Chapter 2

UNLEASHING THE ELEPHANT OUT OF THE CLOSET AND INTO THE WILDNESS OF INNER WORK

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors explore the "hidden curriculum" that is enacted when the teaching-self transmits to the learning-self, the being *aspects of the teacher. It is proposed that these aspects are communicated through discursive and nondiscursive materials. The latter includes energetic, emotional, and gestural "languages." An argument is made that the current, modernist conceptions and practices of education that predominantly focus on covering and downloading curriculum materials do not create openings for exploring the being aspects of teachers and learners. Moreover, acknowledging Avraham Cohen's thesis, "We teach who we are, and that's the problem," the authors explore the hurtful and damaging influence of the teachers' "Shadow materials." An argument is made for the moral imperative of teachers' (or anyone who is in a position of influencing others) self-study to minimize or prevent hurtful and damaging influences that could have a long-lasting impact on the students' or learners' self-formation. The authors propose the method of inner work, integrated with contemplative inquiry and practices, as a way for educators to work with the materials of consciousness. Inner work largely involves working through psychological projections, introjections, and entanglements that permeate one's inner world. Some details of inner work are offered, including how to facilitate a dialogue between the parts or subselves in one's inner world that are in tension and conflict. It has been further proposed that*

this kind of inner work would lay the necessary foundation for becoming kinder, caring, and more compassionate human beings.

Keywords: Inner work; pedagogy; self-study; reflective practice; mindfulness; attention

INTRODUCTION

The statement attributed to Parker Palmer, "We teach who we are" (Palmer, 1998, p. 1), is often quoted in educational circles. Just as shadows invariably follow us, or just as the scent of flowers reveals which flower it is that we are smelling, or as we leave our fingerprints on what we touch, when we stand in front of our students, our teaching, no matter what the content may be, is offered to them through the energetic and existential vehicle of who we have become as human beings (see also what Hulburt, Colaiane, & Roeser, this volume, refer to as the "unnamed domain"). Thus, they receive both the content (curriculum) and the existential signature of our being/becoming (pedagogy), simultaneously. With the current emphasis on curriculum, our pedagogy acts at most as the hidden curriculum. However, hidden, as in "out of sight," ought not amount to "out of mind." The darkly hidden could have dark influences that wreak havoc on those who come under the influence of our teaching without either the influencer or the influenced knowing it in any carefully reflective and articulate way. Knowing the magnitude of the influence that pedagogy can exert on students, we the authors of this chapter would like to capture this understanding in the imagistic metaphor of the elephant in the closet. Here, the elephant represents the pedagogy enacted by the teacher: that is, the being dimension of the teacher.

So brilliant is the main stage light shed on curriculum in conventional schooling that when the elephant is brought out of the closet and into the room, typically we still do not see and recognize the elephant. For example, suppose a teacher who is anxious is teaching students some subject matter. Most likely she will unwittingly transmit anxious vibes to students. Anxiety then becomes something of a "hidden pedagogy"; for, students are unconsciously "learning" anxiety in the sense that they themselves become anxious or, if they were already anxious, they would become more anxious. In not recognizing the connection of being-to-being influence between the teacher's anxiety and students' anxiety, we may pay no attention to the latter; or if we do, we may focus only on the students' anxiety and try to get rid of their anxiety. The situation is akin to the selective perception experiment involving a person wearing a gorilla party suit walking unnoticed by the viewer whose attention solely follows the balls that are being passed among the participants in the room. Now, suppose that we are able to shift our focus of attention from the ball (representing curriculum) to the gorilla-suited person (representing pedagogy) (Simons & Chabris, 1999). What will we see? This is where we wish to bring in Avraham Cohen's addition to the above-stated Parker Palmer line: "We teach who we are, *and that's the problem*" (Cohen, 2015, p. 25). Let us call this additional part, the Cohenian thesis. If, for example,

who we are at present is afflicted with anxiety (as in our example, above), anger, frustrations, burn-out stress, existential malaise, hopelessness, compulsion, ill will, greed, and so on, then, as a teacher, we would be spreading our afflictions, albeit unconsciously and unintendedly, to the students we teach.

At the very same time, "We teach who we are, and that's the problem" is also the opportunity. As Ergas (this volume) asserts, the self and its senses of meaning can and do fluctuate over time. He goes on to suggest the "teaching self" can reflect either the *vita activa*, the active self oriented toward getting through the prescribed curriculum with the prescribed pedagogy, *or the vita* contemplativa, the more contemplative, inwardly focused self who is oriented toward meaning-making for self and others. Thus, in a fashion similar to Ergas, we assert that teachers can orient themselves to more contemplative approaches that focus on beingness, both personal and professional, and their development; furthermore, teacher preparation programs are ideally suited to this task. And like Ritter (this volume), we heartily endorse the inclusion of "self-study" as the "messy process" of fostering teachers' professional and personal development, and from that, interactions with students and colleagues; such self-study is the dynamic work of beingness.

