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The Phenomenology of Attentional Care in the Synchronous Platform Classroom: care ethics, emotion, and attentional justice in 21st century education

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ABSTRACT

This article develops a phenomenology of attentional care in platform-mediated education and advances the normative concept of attentional justice. Employing a phenomenological–hermeneutic method, it analyses composite vignettes derived from synchronous online teaching (2020–2024) in undergraduate and Master's-level courses in philosophy of education, teacher education, and curriculum studies at a public university. The vignettes, based on field notes and reflective memos, condense recurring situations—such as latency-filled discussions, camera-off participation, and chat-based interaction—while preserving anonymity. Phenomenological analysis reveals three invariants of attention in this context: embodied tact (gesture and voice as holding), temporal generosity (protected intervals resisting acceleration), and recognitive address (naming, echoing, and confirmation). Read alongside critiques of the attention economy and technicity, these findings show that attentional care depends on minimally just conditions and cannot rely on individual virtue alone. The article therefore articulates two correlative rights—the right to protected intervals and the right to recognitive address—and specifies institutional duties concerning time, limits on surveillance, equitable access to bandwidth and quiet, and the governance of platform affordances. The study contributes a refined conceptual grammar of attention in education and proposes a normative criterion for platform pedagogy: a learning environment is adequate when learners can truly say, I was held; I was given time; I was recognised.

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Intruduction

> *Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity*.
> Simone Weil (Kissler, 2024; Panizza, 2022; Cameron, 2003).

In the cold glow of dawn, a university teacher logs into yet another synchronous online class. The classroom is now a grid of tiny faces, each lit by the blue light of a webcam. A faint echo of bustle and questions leaks through laptop microphones, punctuated by the ping of chat messages and the lag of video. Notions of "body" and "space" feel suspended: the once-familiar rhythm of hands raised and eyes scanning a room has been replaced by the uneven tempo of network latency. By midday, both students and teacher feel a weariness that is more than physical. This is the new phenomenon of videoconference fatigue, a creeping exhaustion unique to screens. As Li and Yee (2023) observe, the constant self-monitoring demanded by video calls creates cognitive strain: turning off the self-view "can significantly reduce… cognitive load and fatigue" (Li & Yee, 2023). Cheng et al. (2018) similarly warn that even the sustained glare of a computer screen "can cause fatigue when reading" (Cheng et al., 2018). In short, schooling through Zoom and its kin has become its own form of hardship. Every flicker of pixelated movement and every half-second delay imposes a burden: as one analysis notes, even "perfectly working networks… cannot function without a delay" detectable by humans (MacMillan et al., 2021), and indeed "latencies are a common problem in videoconferencing" (Bailenson, 2021). The net effect is a fragmentation of presence that weighs on the spirit. The classroom's very air has shifted, and with it our capacity to attend and to care. What does it mean, now, to care attentively when attention itself has become a commodity? We live in an economy designed to fragment and sell our focus. Journalist Jac Mullen points out that contemporary schooling has been infiltrated by the same market forces that animate social media: "the attention economy" is a "multitrillion-dollar sector… devoted to the industrial-scale capture, extraction, and monetization of human attention" (Wu, 2017). In practice this means that educators find themselves competing with algorithmic infrastructures for every second of student engagement. Every notification, every autoplayed video clip, every metric of "engagement" inside a learning-management system can be traced back to this logic of capture. Even well-intentioned edtech often mimics the tactics of Netflix or TikTok (personalized feeds, gamified rewards, click-driven escalation) all calibrated not toward depth of thought but toward retention of gaze.

Teachers themselves report the affective fallout. Instructors complain that "the silent hum of laptops" and the surveillance of student screens can leave students "zombified," drained not by effortful thinking but by overexposure to stimulus (Gunnars, 2024). The result is a kind of collective agitation often misnamed as mere short attention span: one study warns that under conditions of constant digital stimulus, "students' attention spans have decreased; after a short period, students' focus declines and learning efficiency drops" (Rosen, Lim, Carrier, & Cheever, 2011). Because the attention economy "often promotes a culture of instant

