

Contact with My Teacher's Eyes

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Abstract

Eye contact, a subtle, pedagogical encounter in our classrooms easily slips teachers' attention because of its transient nature. Teachers see their students almost every day. Yet, what does a moment of eye contact mean experientially to our students? By asking the question, 'what is the student's experience of making eye contact with their teacher,' this paper represents a phenomenological study that captures this phenomenon and delves into its pedagogical meanings. Through lived experience description and phenomenological reflection, this research shows pedagogical eye contact, a usually taken-for-granted dimension, mediates our pedagogical relation and calls for teacher's thoughtfulness.

Hide and Seek

"Don't...look...at...me..." Bob shields his head, trying to bury himself into the textbook on the desk. Having not done the assignment, he knows little about what the teacher is talking about. He pretends to be searching somewhere on that page for an answer. He pretends to think hard. He feels the teacher looking at him. He prudently avoids the teacher's eyes: one look and the teacher will know everything! His body is stiff; his eyes are fixed on one point at the fringe of the book. He feels himself become statue-like, an immobile object.¹

In another part of the classroom, Jane is staring at the teacher. She longs to make eye contact with her teacher, but the teacher's eyes seem to wander endlessly. There is a moment when the teacher's eyes almost light on her; unfortunately, they pass her by. Jane sighs.

Such unspoken, subtle moments happen in our classrooms every day. As teachers, are we aware enough of them? Standing in front of our students, we hope our instruction is clear and compelling. We want to be as prepared as possible to answer any emerging questions. We wish to connect with each individual student. However, what happens in the classroom reminds us that individual connection as "eye contact" easily slips away. Its effect is less trivial than might first appear. How does Bob feel the teacher would "know everything" from the eye contact? For Jane, what does it mean to catch the teacher's eye contact in this moment? In popular and academic discourse, eye contact in the classroom is considered a measurable, non-verbal

communication that affects the learning of students. Yet, the subtle and highly relational interaction in which students experience eye contact in everyday teaching and learning is less explored, yet probably more important.

Situated in the research tradition of Phenomenology of Practice (van Manen, 2007, 1997/1991), the study presented in this paper explores students' lived experience of eye contact with their teacher. This research project involved in-depth interviews with 7 participants as well as classroom observation in a post-secondary institution. The lived experience gathered from observation and interviews is crafted in anecdotal accounts with pseudonyms. Through phenomenological reduction, citing relative literature, idioms and movie clips to cultivate insight, this paper aims to grasp the world pathically (van Manen, 2007, 1997/1991), orient to the experiential sensibility and resonate an ethical responsivity in pedagogical life-world. The study is driven by the sense of wonder of a teacher and a pedagogue: what is the students' experience of making eye contact with us? What is the significance of eye contact for pedagogy?

Eyes Open

Open and close, close and open, the eyes are taking in the light of the world. But, they are not merely the receptors to gather sensory data passively. Not unlike an opened window, which welcomes in the sound, the smells, the humidity and breeze of the outside, the opened eyes (for those who can see) act as a fundamental sensation, letting a person be present and dwell in the manifold world. When sitting in the living room, we hardly think it is window taking in the morning sunshine. Similarly, every morning when we wake up and begin our day, we seldom consider that it is our opening eyes that allow us to accomplish our everyday endeavors. As our boundless boundary with the surroundings, our eyes open the possibility of our being-in-the-world. The seer approaches what he sees by looking. As described by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "he opens himself to the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964 p.162).