Our beingness pervades and permeates others with whom we interact. And if our interaction occurs within a power structure of dependency, vulnerability, and dominance, such as in the not uncommon student–teacher or parent–child relationship, this phenomenon of pervasion and permeation can be much more consequential and negative for students' or children's growth and well-being. Given this, are we as educators not ethically obligated to examine our interiority, that is, our beingness, and address all its possibilities: who we are existentially, energetically, and ethically? Should we not carefully examine how we may be negatively impacting others, even if without meaning to, especially our dependent and vulnerable others?

The aforementioned kind of examination would belong to the discipline of reflective practice. However, to date, there is still relative paucity of this kind of inquiry and investigation in reflective practice (Cohen, 2015). For, much of the focus in reflective practice still goes to examining one's practice: what is being taught and how we teach (Dinkelman, 2003; Samaras, 2006; see also Ergas' point, this volume) about the emphasis in teaching practice on the "day-to-day," which confines the self to the educationally normative, and Ritter's argument (this volume) that self-study often avoids what might reasonably be considered its *sine qua non*: a deep and systemic inquiry into the nature of the self). Two decades ago, Donald Schön (2000) already described this practice in great detail. This approach, of course, is very valuable, and we the authors of this chapter are not at all suggesting that we educators do less. Rather, what we are proposing in this chapter is that we make self-inquiry or self-study more central to reflective practice. Such inquiry or study can be named as inner work (Cohen, 2019) and is consistent with Socrates' famous injunction, "Know thyself," and the Buddha's instruction, "Be a lamp unto yourself." This chapter plummets the theoretical depth of this thesis, paying particular attention to the challenges and difficulties that the thesis poses to educators in terms of practice.

In the next section, we inquire as to how the elephant got into the closet in the first place. What is it about our culture and society that keeps the elephant in a closet? This inquiry will reveal a number of long-standing and deep-seated cultural, nay, civilizational, mindset biases at work, of which the elephant-in-the-closet phenomenon is part. Following this inquiry, we will then make a call for a paradigm shift: riding the elephant out of the closet into the open field of education, how that will change our educational practice, and furthermore how that will begin to shift the matrix of this rapacious, exploitative, and violent, not to mention delusional, civilization.

WHY IS THE ELEPHANT IN THE CLOSET? WHO SHOVED IT IN THERE?

Ours is a very strongly outer-focused civilization that preoccupies itself with irrevocably altering the physical and relational environment through an endless cycle of manufacturing, selling, and consuming goods, while engaged in another endless preoccupation of building buildings, bridges, and roads to house and transport these goods. All this is considered to be progress-making. As Ronald Wright forcibly argues, we are captured in a *progress trap* (Wright, 2004). This civilization's wanting to have a certain "lifestyle" as its standard has hugely devastating ethical consequences. Not only an increasing number of people and other sentient beings will suffer but also human beings are in a process of "fouling the nest," thereby precipitating the extinction of all sentient beings, including ourselves, who share this once mostly green and blue, now increasingly brown, planet.

With this focus on externalization, problems and issues we encounter in life are mostly seen as being located "out there," and we endeavor to solve these problems and fix the issues by doing something to what is "out there." As Ergas (this volume) asserts, we have today the choice between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*; in many ways, we are culturally pulled toward the *vita activa* and a corresponding external focus. Even (or, we should say, especially) with environmental education, this external focus manifests as doing something *to* the environment to fix and restore it (see also Albrecht's conception of the "ecological self," this volume). But, how did the environment come to be so devastated in the first place? While this question is meant to be a rhetorical question, embedded in this question is an absolutely critical factor to consider. The externalization focus or modus operandi is not value neutral. Since this focus came out of the binary thinking or dualism that separated what is essentially inseparable, namely all "parts" or aspects of human being, or being human, for example, mind, heart, body, "soul," and "spirit," and whatever else; moreover, this separation is combined with prioritization or ranking of which parts are more important than which others, namely, mind is more important than body or matter—which is twinned with mind-matter dualism (Laing, 1980), wherein matter does not matter as much as mind (see Sellman, this volume).

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In fact, in the materialistic world that we are increasingly inhabiting since the 17th century, matter is as good as dead and inert, and it has no intrinsic value: it only has instrumental value (Bai, 2001, 2012). It naturally follows that we humans who matter the most in our view of the world have the license to degrade, kill, and destroy other beings and "things," and we even exterminate species. The current species extinction that is taking place at an alarming rate is, as David Loy (Loy, personal communication, September 18, 2019) points out, really an act of *extermination* perpetrated by humans against other life forms on this planet. What justification is there for this act? Matter does not matter as it is just inert, lifeless, and at worst, without consciousness: such would be the justification by the classical materialist worldview committed to the dualism of mind-matter and mind-body (see Sellman, this volume). The main point we are making here is that there are heinous ethical consequences to mind-body/matter dualism that fosters and champions external focus and externalization. We are living out these consequences in the current age of the Anthropocene. The human presence is impacting the entire planet and its biosphere in a damaging and destructive way (Bai, Chang, & Scott, in press).