gratification," the very habits of mind cultivated online conflict with what schools claim to cultivate patience, perseverance, sustained thought (Williams, 2018). In such a climate, care becomes doubly difficult. Teachers who once sought to cultivate attention now compete with systems designed to disperse it. The ethical question becomes acute: how does one give oneself over to another student's learning when the medium itself keeps pulling eyes away? Caring attention under these conditions' risks feeling almost heretical, a quiet rebellion against an environment that insists on constant shifting. This crisis of attention must also be understood against a historical backdrop: teaching was not always thus. For most of the modern era, schooling was an embodied practice in physical space. Bodies and rooms were entangled partners in pedagogy. As Alerby et al. (2014) show using Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, a classroom is more than walls and desks: "as humans, we access the world through our bodies and the knowledge we develop is always embodied," and so "the body inhabits the world… our corporeality can therefore be tied to the room, we are affected by and affect the room in a mutual interplay" (Alerby et al., 2014). In that pre-digital classroom, a teacher's glance, gesture, or proximate presence was part of how attention was claimed and held. The shared scene of learning (hands on paper, the soft rustle of books, low voices negotiating meaning, the teacher's pause beside a struggling student) was not incidental; it was pedagogically constitutive. UNESCO (2021) has recently emphasized, in fact, that "the school as a physical space is indispensable" and must remain a locus of collective life, not merely a delivery mechanism for content (UNESCO, 2021). The desk-and-chalkboard world made attention a communal event: caring meant leaning in, listening carefully to body language, modulating tone in real time when a pupil's face flickered with frustration, and drawing nearer when needed.

By contrast, the contemporary "platform classroom" disperses that living presence. A student who once sat shoulder to shoulder with classmates now appears as a thumbnail in a grid; a teacher who once paced the aisles now clicks between breakout rooms. Our bodies are split: the teacher's hand reaches outward and meets only a mouse; the student's question arrives half a second too late, cut off by buffering. The thick gestalt of the old classroom is fragmented into data packets. To call this merely "disembodied" is too mild. It is as if the room's very flesh is being peeled away and replaced by a sequence of mediated glimpses. In phenomenological terms, the mutual interplay of lived bodies in shared space is replaced by asynchronous streams. A single hiccup in internet speed means a nod or question fails to land in time; turn-taking, once rhythmic, becomes disjointed. Even basic human signals (a quizzical brow, a small smile of reassurance) flatten or disappear. Videoconference-fatigue researchers point out that eye contact and body language, which are read almost instantaneously in face-to-face interaction, are now hindered by video lag and intermittent presence (Aagaard, 2022; Bailenson, 2021; Döring et al., 2022; Riedl, 2022). The result is not only technical strain but an emotional one. Many teachers describe a new kind of quiet anguish in this medium: diminished feedback makes them feel unseen and unsure. The pen on paper (or the finger in chat) no longer carries the full

weight of care. As one technology critic puts it, education in this condition risks becoming an "attention-fracking" operation-"tech that pumps pressurized 'content' into eyeballs in order to harvest a steady stream of passive absorption" (Rushkoff, 2019). The living relationships that once bound teachers and students begin to dissolve in the silent glare of monitors. It is in this environment that the notion of attentional care becomes urgent. By attentional care I mean the practice of giving presence through attention, a moral-phenomenological orientation that is at once active (attentive) and ethical (caring). This notion draws on two traditions that meet, and sometimes strain against each other. First is the phenomenology of presence: thinkers like Merleau-Ponty and Weil refuse to treat attention as a merely cognitive filter. Attention, for them, is an opening of the self to the world and to the other, a form of availability, even of exposure. Weil famously treated attention as the highest form of generosity, an act of love that suspends self-interest and makes room for the reality of the other (Weil, 1986; Kissler, 2024; Gehring, 2018). To truly attend is to let the other's existence matter, fully, before one's own agenda. Second is the ethical tradition of care in education (exemplified by Noddings and extended in contemporary relational pedagogies) which treats education not as neutral transmission but as a sustained encounter in which the educator is answerable to the needs, fears, and becoming of the student (Noddings, 2013; Bergmark, 2020; Caine, Chung, & Steeves, 2020). In a caring encounter, the educator does not merely deliver content but listens, "grasp[es] the other's emotions, needs, and point of view," and responds in a way that affirms the student as a subject and not an object (Noddings, 2008; McKenzie & Blenkinsop, 2006). This pairing matters. It allows us to name something specific: attentional care is not just a teacher paying attention. It is the recognition that attention itself, when offered rightly, is a gesture of care. And this, in turn, illuminates why the platform environment is ethically charged. The platform does not only mediate content; it mediates presence. It shapes who is seen, when, and under what terms. It scripts the tempo of interaction. It determines whose microexpressions are legible and whose are lost in lag. When we describe the practice of dwelling with a student across unstable bandwidth (waiting through a silence on a frozen screen, refusing to move on) we are not describing mere patience. We are describing attentional care as an ethical practice in digitally mediated space. This leads directly into the political dimension. Peter Roberts (2023) argues that Simone Weil's philosophy demands a pedagogy in which "the development of attention" is inseparable from truth and love; to cultivate attention is not only to sharpen cognition, but to shape the kind of person one becomes (Roberts, 2023). That is, attention is a moral formation. UNESCO's post-COVID analysis similarly warns that careless reliance on digital platforms risks undermining public education and deepening inequity, particularly where infrastructural access is fragile and educational space is already precarious (UNESCO, 2021). Meanwhile, in comparatively wealthier contexts, there is growing recognition that our "powers of attention" are eroding under conditions of perpetual stimulus: people report diminished focus, increased distractibility, and a shrinking collective attention span (Newport, 2019; Firth