Imagine what is like to open our eyes to see another person? We may find ourselves observing him or her: we may notice his or her clothing, body movement, physical characteristics and special facial expressions. However, at the moment when our eyes meet the eyes of the other, we cannot carry on the same observation. Instantly, we are drawn into a relation with the particular person. Their eyes invite us to encounter the existence of the Other. The encounter itself is ethical. As Emmanuel Levinas writes:

I think rather that access to the face is straightaway ethical. You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes!
(Levinas, 1985, pp.85-86)

In this sense, the eyes on our face are not objects to be looked at. They are the proverbial “windows of the soul” to make inter-subjectivity possible. Meeting the eyes of another gives each a glimpse of our being to each other. Sensing myself seen, I cannot quite be myself. Between recognition and self-forgetfulness, there is no isolated “I”; instead, “I” becomes a “me” in the seeing of you. In the primordial reciprocity, we are able to encounter the Other. Different from a general ‘seeing,’ eye contact first and most is a con-tact: a touch of each other, or “in-touchness” (van Manen, 2013, p.16). In this sense, the experience of eye contact suddenly oriented us toward the relationality of the two individuals – here, between student and teacher. What is like for a student to encounter and be encountered by his or her teacher?

A Glance Calls

In my supervisor’s class, the teaching assistant mentions the word ‘pathic’. I remember a week ago my supervisor suggested that I think about this word in my dissertation. Unthinkingly, I cast a look at my supervisor and find he is also looking at me.

He is standing in the middle of the class, while I am sitting on the left side. We are not located face to face, but there feels to be nothing in between blocking us. His eyes are concentrated, even a little intimidating. I somehow hear him saying: “Focus, this is important! We should talk about this again!” My heart is pounding. My hands are sweaty and clammy. I hurry to take notes and try to write down what I am hearing, word-for-word. I feel singled out from other students by this short eye contact. The glance lasts only a second, but it seems like someone pressed the “pause button”. It could be replayed in my mind again and again. (Andy)

A good lecture engages the audience, personally interacting with us. Even though the lecture calls upon each individual differently, our presence is still merged within a group. Thus, our presence is somewhat anonymous for the speaker delivering the talk. Unlike lecturing, which is aimed to draw the public’s attention collectively, looking, no matter how short, is targeted at any the individual in a singular given moment. As Erwin Straus points out, “the sound that penetrates and unites space ‘embraces millions’...while in a look or in a handshake, we two meet each other individually, you and I”(Straus, 1963, p.378). We can compare eye contact with a handshake insofar as they are both a kind of touch between two individuals. In a classroom, when the teacher’s voice is reaching to everyone, his look is able to touch at most one student at a time. Thus, being touched by the look of the teacher gives a sense of uniqueness. As Andy utters silently, “I am singled out.”

The sense of being singled out at this moment is not only from the action of looking and being looked at, but also from the meaning enclosed in silent eye contact. The word “pathic” evokes a shared memory, and the teacher and the student turn to cast a look at each other. For the student, the eye contact reveals a tacit consensus

with his teacher—suddenly, they are enclosed in an unspoken sharing, which may be of more significance than verbal words.

Most of us may have experienced some moments when face-to-face with the one we deeply love, trust or admire: one look, even a glimpse would triumph over thousands of words. We communicate through more than spoken words. Our eyes talk to each other, too. Here, the direct message of the eye contact brushes away the possible physical barriers and distance: it brings Andy into the closeness with the teacher among the rest of the class. The meeting of eyes of teacher and student opens a silent, yet deeply meaningful, communication between them.

Does his teacher really want to say those things to Andy? We are not sure; it is probably impossible to go back to his teacher and ask about that moment. There lies the ambiguity of unspoken eye language, the vagueness in silence. However, perhaps it is unnecessary to fathom the original meaning in his teacher's look. It is not as important to trace back the teacher's purpose as to see what has happened to Andy: he "hears" the teacher's demand for concentration. He becomes so nervous and vigilant. His body is no more under the veil of pre-reflectivity; his nervousness gathers extra attention to hasten his hand to take note word for word. Even the teacher, who he usually describes as kind, now seems a little "intimidating." Indeed, the teacher's eyes are "intimidating" in a sense that Andy could tell they are expecting more from him. He hears a call from his teacher, a sincere hope for him to be a better student, even a better person. The silence in the eye contact opens more space to echo the pedagogical calling. The call reverberates in Andy's heart. It is such a reverberation between and beyond words and language that may bring about a change of being (Bachelard, 1969). It will be cherished and "played again and again."