We may see the same external focus and externalization in our human relationships. Our relationship to other humans tends to follow the same logic of not seeing the contested and in our view, inherent interconnectedness among human individuals and communities. Ill will, competition, domination, exploitation, cruelty, and atrocity all follow from not seeing the mutual interconnection, which is named in Buddhism, *dependent origination*, or *interbeing*, as Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) poetically captures it. To the degree that one considers oneself as an independently existing unit of being—a social atom, to that extent, one is mired in fundamental ignorance (avidya in Buddhism) or delusion (moha in Buddhism) of what reality actually is and how humans as part of that reality function. And to that extent and degree, one will incur suffering for the self and for others. Yet this reality distortion is pervasive. So pervasive is it that the distortions of the mind are taken as unquestioned social reality and empirical truth. How did we become mired in delusion? What will take for us to wake up from this ignorance? More disasters and suffering?

Instead of waking up to seeing through the delusion, our tendency is blaming others for any problems we encounter and have. We only have to watch the evening news on TV. Our countries' top leaders and politicians are glibly proposing blame solutions to our various social ills and problems, such as: "America will be great again only if we get rid of illegal immigrants and…." Other nations, other cultures, other religions, other ethnic groups, immigrants, mentally ill people, addicted people, "poor, lazy, and dirty" people, "stupid people, stupid animals," etc.: *only if we don't have them and don't have to deal with these "others"!* The results of this tendency of ours most often are to locate and target the external other for the helplessness we feel toward our own misery. Suffering is tragically staring at us, and yet, even to see this requires us to turn around our optical device and point it in the right direction: to our interiority and engage in a vigorous and honest inner work process. The good news is that, as Ergas mentions (this volume), referencing Charles Taylor's (1992) work, contemporary

western culture (of the last 200 years or so) has witnessed an overall significant shift to the subjective, to our interiors (despite the more recent influences of the superficialities present in some aspects of postmodernity). The further significance of Taylor's (2007) more recent work is to show how this move to the existential queries of individual and collective interiors—essentially what we would consider spirituality—is occurring in the secular contexts of western civilization.

What is called for is that we look into ourselves and catch glimpses of how ignorance and delusion are at work, how we propose blaming as a solution to our problems, and how we reenact the same conditioned thinking and seeing. This is inner work. And this is essentially what the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, was researching, and his findings, transmitted across vast tracts of time and places, were shared in languages accessible to common folks. For instance, our mind is said to be majorly afflicted by the three poisons: greed, ill will, and delusion (Loy, 2003, pp. 79–86). To note, greed and ill will stem from personal and cultural delusion. As mentioned, delusion concerns not seeing nonduality or interconnectivity of self and other, interiority and exteriority, the inner environment of self and the outer environment of the biosphere (see also Albrecht, this volume; Sellman, this volume). In ecological terms, nonduality speaks to interconnectedness of all life phenomena, from spores and bacteria to whales and coral reefs, from mountains and oceans to air, clouds, and soil. All are included. If we could truly realize our interconnectedness, we would break out of the problematic binary-ridden worldview that considers much of the world made up of "dead," inanimate matter (Bai, 2013). A direct ethical consequence of this worldview is what we are facing and living out today. Facts are out there for all to see[1]: a mass extinction of species, because of human presence and its activities, tainted with greed and ill will.

Freeing the Elephant, Studying the Self

What the historical Buddha importantly pointed out is that human beings are not social atoms. Quantum mechanics presented a view of the universe not dependent on self-existing particles such as atoms but rather dependent on objects that, first, had the properties of both particles and waves, second, whose properties could not be fully known at any given time or location (the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle), and, third, that are "entangled" together such that you cannot describe the state of one without describing the state of the other, regardless of physical distance. That is, the objects/particles are not individual but relational, inseparable wholes (see also Sellman, this volume). The Buddha dispelled the notion of human self as an individual social atom. If we took the time and *really* looked, deeply, into our consciousness, which is what vipassana (insight) meditation, commonly known nowadays as *mindfulness*, is primarily about, we would see that

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[1]Sources are too numerous to list here, but we mention a few choice ones: Fact Sheet: Global Species Decline (https://www.earthday.org/2018/05/18/fact-sheet-global-species-decline/); The World Counts (https://www.theworldcounts.com/counters/degradation_and_destruction_of_ecosystems/species_extinction_facts).

there are no such things or beings as individuals. Instead, what we would see is this constant flow of process that not only informs and performs but also forms the self, moment by moment; Ergas (this volume) similarly points to the self forming and engaging, moment by moment, interactively. Similarly, Ritter (this volume) points to the "semiotic" self formed through dialogue and polyphony with culture, environment, and history; interestingly, as well, for our context here, he points to the interdependent self that is more common to Asian cultures. Self is a process. This understanding is exquisitely expressed by Dōgen Zenji (1986), a Japanese Buddhist priest (1200–1253) and founder of Soto school of Zen in Japan. In a celebrated passage, he states the following:

Studying the Buddha Way is studying oneself. Studying oneself is forgetting oneself. Forgetting oneself is being enlightened by all things. Being enlightened by all things is causing the body-mind of oneself and the body-mind of others to be shed. There is ceasing the traces of enlightenment, which causes one to forever leave the traces of enlightenment which is cessation (p. 32).