et al., 2019). Taken together, these trajectories suggest that attentional care is not a soft add-on to pedagogy. It is a question of justice. Who receives sustained, humane attention? Who is reduced to a data point? Who is pressured into visibility, and who is allowed opacity, rest, shelter?

At this point a temptation arises: to demand solutions, to prescribe fixes, to announce a program. I resist that impulse. The aim here is not to impose a rigid new curriculum or to romanticize a pre-digital past. Instead, the task is diagnostic and interpretive: to probe what is happening to attention as a significant portion of schooling moves onto synchronous, platform-mediated environments. We try, in other words, to cultivate a responsible slowness. This involves asking how teachers and learners might intentionally sustain attention in ways that resist the default fragmentation of the medium. Some of the emerging evidence suggests that small interventions (turning off self-view, inviting active participation, naming and normalizing fatigue) can reduce cognitive overload and make the online environment more inhabitable (Krishna & Rajan, 2025). But for our purposes, the deeper question is not only technical. It is ethical. What does it feel like to extend one's presence across a screen without collapsing into surveillance or performance? What does it mean to let another mind breathe in a space that is timed, scored, and archived? In what follows, "platform classroom" refers concretely to the synchronous, video-mediated teaching arrangements that have come to dominate my own undergraduate and Master's-level courses in philosophy of education and teacher education since 2020, rather than to every conceivable form of online or blended learning; it is this specific, recurrent lifeworld that supplies the scenes from which the analysis proceeds. Other configurations of online education—fully asynchronous courses, text-based forums, and hybrid models anchored in physical classrooms—undoubtedly organise attention and care differently; they remain important horizons for the present analysis but lie beyond its central focus.

Our hope is to take attentional care seriously enough to ask, without sentimentality, whether it can still be practiced inside an economy that would prefer attention to be harvested rather than offered. We frame attentional care as a question more than a claim. We refuse both cynicism ("care is impossible now") and naïveté ("care is unchanged"). What we are circling, instead, is a possibility that is fragile but not extinct: that to attend to another in the platform classroom is not just to look, not just to monitor, but to remain with them, to hold open time for them, to let them be more than their data trail. The inquiry finally comes to this: Can attention itself become an act of care (a breathing-with) when the very air of schooling is platform-made?

Theoretical- Literature Grounding

In today's synchronous, platform-mediated university classroom, both students' and teachers' attention have become a scarce and fragile resource. Digital learning environments promise unprecedented connectivity, yet they also expose learners to the relentless pressures of what Herbert Simon (1971) foresaw as an *attention economy* a world in which "a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention." Under the conditions of twenty-four-hour digital

capitalism, every ping, post, and notification competes for fragments of our focus (Crary, 2013). Within this milieu, the notion of *attentional care* acquires ethical and philosophical gravity: it invites us to treat attention not as a quantifiable input to be optimized, but as an intersubjective act of care, a shared moral space cultivated between teacher and learner. To unfold this claim, we turn to the philosophical languages capable of sustaining it: phenomenology, care ethics, and critical theory, drawing especially from Merleau-Ponty, Simone Weil, Byung-Chul Han, Bernard Stiegler, Jonathan Crary, and Nel Noddings. From the perspective of phenomenology, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's insights remind us that perception and learning are inseparable from embodiment. "The body," he writes, "is our general medium for having a world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 146). Even in digitally mediated contexts, this bodily foundation does not dissolve it transforms. Recent scholarship underscores that virtual learning is not a disembodied abstraction but a mode of *lived corporeality* refracted through technology. Willatt and Flores (2022) argue that virtual experiences are "inherently embodied and fully real," elaborating on Merleau-Ponty's idea of the *virtual body* as an extension of intentional life. In the synchronous videoconference settings that concern us here, the student attending a Zoom lecture is therefore not a disembodied viewer, but a bodily subject whose sensorimotor orientation stretches into the digital horizon. For Merleau-Ponty, the body "is wherever there is something to be done" (1962, 291). Attention, then, is not a purely mental act but a bodily comportment, a readiness to inhabit the world's invitations. This understanding grounds *attentional care* phenomenologically: attention involves a bodily openness toward others, an act of perceptual generosity that must be respected in educational design. Digital pedagogy that neglects this embodied dimension risks severing students from the phenomenological conditions that make learning possible at all.