Basking in His Wink

In the midst of his lecture, the teacher pauses for a few moments, releasing the students to their own thoughts. As his teaching assistant, I am sitting near the front, to his left. There seems a sense of wonder floating in the air; his words reverberate quietly among us. Then, he leans over, looks at me and winks. For the briefest of moments, a gentle boundary has been sketched around the two of us. I am included in a confidential mood. He believes I understand his point. Basking in the wink, I am his student. I wish this shared moment could last forever. (Eve)

We may wonder, what is a wink? To wink is to close and open one eye quickly and deliberately. A wink creates an instant variation in the eye contact between the one who winks and the person who receives it. A wink could happen either in the middle of a mutual gaze or in the moment eye contact is made. After the wink, of course, the eye contact may either continue or end. Yet, we all know something has changed and has been exchanged between the two people.

Unlike a short glance, the meaning of which could be hidden, ambiguous or

fleeting, a wink is directed, no matter how unpredictable it seems to be. It holds a more evident message to the particular person receiving it. A wink seems to say something like: “I know that you know what is happening here” or, “this is our secret,” etc. In this sense, a wink is an attentive gesture of contact for the special person. The wink makes a person “the special one”.

When exploring the physiognomy of secrecy, Max van Manen and Bas Levering describe as “the eyelid closes in a rapid winking manner, a wink literally seems to enclose the other person within a sphere of inclusiveness” (van Manen & Levering, 1996, p.83). Although most modes of eye contact may contain certain unspoken, shared meanings between the people involved, a wink, by its emphatic and dramatic manner, makes a silent declaration for the rest of us who may happen to observe it—we all know there is some secrecy in the wink even if it is not given to us. In doing so, the wink makes a secret evident without really revealing what it is about. In this sense, to wink at someone is to draw a line between formality and intimacy, between the public and the individual being winked at. Thus, a very formal situation or fledging relation may not be able to absorb the plentitude of meanings conveyed in a wink. If someone we are still unfamiliar with winks at us, for example, we may feel it is “too much.” When a wink is given inappropriately, it may be considered misleading or even flirty. A wink, no matter how slight, contains so much that it instantly awakens us an awareness of our relationship with the other.

In the classroom, a teacher’s wink may have manifold meanings for a student. In the briefest moment, Eve knows, without a doubt that the wink is meant for her, exclusively. She knows this not only from her teacher’s body language – “he leans over, looks at me and winks” —but also from the message delineated by the wink that is immediately evident for her. “He believes I understand his point.” The signal in the wink for Eve is not a mere recognition; it is a manifestation of shared understanding.

To “understand” is to grasp the idea or be thoroughly acquainted rather than merely knowing about something (Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 2004). Thus, the wink shows Eve her teacher’s acknowledgement of her insight on this particular topic. Yet, how could he tell? We may guess that maybe Eve and her teacher have discussed this topic previously, perhaps just before class; maybe the teacher knows Eve’s thoughts on his argument: she is his teaching assistant after all. However, our guess is unimportant compared with how the wink impacts this student. All in all, the most important signal of winking is the teacher’s conviction to her: “He *believes* I understand his point”. I am special because I am *believed* to understand my teacher.

Yet, isn’t it also what Eve believes? After all, a wink is a silent wink. It actually says nothing. Or does it? Like a bridge can only stand between two shores, the wink may only be understood by the “sharedness” – mutual memories, recognition or trust – between the student and the teacher. Here, we may already notice that no matter what Eve’s position is, be it a teaching assistant, a colleague, or other — a momentary wink is powerful enough to draw her back to a primordial orientation. “Basking in the wink, I am his student.” In this ‘teacherly’ wink, Eve becomes once again a student to be taught, guided and cared for.