The first thing we will likely notice if we study the self is that "self" is not some identifiable individual "thing," a *social atom*, as we conventionally think. We are, through socialization, conditioned or habituated to think, feel, and see it that way. Vipassana (insight) meditation is an attempt to "catch" such social atom perception and from repeated failure to catch; in every moment of such attempt, we are compelled to accept the conclusion that there is no such thing as social atom: that one's self is not this kind of social atom. What is the self, then? Zen adopts the traditional Buddhist language of "no-self." We are no-selves. Really? Who loves, who eats, who works, who competes, who wins, who loses, etc.?

"No-self" is not to be taken literally. Rather, no-self is best understood as "*no such self* as atomistic self" that individualism imagines. Ultimately, Dogen is making the point that there is no fixed self, and ultimately, no fixed anything. "No-self," instead, points to the self that is one with "ten thousand things," to borrow a Chinese expression that refers to all that exists in the phenomenal world: that is, an interdependent, ecological self, embedded in the whole universe and, therefore, enacted by the whole universe. Thinking of "self" as a process rather than a fixed thing is certainly a much more realistic way of describing this being. Coming to this understanding, not just intellectually, but in an embodied way—that is, experientially, in the fullness of felt sense and perception, is what is traditionally named "enlightenment" or "awakening." As such, this experience *qua* experience is neither rare nor exotic. Whether we describe the actual experience by words and expressions like "flow," "in the zone," "bliss,"and "engrossment," most of us have had an experience like this, however, fleetingly. Such experience is so fleeting that we often miss, ignore, dismiss, or forget that we have it. We may treat it just as a nice and pleasant experience and lightly move on. But if we were to drop down into that moment, we may be confronted by what we call a nonordinary experience of everything, including one's self and our interconnectedness. And when we can get into having such experience frequently, regularly, or steadily, we are then said to be enlightened or perhaps better put as "awakened."

What is the importance of such experience to us who are investigating the role of self and self-study in education and teaching? The short answer is, to reiterate, that enlightenment as nonduality or interconnectedness of self-other is of paramount importance to us educators who are, and rightly should be, concerned with the well-being of the planet and all its members and seek ways to educate ourselves to dispel the illusion of individualism and materialism, and to clearly see the destructiveness of instrumentalism and consumerism.

Realization of self-other nonduality would have enormous ethical consequences. For example, the moment the teacher self sees her student who is not working at her assignment and is staring out the window, distractedly, and has the thought that this student is lazy, is a trouble-maker or an academic failure, the nonduality understanding, *if available*, may pop up and ask the self to question this conditioned and habituated act of externalization: "Is it possible that I am seeing the student in this way due to my own inner conditioning, however that might have come about in my formative years?" However, without some intense and immersive practice in inner work as self-study, it is difficult to recognize and attempt to counter one's conditioned and habituated patterns: in this context, externalization. The initial moment of "noticing" such perceptions is a crucial moment of awakening, and hopefully, the initiatory moment of many such awakenings and insights.

Persistently continuing the above line of inquiry, over time, would result in further uncovering of the nature of one's conceptual, perceptual, and emotional life, revealing its "taintedness" by greed, anger, dislike, resentment, despair, hatred, envy, vengefulness, and so on. All of these are, in Buddhist psychology, understood to be corollary of self-other duality (Loy, 2019a, 2019b). Without such duality, there cannot be greed, anger, and the like. For, you and the "other" are engaged in an intimate dance of like-and-dislike, love-and-hate, in short, all manner of psychological projections, introjections, and entanglements. You cannot do it alone! Understanding all this, seeing such as the dance of non/duality, and also sorting through who is doing what in response to the other's, is major inner and relational work.

Teachers would find this additional work staggering ("Who has the time and energy?"), given that their mandated curricular work—the "day-to-day" world with its normatively determined curriculum Ergas acknowledges (this volume)—is often overwhelming to begin with. It is altogether understandable that teachers and school administrators deny ("Look, Johnny *is* the problem; I'm not the one creating the problem!), avoid ("Let's not go there! I don't have time and energy."), and delegate ("Not my job! Let's send Johnny to the school counsellors or psychologist"), rather than take on the inner work needed to enact inner knowing and nonduality of self-other (see Hulburt, Coalaiane, & Roeser, this volume). And educators are of course not unique in this. As indicated, and generally speaking, this whole civilization is built on the epistemology of self-other and inner-outer dualism, as well as privileging of the externalization *modus vivendi* and *operandi*. The current climate crisis is a glaring example of this, as we indicated earlier. All the conflict and violence on the plane of human relationship supply further examples.

