the body in being a highly complex composite of many simple ideas and is thus possessed of perceptual capacities exceeding those of other, non-human minds.* (Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, n.d.)

Similarly, his logic brings him to a view that people seek the social because this is a logical consequence of who and what they are. According to Gatens (2000),

> *Spinoza argues that each individual seeks out that which it imagines or thinks will increase its power of preserving itself. From this simple maxim, it follows that an attempt to organize one's encounters in order to minimize bad and maximize good affects leads human being to sociability.* (p. 65)

The notion there is only one substance, in which humans partake so that they are never complete but always in a process of relationship with others, yields a position that explains both the attraction people feel for others and the nature of productive 'joyful' relationships.

In the very few steps of argument here, we have a resistance to Decartes' separation of mind and body, but also a resistance to the more important, pervasive, unnoticed separation of individuals themselves from the body-social. It is not quite as vehement as the Samoan rejection of the individual found in Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, and Bush (2005), but certainly is strong enough to underpin a strong critique of individualism, and specifically the methodological individualism of neo-classical economics and new public management.

The individualist critique is extended in the work of Deleuze, who in a lecture on Spinoza's thought, explains the difference between *affectio* or affection, and *affectus* or

affect in terms of the 'adequacy' of the experience (Les Cours de Gilles Deleuze, 1978). *Affectio* is the experience of the mixing of substances or bodies, and Deleuze gives the example of the experience of sunlight on the body. There is no purpose of the sun in giving heat to the body: it is a meaningless experience in some ways, and is therefore 'inadequate'. An affect, however, is meaningful to the person who experiences it: it comes from an external source, and is undergone by the person who experiences it whether they will it or not. The verb is *patior* gives us 'patient', the person who experiences. It is often translated as 'passion' but this is to convey a sense of will that is not present in the original. However, the affect will present itself as an experience of some kind of emotion on a continuum between joy and sadness. Again, joy and sadness are not quite what we expect. Joy increases our capacity for action: sadness decreases it. It is the natural reaction of a body to a sad affect to try to escape it. Likewise, the response to a joyful experience is to enjoy its affect. So our responses to other bodies, and things, are always in a state of flux.

Affect and schooling

Spinoza thinks of subjectivity as a state of constant exposure to the complexity of experience and volition. The parts of the body and the subjectivity that corresponds to the complexity of the body are in perpetual motion as they experience themselves and other forms of being. If we think of educational contexts for students as the experience of a whirling physicality and a constant barrage of changing experience in relation to other bodies, then we have to abandon the idea of the autonomous, self-referential subject of education. It then makes no sense to talk about individual decisions, choices or responsibility.

Such a different way of looking at affect, at relationship, even pedagogy and knowledge, suggests different ways of thinking about the student, the teacher, pedagogy and learning. In the conventional classroom, the ability of the student to distance themselves from a bad encounter is seriously limited. In a Deleuzian/Spinozian world, the students, and perhaps also the teacher, has the ability to decide on what other bodies they will mix with, on the basis of their understanding of the affect of those bodies upon themselves. This is a type of autonomy that is not really embraced by the Greek notion of 'know thyself' but it may well be a very good rendition of 'take care of yourself'. It allows for a kind of instinctual withdrawal from proximity that students can be very good at, but which is not usually officially permitted or encouraged in the context of compulsory and non-compulsory schooling.

In *Nomadology,* Deleuze and Guattari (1986) expound their view of subjectivity. Like Spinoza they do not subscribe to the Cartesian view of the world, which can be summed up as the distinction between mind and body. Nor do they accept a Kantian view of the person as a kind of disembodied rationality. They differ from most modern theorists on the nature of subjectivity by regarding the person as always in a state of change, of tension, of movement between states – a conception that puts all liberal and neoliberal theories, and those of developmental psychology into question, because these theories regard the person, or the subject as a fixed state – as having 'personality' for instance, in the case of psychology, or of having fixed and ordered preferences in the

case of neoliberal economics. These very characteristics, the rejection of the Cartesian (and Kantian) make Deleuze and Guattari sympathetic from the point of view of non-European researchers: the inclusiveness of their thinking concerning the non-human, material, ecologic world and the interest in the relations between people resonate with Pasifika ways of thinking, and could well provide the basis for productive ways of thinking for early childhood teachers and teacher educators who are looking for ideas beyond the confines of European individualism.

Conclusion

This paper has explored two different views that may be woven into the educational mat of early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. While we acknowledge the importance placed on relationships in the fabric of *Te Whāriki* , we critique the primarily bicultural emphasis that excludes a specifically Tongan perspective of what these relationships might mean. In the second half of the paper, we extend this discussion with a critique of western individualism found within the western tradition that we think complements the non-western discussion of *tauhi vā*. The spatiality of the mat of early childhood education in the Tongan context of *tauhi vā*, and the affective-spatial dimension in the ideas of Spinoza and Deleuze, offer an interesting opening in which to consider early childhood education in a way that stands in resistance to both bicultural essentialism and western individualism.

We consider the type of *fala* or mat that teachers of Tongan children want to weave would involve the qualities of the critique both sections of this paper have explored. *Tauhi vā* is the specifically Tongan way of viewing relationships that is spatial, communal and embodied. Spinoza's affective materiality and the Deleuzian fluid body/subject provide a similar perspective, albeit from a radically different tradition. Relationships in education, if we take on board both dimensions, involve a community of affective subjects that are inextricably linked to each other. To return to the metaphor of the woven mat, these relationships are not only sympathetic to the Tongan culture, but also vital and productive in ways that benefit the space of education generally.

Our purpose here is not, by any means, to assimilate Tongan ideas to the ideas of Spinoza or Deleuze. What they have in common is that they have well developed notions of ontology, of being, and the kind of subjectivities that develop from different ways of thinking about ontology. Moreover, all these philosophic positions can be seen as forms of resistance to the currently dominant forms of thought concerning ontology and subjectivity in New Zealand education broadly, and early childhood education specifically. Although they would play out very differently in educational practice they are worth thinking about as ways of developing the importance of relationships, and the effects we have on one another in the educational village.

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