A student is “a person who is engaged in learning” (Oxford English Dictionary,

2013). However, knowing there is more knowledge to acquire does not necessarily make a person feel like a student. For Eve, it is the meaningful wink that happens in the particular class makes her a student again. In the midst of the lecture, the teacher pauses and leaves a temporary silence to fertilize his students' thoughts. It seems like a common teaching event, but it changes how Eve experiences the moment: "there seems a sense of wonder floating in the air." In the same way a nice little talk with friends can refresh our afternoon, or a brief visit from family members can brighten our house, a pedagogical interaction may enliven or sediment the class. Indeed, there is a special pedagogical atmosphere growing from the sense of wonder as the fundamental emotional conditions that correspond between teacher and student (Bollnow, 1989, p.5). It colors the wink with pedagogical meaning and saturates it as the special mode of eye contact with genial warmth to let Eve "bask in."

A wink like this acknowledges Eve and may simultaneously encourage her to notice and wonder more. Under the warmth and light of mentoring, Eve is reminded of her being a student, which is indeed a state of life that is always open, unfinished and promising. More poignantly, she admits to be 'possessed' by the teacher through this wink: "I am *his* student". She is open for what has been acknowledged and paved further by this particular teacher of hers.

A Powerful Look that Demands

Her eyes are looking right at me; no, they are drilling me. I feel forced. I look down to avoid the eye contact. I can almost hear my heartbeat. I see my coffee on the desk. I try to pick up the cup, but I have to use both of my hands because they are shaking. Hold the cup, get it to my mouth, drink the liquid, put it back...Seconds slow down into hours. There is a power in these eyes demanding I speak! I only hear one sentence from her: "Who would like to share their experience of interviewing?" I look up again. I have to respond. (Tammy)

In this instance, the student becomes very uncomfortable being her teacher's center of focus. She describes the eyes as 'drilling' her. Only something sharp is able to drill. Just as a steel nail can be knocked into a wall, the teacher's eyes, at this moment, have an almost piercing quality that bores into Tammy. They are seeking for the ideas inhabiting Tammy's mind. She suddenly feels intruded or 'forced' when being drilled by the eyes. She feels pushed to get out of her passive status as a listener and into an active status as a speaker.

Being forced means to have to do something that is not from one's will or given freely or spontaneously. When we are forced, we are no longer at our leisure anymore. Instead, we experience uneasiness and interruption of the transparency of our taken-for-grantedness. In many situations, we rarely pay attention to our body: we simply behave naturally. When drinking coffee, for example, we do not first analyze how many physical procedures the activity may take. We do not reflect on the movement and function of our eyes, hands, mouth and tongue. When we behave

naturally, we do not separate our body and our-self. However, drinking coffee now becomes disjointed for Tammy. Her mind seems dragged away by the teacher's eyes and she observes her own body at a distance, as if she is watching herself from the eyes of the teacher. With this sense of detachment, time also stands still. Every single movement slows down and becomes traceable. She becomes acutely aware of her embodied self. As J.H. van den Berg writes, "a disturbance...has to enter the body one *is* to make the body one *has* come into existence" (van den Berg, 1972, p.50). In this sense, her body and herself are objectified under both the teacher's and her own observation.

Many of us have had the experience of being the object for another when being looked at. When a friend looks at us and expects an interesting topic in the middle of chatting, we may more actively search for vocabulary that allows a vivid description or an eloquent argument. In the moment when we are under a lover's gaze, our only wish is to become more lovely and beautiful for him or her. These are very subtle instances in our everyday life, from which we can see how the look from another can tease out our self-consciousness. To put it more precisely, it is our sense or awareness of the other's look that constrains us from being fully merged in situations. Jean-Paul Sartre (1956) vividly depicts how the Other's look – even just the potential of this look – could suddenly change one's awareness of self and the environment. Imagine there is a man jealously peering through a keyhole to see what is happening in another room. At this moment, not only is he driven by jealousy but also subsumed by the act of looking. He becomes the jealous look itself. His whole existence inhabits in the keyhole and he is "in a pure mode of losing [himself] in the world" (Sartre, 1956, p.259). But, all of a sudden, the footsteps in the hall make him self-aware: oh, what I am doing? I must look so awkward. Now, everyone might know the jealousy burning inside me. At this moment, the individual is pushed to see himself because he knows somebody sees him. He thus becomes an object exposing its vulnerability to the scrutiny of the Other.