Weil (1952) framed attention as the highest form of generosity; Han (2015) warns that today's "burnout society" transforms such generosity into exhaustion; and Stiegler (2010) describes attention as a form of psychic energy depleted by technological acceleration. Meanwhile, Noddings (2008) reminds educators that to care for learners' attention is also to care for their capacity to think and to feel within the shared moral space of education. Taken together, these thinkers remind us that attentional care must hold together generosity, ethical restraint, and awareness of the social conditions that threaten them. If Merleau-Ponty provides the ontological depth of attention, Simone Weil gives it moral luminosity. In *Waiting for God*, Weil (1952) famously writes that "attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity." For her, attention is not merely concentration; it is the suspension of self the ethical act of allowing the other, whether person or problem, to appear in its full dignity. To attend is to love without grasping. Education, for Weil, must therefore train attention as a spiritual and moral faculty rather than as an instrument of productivity. The attentive student learns humility before the object of study; the attentive teacher practices patience, restraint, and receptivity. In this Weilian frame, *attentional care* names a pedagogical disposition in which teaching becomes an offering

of presence. Each lesson becomes an opportunity to practice what Weil called "waiting in expectation," a stillness of mind that allows meaning to emerge (Weil, 1952, 273). This is not nostalgia but resistance: in an economy of speed, to teach slowly is to enact care as generosity.

Nel Noddings extends these ethical intuitions into an explicitly pedagogical philosophy. In her *ethic of care*, Noddings (2008) situates attention at the heart of moral education, describing care as a dynamic relation between the *one-caring* and the *cared-for*. The act of caring begins, she argues, with "engrossment" a form of receptive attention in which the teacher is fully present to the student's experience. This is not a one-way transaction but a reciprocity: the teacher's attentiveness invites the student's response, creating a shared field of ethical attunement. In practice, this means that to care is to notice the subtle signs of confusion, fatigue, or curiosity that arise even across a digital interface. A teacher who practices *attentional care* reads the quiet gaze of a student as meaning-laden rather than empty, adjusting tone, pace, or approach accordingly. Noddings warns that when education becomes procedural, "students may equate caring with coercion" (2008, 74). The teacher's attentive stance must therefore remain voluntary, grounded in authentic regard rather than managerial monitoring. Within the platform classroom, were algorithms increasingly mediate engagement, Noddings' framework challenges educators to restore the ethical immediacy of care to see each pixelated face as a site of moral relation, not data capture. If phenomenology and care ethics illuminate the promise of attention, critical theorists expose its peril. Jonathan Crary (2013) describes our epoch as one of *24-7 capitalism*, a regime that seeks to eliminate intervals of rest, reflection, and disengagement. Attention, once a condition for thought, is now a commodity to be extracted. Crary observes that the attention economy "dissolves the separation between the personal and the professional," rendering every moment monetizable (Crary, 2013, 75). Byung-Chul Han (2015) develops this diagnosis further in *The Burnout Society*, arguing that digital hypercommunication produces a pathology of "hyperattention" and exhaustion. In this self-exploitative culture, individuals internalize the imperative to be constantly available (to respond, perform, and produce) thereby eroding the contemplative depth on which education depends. Bernard Stiegler (2010, 2014) likewise warns that the industrialization of attention through global media systems engenders what he calls "symbolic misery": a loss of intergenerational transmission and affective care. Attention, he insists, is not innate but cultivated through education, through "the long circuits of care, desire, and waiting" that sustain collective meaning (Stiegler, 2014, 65). The digital milieu shortens these circuits, replacing slow pedagogical formation with instantaneous consumption. Yet Stiegler remains hopeful: he frames education as a *pharmacological* practice) poison and cure at once (through which technics can be reappropriated to rebuild the capacity for attention. Bradley and Kennedy (2020) expand on this pharmacological vision, showing how Stiegler's philosophy of education offers a model for resisting the depletion of attention in a hyper-digital educational environment such as the one we analyse here.