Mindlessly Minding the Elephant

Even if our readers should happen to be theoretically convinced of nonduality of self-other and inner-outer, realizing and experiencing the self-other/world interdependence in an embodied way does not automatically follow. Some kind of practice and cultivation are needed. Previously, we alluded to the Buddhist vipassana meditation[2] as a way of refuting the atomistic, that is, singular and independent, self. Basically, in this practice, we look deeply into the workings of our mind and witness that, indeed, self is a dynamic, nonpermanent, and pluralistic *process* (Macy, 1991), always merging into and out of the other (as the changing object of one's attention) (see also Hamilton & Pinnegar, this volume, for another perspective on how self and other are entangled). Could we introduce this and other kinds of practice to our educational environments? What would they look like?

Insight meditation or, as we the authors of this chapter prefer to call it, following Dogen, "the study of the self," is currently underutilized and, worse, misunderstood and misrepresented, if not corrupted. Here, we are referring to the popularization of mindfulness meditation in all sorts of social arenas in contemporary culture, from school to military services, from stock market investment industry to mental health services (Forbes, 2019; Hyland, 2017). Typically understood and practiced in contemporary culture, the purpose of mindfulness practice is to destress and also to sharpen attention. Mindfulness or rather modern instrumental forms of mindfulness have been subsumed under the matrix of *self*-help and *self*-improvement, which ostensibly reinforces the notion of an atomistic, individualized self arising through the process of ego-reification and Cartesian dualism (see also Sellman, this volume). Applying this logic, any exploration of self is considered an undertaking to further reinforce one's essentialized, substantive sense of self to manifest any number of so-called "desirable outcomes" to cope and succeed in modern materialistic and consumerist societies. These outcomes include greater focus and attention, stress relief, stress management, resilience, efficiency, and so on. In other words, modern mindfulness is a tool to be applied in the pursuit of material goals; that is, modern mindfulness offers competitive advantage in a hyperindividualistic and hyper-competitive world. Because of this transformation of mindfulness from one part of a system of ethics rooted in Buddhist philosophy (notably, the Noble Eightfold Path) inextricable from its larger whole to an instrumental and prescriptive technique, mindfulness then becomes an apparatus that facilitates the machinations of neoliberal corporate capitalism, the dominant organizing principle of modern societies today (Reveley, 2016).

As mindfulness has become in vogue and has grown in popularity in the mainstream, there are inevitable challenges and potential pitfalls that arise from its wider acceptance. One such challenge is the watering-down of the original

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[2]As indicated previously, vipassana (literally, insight) meditation and mindfulness are nowadays considered exchangeable. Also, mindfulness is now considered to include, besides vipassana, shamatha (single-pointed concentration meditation) (Cullen, 2011).

principles and ethics in which mindfulness is rooted in Buddhist philosophy. That a Buddhist practice has come to be accepted and commonly practiced in Western secular society, one that is predominantly Judeo-Christian and pragmatic, as in the case of North America, is quite a feat in itself.[3] However, this explosion in popularity of mindfulness in the West comes at the cost of a loss of clarity and connection to the principles of mindfulness in its original conceptualization in Buddhism. The recent collaboration and conflation of Buddhism with modern psychology under the rubric of self-care and well-being has greatly facilitated the spreading of mindfulness into many areas of public and private life. However, this maneuver potentially leads to the muddying of an already conceptually unclear field of inquiry. Is meditation a Buddhist practice for liberation and insight or a neurocognitive technique to facilitate focus and relieve stress?

Seeing just how mindfulness has become appropriated for "other" purposes, some may propose to just throw it out. Most understandable sentiment; yet, this would be like the proverbial throwing the baby out with the bath water. Let us keep the baby (mindfulness) but change the bath water soiled with capitalism, neoliberalism, consumerism, instrumentalism, militarism, and so on.

Becoming an Elephant Whisperer

It is well-known that elephants are extremely powerful and need to be raised and interacted with kindness to become helpers and comrades to humans. Trying to tame a powerful elephant through willfully badgering it and beating it will not result in a good-tempered and cooperative elephant. On the contrary, if ill-treated, they may even trample the trainers and riders to death. Gentleness and generosity beget gentleness and generosity; kindness and compassion beget kindness and compassion. Moments of firmness can also be infused with compassion. We posit here that the same goes for cultivating the self in the service of becoming an elephantine pedagogue. In this section, we introduce the gentling method of self-awareness cultivation.

The initial step is to turn attention inward: first, to simply become aware of the flow of consciousness, next notice what is there, and then delve into this something and allow for the free movements of consciousness which includes darting here and there. There is no attempt to control the consciousness; rather, the effort is to discover the phenomena of the inner world, its patterns, and its roots. Simultaneously, parallel to allowing the free movements of consciousness, we also make effort to strengthen and develop what is the central and core "ability": our capacity for awareness.

