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Preface

The authors began the extended conversation that is embodied in this book in 1982, when Arthur was already twenty-three years into a teaching career and Marcia had just completed her teaching credentials. From the beginning, our discussions revolved around the themes of how we experience human nature and what we imagine to be the elements that constitute a human being. In 1993 Arthur took a sabbatical during which he explored in greater depth educational and philosophical literature dealing with these topics. By 2000 Arthur had retired and Marcia was working part-time as a graduate student supervisor. With this increased spare time, we began to write chapters expressing the conclusions we had come to through our professional experiences, conversations, and research.

The structure of the book and how we came upon it is discussed at length in the first chapter. We discovered that each person comprises four faculties that are progressively more inclusive. We call these faculties Behavior or Persona, Thinking or Understanding, Feeling or Knowing, and Personal Awareness. It is our contention that most modern schools in the United States address only two of these dimensions: Behavior and Thinking. Many fine teachers—such as Parker Palmer, Jonathan Kozol, and Frank McCourt—have published books on the subject that include discussion of the Feeling or Knowing faculty. Other educators, personally known to us, have also influenced this book; among those who have contributed their wisdom are Mark Diefendorf, Frank Faber, Mary Garrett, Karen Griffin, Brian Hunt, Ken Kirik, Tom Kurkjian, Chris Mastro, John Perry, John Piechnick, Carol Rasowsky, Richard Searles, Nina Sher, Lydia Tobler, Ed Welch, and Jennifer Wolfe.

The faculty of Personal Awareness is the largest and most inclusive of the four faculties. We suspect that some teachers regularly

access this faculty, this largest and most inclusive human dimension, but only indirectly or unconsciously. This is understandable, because Awareness is a state in which a person is paying close attention, in a nonjudgmental frame of mind, to everything that is going on around him or her. Awareness often occurs in brief flashes that go unnoticed. This state is completely perceptual or “phenomenological” (in one interpretation of that philosophical term), without any interference by evaluation or judgment. Things simply are as they are. It is inevitable that impressions from this faculty will be made on the sensory system in such a way that they will imprint a wash of images on the Feeling arena, images that in turn will focus and organize as thoughts and, subsequently, as behaviors in judgmental responses to these impressions. Thus, each inclusive perceptual situation will yield to the demands of increasingly concentrated or reductive patterns of judgment, in a flowing alignment that loops back and contributes its conclusions to a broadened personal awareness. We believe that this aligned flow is crucial to any authentic learning experience.

The problem is one of conscious duration: How long are we able to hold our Awareness open, as if it were a camera lens, so that the imaginative impressions formed on our Feeling faculty are as conscious, complete, and accurate a registry of Awareness as possible? There is almost always, because of the time constraints of the classroom, a rush to judgment and an urgent need for action. Trouble arises with students because this urgency leads to an incomplete, vastly reduced registry of those faculties that comprise their humanness. Continuing with the metaphor of the camera lens, if the exposure is too brief, images will be indistinct and inaccurate; if too long, images will be washed out and darkened, like an overexposed negative. When discussing these ideas, we have often been dismissed as cockeyed idealists and criticized as unrealistic regarding actual classroom situations. However, this effort to align the human faculties in our teaching approaches, in as accurate and timely a manner with our students as possible, has been central to our pedagogy, with greatly enhanced professional results.

We believe it is possible to train beginning educators in these perceptual and evaluative capacities; for example, Marcia experimented with training exercises directed toward the acquisition of such skills during the supervision and university faculty adjunct phase of her career just before retirement. Gradually, the guided practice of paying close attention to their students, with as little hasty judgment as possible allowed the imprints from the trainees’ Awareness to become more conscious, accurate, and purposefully useful in the classroom. This

practice also led some of her trainees to notice the reciprocal nature of this effort: as they paid closer, more neutral attention to the faculties of their students, they attended to the alignment of their own awareness and made important discoveries through constant written reflections on how their attitudes either enhanced or subverted the classroom situation. In another example, Arthur used projection and introjection exercises in his psychology classes to emphasize how judgmental attitudes arise. Over time we both found that behavior management issues became negligible, the presentation of lessons more coherent, and the fear factor decreased.

When we shared this theory of alignment with colleagues, they often responded with objections, such as: “I couldn’t have done that as a new teacher—I was too concentrated on classroom control, lesson preparation, supervision issues, whether the kids liked me or not, whether I would get tenure, and so on. I was very afraid of making mistakes in all these areas.” We noticed that, though valid, these objections are focused on “me-the-teacher” and are largely self-referential. Fear, and overcoming fear, are the implied themes of early professional practice.