What if the objectifying look is from my teacher? Besides arousing Tammy's bodily awareness, the teacher's eyes seem to exert a particular force on her. They have "power." She tries to avoid her teacher's eyes, yet she cannot get rid herself of the sense of being looked at and pushed. The teacher's look seems so transparent that its demanding power, at this moment, becomes omnipresent to her. Tammy is exposed by the presence of power. She has nowhere to hide after the teachers question to her. She must speak.

As Tammy's experience shows, being a teacher may incur certain 'power'. The power renders the teacher-student relation unsymmetrical, so our students – no matter if they are adults or young people – are vulnerable. Thus, teachers must be deliberate about what might be objectified or realized, distorted or encouraged by a look – because the vulnerability is just where the pedagogical possibility grows up. For instance, it is possible that for Tammy, the demanding power turns into a potential acknowledgement. Willingly or not, by the teacher's requirement, she is having the chance to speak for her own experience, reflect on it, and hopefully inspire the class to learn from each other. Sometimes a student's growth does not come naturally; it

may require a certain demand. As Sartre has pointed out, we are also realized by the objectifying look: “the Other’s look makes me be beyond my being in this world and puts me in the modest of the world which is at once this world and beyond this world” (Sartre, 1956, p.261).

Going beyond “the world” is to become reflective about the un-reflective self. Only by knowing that one is being looked at can an individual see his or her existence. Therefore, as teachers, we should be aware of the direction in which our look will orient our students, even right at the moment we make eye contact with them. In other words, the teacher’s eyes are oriented in two directions: they need to *see* and *foresee* at the same time. To see is to be attentive to the student’s situation in lived moments. It asks for the sensibility of student’s actual experience of learning and life in school. To foresee, in contrast, is to see ‘beforehand’. The teacher is the one who is responsible to see further than the students. They are obligated to make pedagogical decisions when necessary, which are supposed to be, of course, for the student’s sake. However, rather than a prediction of a certain future, foreseeing is a readiness to accept pedagogical possibility that may or may not grow from the lived moments. It is “to realize that the explicit and the implicit influence may have enormous consequences” (van Manen, 2013, p.3).²

What Eyes Shut Down and Possibly Open Up

We are having an open discussion about each other’s final project. It’s John’s turn to talk about his project. Struggling with big questions, he frowns while talking. At that moment, an idea jumps into my mind: I have a solution for him! I feel I have to share it. Right after John finishes, I raise my hand.

My teacher notices me and I start to talk. She is looking at me directly and her eyes seem to open my thoughts even further. I am so exhilarated to share this idea! At last she says, “Yes, Wayne you are right. But...” Her eyes look away; her voice seems to turn to somewhere else. “I have another idea for you, John...” My idea is shut down without any feedback. I become still in my seat. My face feels suddenly flushed and I put my head down. (Wayne)

At this moment, Wayne feels being shut down by his teacher. To “shut down” is “to settle so as to obscure vision”(Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 2004). Indeed, when our eyes stray or turn away from someone, we do more than simply obscure him or her from our line of vision. Consciously or not, our eyes are helping us to keep the gentle balance in the social relationship. The eye contact can be lost because of shyness, nervousness, indifference, or simply shifting of the attention or topics. Shutting someone down with our eyes hereby contains more or less negative signals. It may suggest negation, inattention, or at least a desire to break off. Thus, being shut down by someone is to be stopped at a place where we never thought we would stop. Out of any expectation, we are suspended on the half way to somewhere: it becomes

impossible to go further in this direction. If we were driving a car, we may feel that the vehicle's momentum was still oriented to move forward, however, we have had to brake the car, end the trip all of a sudden, in the middle.

Wayne's experience of being shut down when the teacher's eyes moved away seems even harder to face. Just few seconds ago, his teacher's eyes were recognizing and inviting him to talk. He felt more than happy to get recognized and share his idea. Now, the teacher's eyes turn away from him. Without any further feedback, his idea seems to be abandoned. There is a contrast in the teacher's attentiveness, between opening and closing. It changes the tempo of this class for Wayne. Even though he has been sitting in his seat the whole time, he switches from being lively and interested to still and withdrawn. Being shut down instantly traps his energy and attention in a limited sphere, shrunk to the space of his chair. Face flushing, head yielding down, he momentarily retreats from the class.