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[3]Although, as Charles Taylor might point out (see *Sources of the Self*), there has been in the last 200 or so years a significant shift in western cultures toward interiors. The surges of interest in eastern religions/practices/philosophies, both in the 1960s and in recent years, have emerged because westerners could not see Judeo-Christian (or secular) organizations offering practices of interiority; also, the eastern approaches were skillfully "marketed."

Ordinarily, thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and sensations show up on the "screen" of consciousness. What tends to happen is that we either latch onto some of them, in which case, we become absorbed into and identified with them, or our attention goes elsewhere, in which case they just fade away. An alternative to these is to pay attention to these phenomena, which is the process in which the self-as-awareness is witnessing the rising and fading away of these phenomena. All that we need to do is become aware of whatever happens and *study* the experience. The key here is that you cultivate and grow awareness in the service of awakening to lessened attachment to the phenomena. If this is done, gradually, over time, and you persist in this practice, what can happen is that your awareness function strengthens and expands, and you become less reactive to whatever is happening around you. With diminished reactivity, you are able to "sit with" and can work with whatever arises, in the service of illuminating understanding and insight.

Consider the following vignette of inner work meditation that was performed in real time of three to four minutes by one of our chapter authors, Avraham Cohen:

> I am entering into a meditation. I am standing up. My initial awareness is sensory. I hear the sounds from outside; traffic, birds, a distant siren. I feel my feet on the floor. My eyes are half closed. I notice a flicker of movement in my torso. I allow the movement. A small sound emerges from me. I start to walk slowly. My eyes are sufficiently open that I will not be walking into any objects. I have a thought about a task I have planned for later. I feel a surge of energy in my chest. The feeling is not entirely comfortable. I have some concerns about this task. The concerns are related to working with a person who will be also involved in the task. I am still moving. I have thoughts about this person and my perception of their shortcomings. My attention shifts suddenly to my participation in this relationship. I am aware that I often get an unwanted reaction from this person. Suddenly a memory emerges. My father is telling me that I am going to mess "it" up. This memory is quite vivid. I am still moving around the room. In the background I hear traffic sounds from outside.

To note, in the above meditation, no effort is made to "not think." On the contrary, the meditator is following the events in consciousness without being absorbed into them, which is indicated by the constant presence of awareness. The vignette continues:

> I turn my attention to my father. I am aware of his unhappiness within me. I am about 13 years old. I also am aware of my 13-year old self who is feeling hurt and anger. The whole interaction is somewhat representative of what is frequent enough between a parent and a child. I am aware of three "phenomena" in my inner world: My father, my 13-year old self, and my consciousness. I now put myself into being my father in the service of knowing my inner construction of my father, and "smoothing" the binary, and seeing the whole that is the relationship between me and my inner, and outer, father.

> I feel anxious and unhappy with my son. I am worried about his future. He often seems to make poor choices. As well, he seems to be very unhappy. I despair about his future. I feel tense in my body. Suddenly, I remember my immigrant background. I was born in this country. My parents came over from the Old Country. They worked hard and I remember often being concerned about our family's survival. "Would we have a roof over our heads? Would we have food to eat?" I have an awareness that these fears are occluding this situation with my son. I wonder if my worries are actually contributing to the situation between us.

I now put myself into being my 13-year old self.

I am very mad at my Dad. He does not understand me. Nobody understands me. I am alone. I am angry and desperate. I am just a kid. What can I do? What can I do? I need help. No one is helping me. No one!

It is likely clear that much more can be done with this inner work, particularly the relational piece between the inner Father and the inner 13-year-old Son. The integration of the identity parts and the "growing" of their inner relationship provides for a more liberated possibility that allows for the flow of life energy when the inner and reified selves are no longer so readily activated. Avraham's inner work here is an illustration of the central thesis this chapter is putting forward: rediscovering and reclaiming nonduality or interconnectedness ("inter-being") through inner work or self-study a la Dogen.

As shown above, the possibility of working with one's interiority requires that there be awareness that is not absorbed into the content of consciousness, be they various perceptions, body sensations, emotions, desires, notions, memories, storylines, and so on. But this awareness that we need to do inner work does not, and cannot, come from outside one's consciousness. For, awareness is "internal" to the experiencing subject. By the same token, then, when the surrounding culture, such as ours, is so externally focused, we are not given enough opportunity to do inner work. All around us, we see the results of this externally oriented culture. What this means for us educators is that we need to intentionally, skillfully, and persistently seek and engage with our opportunities for inner work.