Discipline and behavior modification imposed from the outside do not necessarily translate into self-discipline. To make us feel less anxious, we need to turn our fear into alertness that will foster the student’s need for self-regulation. We say “alertness” because students represent a very wide developmental spectrum of skills, temperament, interests, and compliance with educational expectations. As we become alert to students, we pick up on their nuances and bring attention to individual and shared capacities. As we cultivate this attitude of greater attentiveness, we increase our chances of making the leap to Awareness of our students’ actual selves, their “just-so-ness.” We begin to feel a real joy in their actuality, rather than a mere toleration of it. This elation is inexpressible, but completely palpable, and is experienced by any good teacher from time to time; one of the purposes of this book is to suggest that one can train oneself to experience more frequently this feeling of “all’s right with the world.” Our accuracy and our energy for the task of teaching will have made a quantum leap.

Perhaps what we most fear is anything that contradicts our identity, that is, who we think we are. Getting to know oneself is intimidating. With this in mind, we offer two chapters on Jungian typology and its moral and ethical ramifications for our actions. Typology offers a fairly neutral way of approaching our own shadow material, some of which we project onto others or onto our own unacknowledged capacities. It holds out the possibility of becoming more inclusive of those

whom we might otherwise dismiss as being unlike ourselves. What is called for is a courage that upholds our right to make mistakes and to proceed according to the evidence we glean from them. We must ground our actions in our own reservoir of experience as we correct our mistakes and gain increasing accuracy in “actual occasions” (Alfred North Whitehead’s term for the real situations we find ourselves in). We call this courageous insistence on the integrity of one’s own evidence “defiance.” We recognize that the themes addressed in our book may cause some readers to experience dissonance, because becoming more cognizant of one’s own rejected shadow aspects, while at the same time building a healthy defiant confidence, seems a daunting task. We hope readers will look at the structured process that this book offers as a means to gain steady, long-range, increasing inclusiveness by way of transforming the energies of fear to alertness, to deep attentiveness, and ultimately to Awareness.

To suggest that there are current crises in our public schools is simply a matter of pointing out the obvious: high dropout rates; violence; too many students in classrooms; dilapidated buildings; teachers lacking legacy and subject preparation; cutbacks in the arts and humanities; curriculum bound to standardized testing; curriculum tied to pat, constrictive evaluation; behavior management that doesn’t work; sound-byte lessons that acquiesce to limited attention spans; students bereft of any sense of historical process, and so on. There is clearly an urgent need for problem solving in our society.

We believe that cultivating an attitude toward expanding the four faculties in our students and ourselves, and transforming fear-based, self-protective approaches to perceptive, conscious teaching, would go a long way toward encouraging new directions in education, because attitude plays an overarching influence on educational outcomes. This book is about cultivating a specific attitude in teaching, an attitude of waiting upon Awareness. Goal setting, curriculum design, mission statements, behavior management approaches, and replicable teaching strategies, although important, are not what this book is about. It is not a how-to book. Rather, we pay close, differentiated, and systematic attention to two factors that shape attitude: first, the nature and cultivation of human faculties in the determination of what and how much we learn; and second, the role fear plays in both students and educators.

Arthur Willis
Marcia Greenberg

Introduction

“Quick now, here, now, always—”

— T. S. Eliot

WE ARE HERE FOR THE KIDS

One of the dictums most often heard among those who educate children is: “We are here for the kids. Whatever else may concern us, we can agree that we are here, first and foremost, for the kids.” But what does this mean, to “be here for the kids”? And what, other than a young goat, is a kid, anyway?

WHAT IS A KID?

Our answer to that question is different from those offered by the dominant models of our time: behaviorism, cognitive constructivism, and social constructivism. Briefly, behaviorists see students as seemingly intelligent, but potentially unruly organisms that need to be controlled, conditioned, and shaped (through means of stimulus/response) into socially desirable objects, as well-expressed by B. F. Skinner in *Walden II*. Behaviorist educators seem to say “Give me the child, tell me what the culture wants him or her to be, and I, like a master potter, will mold that child into the predetermined cultural shape.”

Cognitive constructivists say “Children, like all of us, exhibit characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving, and possess both nurture and nature components and limits. Each child is borne along in discrete stages, as determined by nature (bio-design) and nurture (environment).” They say that we must design our curriculum according to demonstrable cognitive stages through which children pass.

A reliable testing program will indicate a given child's level of mastery of Piaget's stages of intellectual development.

Social constructivists believe that, whatever else a student is, she or he is, at center, a personality located in relationship to other personalities, during which the student is constantly altering his or her personality to reflect the dynamics of the observer and his or her own perspective. The self is contextual, oscillating in relation to others, says Vygotsky. The educator must become a master of defining social context for the benefit of the student through group learning, the development of language skills, and other forms of interdependence. The emphasis here is on the development of personality, which can competently navigate social relationships within desired cultural norms. Curriculum means teaching kids to behave along certain acceptable lines and to think within a certain design. In this model, Thinking is considered the leader and Behavior the follower. Result: seriously depressed, dispirited, unmotivated, bored kids! Why? Because a kid is far more than an amalgam of thought and behavior. As with Procrustes' bed, in these models we are pulled and shrunk in conformity with the assumptive program.