Yet, what is happening to the rest of the class? Is John still frowning? Does the teacher's idea work? How is it different from Wayne's? Saying, "let's listen to your idea" and looking at Wayne directly, the teacher showed an invitation for Wayne's voice and opinion. Her eyes had a transformative effect and opened Wayne's idea even further. However, it is possible that the opening turns out to go in some directions that are a little devious, even not quite right for this particular situation. After all, the aim of the class is to help each individual shape his or her own final project as much as possible. Although it is an "open" discussion, the openness still needs to be oriented to certain direction. The sense of direction guarantees the class being both inspiring and helpful. Or we may say, only the directed and helpful ideas could be inspiring enough and let students learn from each other. In this situation, the mission of the teacher is complicated and seems almost impossible to accomplish. It needs to balance between teaching and letting participate, between individuality and the whole class, between *this* frowning student and *that* student who assuredly has a "solution" for his peer.

Is it possible for the teacher to open the eyes for all the students all the time? Physically impossible, perhaps pedagogically, as well. Unlike any other kind of physical touch, eye contact only happens between two people. Even when touching by hand, we can reach to different people with both hands at the same time! As teachers, we cannot make eye contact with the entire class at once: if there is an eye contact, it must be oriented to one student. Thus, the pedagogical meaning of eye contact is to have contact with student's singularity. In this sense, we have to make decisions through our eyes in order to keep the promise of contact with every student. We have to keep shifting our eyes from this student to that student, trying to distinguish between bad, good and better for each of them. We must hold the possibility for every student to be seen and touched. Here, by providing a brief response to Wayne, the teacher may not suggest Wayne is wrong; instead, it is possible that she tries to provide an alternative idea that may be more right for John. For, if not doing this, this class's focus may move even further from what John immediately needs. The teacher's eyes should not only be able to open, but may also need to stray away, even shut down in some occasions, especially when the temporary shutting-down may lead

to more openings in the future.

We may wonder, what will happen to Wayne later? Is he still able to concentrate on the class? Will he only remember the moment the teacher looks away? Will he notice the movement of teacher's eyes could the movement from him to the class? We are not sure. It is almost impossible to always see through the situations and their potential implications, which in turn demands us to pause and ponder from time to time: what does this *really* mean to *this* student? Making pedagogical decision is an art of choice that has its chance and risk. Teaching toward the possibility paradoxically requires our acknowledgement of the impossibility. Thus, the value of knowing student's experience of having eye contact with us lies in getting to know both the power and limit in the eye contact. We should not only know when to make eye contact with a student. We have to know when to not give it. We have to admit that our eyes cannot see everything — or there is always something we cannot discover only by our eyes. As van Manen reminds us, "real seeing uses more than eyes" (van Manen, 2002, p.30), the real 'teacherly' seeing is to be ready for what has not been seen in our students. Yet, what does real seeing use to 'see' other than our eyes? What exactly in our students is waiting for our seeing? And how do we get ready for something we may never see or know?

A Lingering Note: Teaching Toward What Is Not Yet Seen

Todd casts a look at his teacher then instantly blinks away the eye contact. "I didn't do it. I...I didn't write a poem." After grumbling the sentences, he finally looks at his teacher again—as if he has to do so. His teacher, Mr. Keating, looks at directly him and then shifts his eyes to the whole class: "Mr. Anderson thinks that everything inside of him is worthless and embarrassing." Then he turns to Todd again: "Isn't that right, Todd? Isn't that your worst fear?" Todd lowers his head, looking down. And the teacher keeps going, "Well, I think you are wrong. I think there is something inside of you that is worth a great deal!"³

There are many movies on the theme of schooling, teaching and learning, but this one is hard to forget. In *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989), the thoughtful teacher, Mr. Keating, tries to teach his students to think deeply and live deeply in the light of the meaning of poetry. There is an especially memorable moment that transpires between the teacher and an unconfident student, Todd. Not trusting himself at all, Todd has not written a poem for the homework. It seems that Mr. Keating notices his reluctance. He catches Todd's eyes in the pedagogical encounter. Todd has to carry the look from his teacher, though he tries best to avoid the direct eye contact.