Over time, with cultivation and practice, the awareness capacity grows. Its capacity can progressively be so enlarged and solid that it becomes very stable and nonreactive, while being vigilantly aware, and it can then nimbly track and follow anything that comes its way. When this happens, a whole range of diverse, even contradictory, views and values, thoughts, and emotions become available in consciousness without their crashing into and crushing each other, and without the usual overwhelming discomfort and pain. The more expansive and solid our awareness becomes, the more it is able to examine, without flinching, how one's particular self has been constructed in constricted ways emotionally, cognitively, somatically, and energetically, and how it all operates. We may then also increasingly see how our reactivity to what is and who is "out there" controls our consciousness via the nervous system. By tracking and following, one may see one's habitual patterns of survival responses in the form of "4 F's": flight, fight, freeze, and, we may also add, *fawn*. One may see clearly that what is identified as one's self and one's personality is mostly made up of the patterns of reactivity, and that have been reified from the earliest days of one's existence.

When the experiencing self has become stable and nonreactive through strong and ongoing inner work as Dogenian self-study, it is less prone to falling prey to all that goes on in the theater of one's consciousness, especially the negative dramas of oppression, repression, criticism, self-sabotaging, self-negation, self-glorification, and so on. The same applies to the arena of one's interpersonal

relationships. When awareness has become strong and expansive for the experiencing self, the latter is much less susceptible to the interpersonal drama that whips up such miseries as criticism, sabotage, punishment, withdrawal of love and attention, and vagaries of likes and dislikes. All in all, then, the aware self can be the best nurturer for itself and for the other. Under the gracious and spacious hospitality of the aware self, growth and healing can take place, most often simultaneously. It is most important to remember and remind ourselves, however, that the growth of awareness is typically a lengthy process as the initial awareness may indeed unearth the depth of the associated pain.

In the following final section, we recast Dogen's self-study idea into an educational philosophy that can answer the following questions: Could we have an education that encourages us to look within, deeply, in the service of some balance between the inner and the outer directedness at this point in history? Could we resolve to move away from the systemic externalization that is part and parcel of humanity's tendency to dominate, manipulate, exploit, and consume, all for the sake of so-called progress?

Coda: Becoming an Elephantine Educator and Realizing the Unity of Self-other-environment

Here, we are evoking what Ergas (this volume) refers to as the contemplative self in teaching. This self is indeed one that sees itself and thus the world anew, one that can dispassionately and compassionately observe the personal, relational, social, and cultural shackles of the past. Methodologically speaking, attention, focus, and awareness are states common to processes as diverse as contemplative introspection and the exacting methods of logic, mathematics, or science-based research. Empirical observation, after all, might accurately describe the spirit of outer-focused inquiry as much as the exploration of one's subjectivity, if we consider that both express the aspiration to perceive what we experience without the accrued conditioned biases we absorb from culture, formal education, upbringing, or habit.

Attention is most commonly thought of as "to take notice of" in the above sense; yet it can also denote "consideration, care" (Oxford Dictionary, 1954), "sympathetic consideration of the needs and wants of others" (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, 2019), or even "the action of dealing with or taking special care of someone or something" (Dictionary.com, 2019). According to Cheyne McCallum (2015), early experimental psychologist Edward Titchener believed that attention "determined the content of consciousness and influenced the quality of conscious experience." As Titchener observed, attention is "the normal state of our consciousness," whereas "inattention" is not so much that we are not paying attention as "attending to something else" (Titchener, 1911). This "normal state" nevertheless implies a constant cycling between central and peripheral awareness, paired with the ability to consciously recalibrate focus as circumstance necessitates. In other words, attention is not an *all-or-nothing* or *on-or-off* phenomenon. It is incredibly dynamic and complex, and gaining a mastery in attentional work supports our self-study as offered by Dogen.

But the question remains: as learners and teachers, to what do we attend? This is an especially important question in consideration of Ergas' point about the supremacy of the day-to-day self in contemporary education. Again, we are invoking the contemplative self. What is the "quality and content" of our focused awareness in relation to self-inquiry and inquiry into the educational process? In "The Need for a Philosophy of Education," John Dewey (1934) describes how the first step in understanding education is

> …discovery of what actually takes place when education really occurs. And before we can formulate a philosophy of education we must know how human nature is constituted in the concrete; we must know about the working of actual social forces…. The need for a philosophy of education is thus fundamentally the need for finding out what education really is. (pp. 3–4)

For Dewey, educational practice might be more accurately defined by observing the relations and effects of the wider social, cultural, and political contexts in which it is situated. Similarly, we as individuals might also be "observable in our relations and effects," in that we simultaneously condition and are conditioned according to diverse social and environmental factors. These influences, of course, help define our individual outlooks, which in turn influence our decisions and actions, whose consequences echo throughout our families, peers, workplace, and wider communities. On a temporal axis, these echoes may have delayed effects and cannot be limited to points of reference specific only to our lifetime and its immediate sphere of influence. If we can each be said to embody culture in ways unique to our experience, it follows that we also embody the myriad forms and processes that comprise learning and the actualization of what we learn. To read this in light of Cohen's reformulation of Palmer, to understand and theorize educational practice, we are necessarily bound to understanding who we actually are "in the concrete" and take stock of the "quality and content," as well as the effects of our being; in other words, "who we have become that we are not!."