After about two decades of teaching, I began to realize that these three models are not so much wrong as they are only *partly* right. To see kids in these terms is to see incompletely, because not only does each model make gross assumptions about the nature of the child, but it offers little more understanding of that nature except that it is young and malleable. If I know my students as individuals, what is it that I know: their names, their personalities, their interests, their friends, their academic records, their abilities to conform to expected standards? Are your students safely tucked into these models, knowable only by these descriptions? Are you the custodian of their surface existence? Or are these impressions important, but secondary, ways of knowing your students?

When I began my teaching career in Cook County, Illinois, students appeared to me as adversarial demons; some were properly cowed, others were just waiting for an opportunity to attack and render me useless, if not helpless. I wasn't necessarily misreading their mood: I was replacing a teacher whom they had driven off, who reportedly had lost control of both the classroom and himself, and suffered a nervous breakdown.

It took a few years to know that that was, indeed, the mood of the students that first day, but that was all it was—a mood. Over the next several years I came to realize that student persuasion was usually consonant with my persuasion, and that my attitude toward them sculpted their attitude toward me.

And what is attitude? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as “a habitual mode of regarding anything”; also, a “settled behavior or manner of acting, as representative of feeling or opinion.” And *Webster’s* definition, “a position or bearing as indicating action, feeling, or mood,” describes attitude in stark relief. What lies beneath this behavior, this habitual mode of regarding? Clearly my early teaching attitudes had been shaped by the cultural preferences within which I had been educated.

What *are* students made of, then? Are they simply bodies—organisms—as the behaviorists assume, with mental workings that are inscrutable and therefore unknowable, experienced by us only as behaviors that are shaped by stimulus and response? Or are they organisms with mental properties, which can be duly examined through standardized testing procedure? Psychometricians (human measurers), following a model called cognitive psychology, base their studies on the idea that students are testable, measurable entities that can be reasonably shown to possess a mind or mental life at demonstrable levels. Are students in your midst a mix of body and mind? If that is all you experience, then you are justified in assuming an attitude of condescending objectivity. You are there to educate—which can be described as *educere*, “to lead out,” in a process Van Cleve Morris notes, or *educare*, “to rear or nurture, working with what is already given in a child’s nature” (p. 105). But what is already given? A body reduced to its automatic functions? A mind shrunk to its organizational agency? And if we see our students as a combination of only body and mind, we are reverting back to our Puritan roots and earlier, wherein young people can be habitually modeled as depraved or disabled. Beware: these are strong words, but this is how many in society, and especially older, embittered teachers, customarily regard the young. Marcia also notes that in the field of special education, where “functional skills” are the desired and well-meant outcomes, the body/mind models are the ones exclusively concentrated on in teacher-training programs.

Rather than seeing students as bipartite beings (body/mind), we suggest adding a third part to your experience, namely spirit, thereby granting to human nature a tripartite status: body and spirit can meet in mind with often salubrious results. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan’s advice in *Indian Philosophy* is instructive:

We generally identify ourselves with our narrow limited selves and refer to spiritual experience as something given or revealed to us, as though it did not belong to us. We separate the power of spiritual apprehension from the rest of our nature and refer to it as something divine. Such a separation is unfair to humanity. The insight of the best moments reveals the

deepest in us. It is wrong to regard human nature as its very self when it is least inspired and not its true self when it is most. If our self finds in these moments of vision its supreme satisfaction, and is intensely alive while they last, then that self is our true self. We cannot limit our being to the physical or vital, the customary or conventional. (p. 628)

Therefore, we need to recognize the spirit as well as the body and mind. But in the words of Aline D. Wolf, “Unlike the teaching of academic subjects, spiritual nurturing cannot be approached with detailed steps that tell the teacher exactly how to present specific concepts with appropriate materials. The effort to nurture spirit must flow freely from the teacher’s own inner essence and from his or her belief that each child is truly a spiritual being.” (p ii). In other words, this effort must flow from the teacher’s authentic self, through an attitude of attention to the tripartite nature of a child.

As my career lengthened and deepened, I passed through a sort of progressive expansion of notions about what a student is. At first, I saw students as behaving personalities that needed to be shaped and controlled. After a few years, I began to see them as having an interior life of feelings and thoughts that needed to be acknowledged, motivated, and directed. Gradually, I began to feel that kids are more than human objects or *others* with distinctive patterns—rather, I became impressed by an elusive element, something that was beyond the uniqueness of each individual. That something seemed embedded in the nature of each person as an amalgam of the elements of body, mind, and spirit, which we see as soul. Whenever all three of these elements were recognized, students and teacher became mutually animated. I found myself more and more present in the company of students, both in and out of the classroom.