Mr. Keating walks up to the blackboard and begins to write: I sound my barbaric YAWP on the roof of the world. "Uncle Walt again. Now for those of you who don't know, a yawp is a loud cry or yell. Todd, give us a demonstration of a barbaric yawp!" Now, Todd has to stand. He is asked to stand in front of the class to make the sound in his heart: to "yawp". His eyes are blinking, his whole body

is shaking. Desperately, he manages to give out a loud YAWP and a couple of words after. Mr. Keating points to the picture of Walt Whitman on the wall and asks Todd to compose a poem about him. But Todd cannot go on. He is stammering and mumbling. Steadily, Mr. Keating covers Todd's eyes with his hands. "Close your eyes. Now, describe what you see."

What does Todd see? Actually, nothing. Yet, with covered eyes, he seems to be able to see something even more real than what is physically before him. His mind starts to become emancipated in the temporary inability of seeing by the eyes. He starts to see something that he has never seen before. Mr. Keating tactfully chooses to cover the student's eyes. However, he is still looking at the student's face as if to maintain contact with some part of him that is more fundamental. His steady hands are guarding Todd from any possible distraction. He knows, at this moment, Todd seeing others seeing him is disturbing this student from seeing his own potentiality.

Tremblingly, Todd indulges his mouth to release the words from his mind — with Mr. Keating's firm guidance he even becomes fearless of the classmates' laughter and cynical eyes! Stanza after stanza, he becomes braver and braver; his teacher slowly removes his hands away. But, Todd still keeps his eyes closed. After the last word leaves his mouth, Todd slowly opens his eyes. Silence. He sees the whole class musing at his poem; he sees his teacher, crouching in the corner of the classroom, looking at him with confident and marveling eyes.

What does the teacher see that makes his eyes marveling? He sees the realization of potential in his student that he believed to be there. Mr. Keating thus has a new vision of the student, a vision navigated by him, but still novel. When Todd finally opens his eyes, his teacher's eyes are also opened by the student's potential and the truth in pedagogical trust he planted through his teaching. We may never fully know the potential in students' becoming—otherwise, it will not be called 'potential'. For this reason, our pedagogical trust of them should be a genuine trust: it is not a belief-oriented to a predictable direction; rather, it is ultimately toward somewhere unseen and as yet unknown. It is keeping faith in something that may not necessarily ever happen. Without holding this genuine trust for our students in the first place, how can we teach them to believe in themselves? Covering the student's eyes, Mr. Keating is discovering what is unseen for both the student and himself. He is revealing the truthfulness in teaching and educating, which is an activity to "educere": to "lead out" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2013).

Opening his eyes, Todd sees the world differently. His eyes are now filled with joy, passion and firmness. He looks like he is no longer the same person. "*Don't you forget this,*" says Mr. Keating. He comes to hold Todd's head, making direct eye contact with him. Here, again, the meaning in pedagogical eye contact cannot be exhaustively described and interpreted by any words or language. What we all know is that it is a moment the student will never forget.

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¹ This and other student anecdotes which are formatted similarly in this paper come from a phenomenological research project exploring students' lived experience of having eye contact with their teachers. The pseudonym in each text is a tool to identify different anecdote and make it easy to signify the lived experience in phenomenological reflection.

² The ethical and practical implication in teacher's seeing and foreseeing is a paradoxical, philosophical and important topic that deserves more elaboration in another paper. Acknowledging its relevance and depth, I am hoping to investigate this topic in the context of my doctoral research, which is a phenomenological study on pedagogical seeing and eye contact.

³ This and other following indented paragraphs are my descriptions of one scene in the movie *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989).