We might extend this essential relationality to our very physicality and, as Alfred North Whitehead (1958) observed, draw the inference that the experience of an independent consciousness is in part illusory from the perspective of evolutionary biology. How can this be? Whitehead suggests that it is because the organic design and processes of human consciousness—our very ability to perceive, think, and feel—have always evolved as part of a unified biological environment:

> The body is that portion of nature with which each moment of human experience intimately cooperates. There is an inflow and an outflow of factors between the bodily actuality and the human experience, so that each shares in the existence of the other. The human body provides our closest experience of the interplay of actualities in nature. The body is that part of nature whose functionings are so coordinated as to be reciprocally coordinated with the functionings of the corresponding human experience. (p. 157)

We might say that our "self" is literally, from this purely biological perspective, an expression or facet of environment, from which all beings and subsidiary processes (human and otherwise) cannot be neglected as factors of

direct or indirect influence. This is, we would suggest, a natural extension of Ritter's "semiotic" self, an indirect invocation of Charles Taylor's (1991) dialogical self. Such an orientation implies the necessity of an ethics of relation that we pay attention to how we conceive of and treat ourselves and how we conceive of and treat whatever we take as being either peripheral or external to our self.

Ergas (this volume) asserts that to touch the "deeper levels" of ourselves, we need to retreat from the sociocultural constructs of identity placed upon us; we need to inquire into the nature of the self. To "teach who we are" presumes an ever-clearer definition of self. Extending from the parallel examples of Dewey and Whitehead, if "who we are" is not just our individual self (or contextual role) as either educator or student but also "us" as a dialogical dynamic, each of us already embodies something like a "self-other," or even a "self-other-environment" that fluctuates in ongoing reciprocal response, as we saw in Cohen's vignette. To what degree do we perceive the implicit potentials of this already-existing state of affairs? How might the benefits of such a focus be realized without limit or exception? This, we believe, is the arena of attentional work. Through attending to the already-existing state of affairs, we come to realize and embody the relational bond of self-other-environment. This is what education could achieve as aims of education in a culture that has gone atomistic and solipsistic, compelling us to become the proverbial, "cogs in a wheel." As cogs in a wheel, becoming reflective practitioners would be limited to reflecting on how we function as cogs in a wheel, which may result in an improved cogs-in-a-wheel impersonation but which is hardly what Dogenian self-study and Cohenian inner work are about. The latter suggest that we change who we have become (under the societal and familial survival pressure), not just what or how we do it.

In this chapter, we have offered the possibility of using everything that the self contains, that in truth is a holographic representation of the whole universe, in its performance of consciousness and becoming perspicaciously aware of who and what we are, seeing reality ever increasingly in lucid ways, connecting with others and the world in increasingly authentic, honest, and real ways.[4] The process itself and engagement with it is the way of becoming fully human educators. And researching this in the field of education renders our research to be an integral part of becoming fully human, too. Such engagement is a potent possibility for aliveness and full presence in life.

The implications from our work here for teacher education are significant. Understandably yet regrettably, preservice teacher training is often exclusively

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[4]There is no space in this chapter to offer practical application examples of what this chapter proposes. We can, however, point to the graduate program at Simon Fraser University, Master's in Education in Contemplative Inquiry and Approaches in Education, which is currently (2019—2021) in progress. The first cohort in this program started in 2014, and the current, fourth cohort, started in 2019. Interested readers may find more about this program here: https://www/cirfe/org. Also, there is a book chapter about the work being done in this program (Anderson, Miyakawa, Mangat, Scott, & Bai, 2019).

focused on what Ergas refers to as the "day-to-day," the mechanics of what to know and what to do. We would suggest that time would be much better spent in the less concrete but more relevant—and meaningful!—"what to be." Mindful, contemplative inquiries into the self can be as academically rigorous as any other (something Socrates, among other sages of East and West, made abundantly clear). They bear fruit in teachers becoming more fully human (Freire, 2006; Cohen, 2020; Vanier, 1998, 2015).

In our experience, teachers and teachers-to-be eagerly welcome these contemplative inquiries and explorations into the nature of the self (see Albrecht, this volume). First, they often tell us that no one has ever afforded them these opportunities of the interior life and that they are keen to explore the existential/spiritual questions that had dimmed in the recesses of their consciousness. Second, they tell us, repeatedly, that it is not nearly as much a matter of what we do or even say in our teaching that has an impact: it is who we are that makes the difference. Third, they quickly find that these are opportunities to integrate their personal, professional, and academic selves. In doing so, they are on the way not only to forming philosophies of education but also, and perhaps even more importantly, integrated philosophies of life. They are becoming more fully human in a world that now is liable to see "human" as problematic and, even, increasingly moot. We are offering anew our students in our program the opportunity to teach who they are.

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