In this regard, Marcia’s account of becoming present to her student Melanie is resonant with my experience:

Marcia and Melanie

Melanie joined my caseload when she was about ten months old. She had been referred for early intervention services because of failure to meet developmental milestones across all domains. Difficulties in her functioning had been noticed from birth, but her failure to make any significant progress had become pronounced by ten months and neurological tests indicated that she might have a severe, progressive disability. Within weeks of beginning services it was obvious to me that she was the most

handicapped child on my caseload, with little hope of making much progress, even with intensive therapeutic intervention.

Melanie lived with her teenaged single mother in a working-class neighborhood; her father was serving a short sentence in prison. When her mom was at work, Melanie was frequently cared for by her great-grandmother, who lived in a rundown, crime-ridden area of the city. Melanie's great-grandmother presented as a large, unkempt woman, who, because of leg-vein problems, had difficulty moving around her home and, as a result, conducted her domestic business from a couch in the living room. Consequently, Melanie was confined to a small area of the couch, surrounded by pillows, so that great-grandmother could feed her and change her diapers without having to get up. It was in this setting that her other therapists and I made many visits during the two years Melanie was with our program.

I hated going to that place. My fastidious, middle-class nose was offended by the stale cooking odors, by the smell of Melanie's unbathed body and by the stench of dogs and cats that wandered through the room and occasionally left their deposits in the long entrance hallway that was stacked with boxes of cast-off items. I felt uncomfortable around the rough-looking male family members who streamed into and out of the house in steady waves all day. I loathed the cockroaches that skittered across my pant legs while I engaged in floor time play with Melanie. Great-grandma rambled on throughout the sessions, and I acknowledged her chatter with polite, but detached attention, just as nice girls of my generation are expected to do.

Because of my strong work ethic, inculcated by Depression-era parents at a young age, I dutifully kept going—twice a week, week after week. Periods of respite occurred when her grandmother cared for Melanie in a much less chaotic home setting in a nicer part of town.

Around the beginning of the last six months I worked with Melanie, I had the following dream:

I go to great-grandmother's house for my regularly scheduled visit with Melanie and knock on the door. Great-grandmother opens the door. She is wearing a bright, pretty housedress, all starchy and ironed, and her shiny white hair is in a little bun on top of her head—a vision of the archetypal grandmother or fairy godmother. The hardwood floor of the long hallway is polished and glowing. On a credenza against the wall is a vase of large, colorful flowers. She welcomes me warmly and invites me in.

Just then Melanie comes running down the hallway. She flings herself into my arms, calling out, "Hi, Marcia!" In the dream I feel astounded: both Melanie and her great-grandmother are walking! Melanie can talk! The house is beautiful!

When I awoke, my first rueful thought was that the dream was some sort of compensation for helping me get through another tedious visit that day. That afternoon, when I entered the house and picked Melanie up, I physically felt a shock, a thunderbolt of awareness. I looked into Melanie's eyes and fell completely in love. To this day, I can't explain how that process of coming to see her spirit and soul instead of just her unkempt little body and disabled mind occurred. She was to me no longer a handicapped child with almost nonexistent skills that needed improving. She was simply Melanie, just who she was. That process must have had something to do with persisting, of gradually becoming attentive—what Arthur calls "staying in the room"—long enough to face and wear down my own judgmental nature and fears and pass beyond them. My dream had apparently showed me what the souls of Melanie and her great-grandmother looked like and if I entered that wider space, they would welcome me. Seeing them in a context greater than their hard lives and disabilities allowed me to step past my own limits to human connection.

In the following months, Melanie began to move around more independently and exploratively with her little bunny-hop crawl and attempted to stand up to play with toys on the coffee table. Her brand-new glasses and leg braces helped a lot. I began to notice certain subtleties in her communication system—eye glances, crawling toward desired objects, use of a word that sounded like "dhat"—that indicated her interest in pictures and photographs as she looked toward them. I accompanied Melanie and her mother on several trips to the neurologist's office and became her vocal advocate there, once literally grabbing her off the examining table and playing with her on the floor so the doctor could see her movement patterns beyond the routine and rather dismissive examination. The doctor began to question the progressive nature of her disabilities.

I took to listening closely to great-grandmother's stories and found out a lot about her interests and not-easy life. Regarded attentively, she began to register as the interesting person she was, a woman with a jolly sense of humor and good stories to tell. The rough guys no longer bothered me and, in fact, turned out to be helpful and motivational during visits, because Melanie liked them; one would regularly escort me to my car car-

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