Here the ethical and political dimension of the argument becomes visible: the struggle for sustained, humane attention is what we may call a question of *attentional justice*. We use this term to denote a conceptual contribution of the present study, one that reframes educational equity not merely as access to information but as access to the very capacity to attend. In an age where cognitive and temporal resources are unequally distributed, attentional justice demands that schools safeguard the conditions for genuine focus, especially for those whose environments are saturated with digital noise. From this standpoint, *attentional care* is both a moral practice and a political stance: it resists the commodification of consciousness and asserts the right to attentive coexistence as a form of justice (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015; Stiegler, 2014). What, then, does this synthesis mean for the synchronous, video-mediated classroom that is our focus in this article? When video lectures, chat threads, and notifications vie for the student's gaze, *attentional care* calls for re-embodying learning and revaluing slowness. Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenology invites practical gestures: integrating bodily movement, deliberate pauses, or tactile tools that re-anchor learning in lived experience. Stiegler (2010) would view these as *technologies of care* counter-technics that re-inscribe desire and patience into the rhythms of teaching. Ethically, Weil's (1952) notion of attention as generosity and Noddings' (2008) ethic of receptive care converge in pedagogical strategies that humanize digital interaction: beginning class with a shared moment of silence, encouraging sustained listening, or inviting reflection before response. Even small design choices (turning off self-view, muting notifications, slowing transitions) embody attentional care as a form of resistance to fragmentation. Such acts become pedagogical micro-practices of *attentional justice*, modest yet vital reorientations toward ethical presence within technological mediation. In this sense, *attentional care* emerges as a conceptual bridge between phenomenological, ethical, and critical traditions, a human response to the digitization of education. Phenomenology teaches that attention is a mode of embodied being-in-the-world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Willatt & Flores, 2022). Care ethics reminds us that to attend is to love, to respond, to remain (Weil, 1952; Noddings, 2008). Critical theory warns that under the logics of 24-7 capitalism, this capacity is endangered (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015; Stiegler, 2010, 2014). To practice *attentional care* in the synchronous platform classroom is therefore to reassert the moral and political value of attention as shared presence to make teaching an act of ethical resistance. In a world that monetizes distraction, the educator's attentive gaze becomes a gesture of justice: a way of giving time back to thought, and thought back to care.

Methodological - Conceptual Approach

How does one inquire into attention so that one's very manner of inquiring does not betray the phenomenon under study? Because our question concerns the lived texture of attentional care within synchronous, video-mediated platform classroom (its embodiment, temporality, and ethical charge) the appropriate mode is a phenomenological–hermeneutic inquiry in education rather than an empirical measurement paradigm. We proceed by describing and interpreting

experience as it is lived, allowing its structures to show themselves, and only then drawing ethical inferences. This approach aligns with the phenomenological tradition (Husserl, 2012; Merleau-Ponty, 1962) as adapted for educational research and writing (van Manen, 2016, 2023), while remaining answerable to hermeneutic procedures of understanding (Gadamer, 1989; Ricoeur, 1981). The method is slow, disciplined, reflexive, and explicit about its limits. At its core, phenomenology suspends explanatory theories in order to attend to how a phenomenon is given in experience, its intentional structure, bodily anchoring, temporal flow, and intersubjective horizon (Husserl, 2012). In education, this concerns the lifeworld of teaching and learning (gesture, silence, gaze, mood, rhythm) without reducing them to variables (van Manen, 2023, 2016). Our object (attentional care) is precisely such a lifeworld structure: it is not exhausted by cognitive measures of focus or behavioral proxies of "engagement." It appears as an ethical–phenomenological orientation, a way of being with others in learning. In what follows, this lifeworld is not "online education" in general but this specific configuration of synchronous videoconferencing in higher education, and our use of "platform classroom" should be read in that delimited sense. At the same time, attention in platform settings is historically and technically mediated; it arrives already inflected by discourses, interfaces, and power. A purely descriptive stance would be naïve. We therefore join description to hermeneutics: understanding unfolds as a movement between part and whole (the hermeneutic circle), informed by the prejudgments we inevitably bring (Gadamer, 1989). Where appropriate, we adopt a critical hermeneutics (distanciation and critique prior to renewed appropriation) to surface how economies of attention and platform logics prestructure experience (Ricoeur, 1981). This double gesture (phenomenological closeness and hermeneutic distance) lets us dwell in, and also interrogate, the platform classroom without allowing critique to eclipse lived description. Why phenomenology of education (and not measurement)

1. **Ontological fit.** Attentional care is lived before it is measured. It is encountered in the teacher's paced silence, in the student's hesitant return to the screen after a freeze, in the felt strain of latency. Such textures are lost when reduced to variables. Phenomenology protects the ontological priority of lived meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; van Manen, 2016).
2. **Avoiding psychologism.** Following Husserl's critique, we refuse to collapse attention into internal states explainable by empirical psychology alone (Husserl, 2012). We treat attention as an intentional structure (world-directed, intersubjective, temporally thick) rather than an inner content. This safeguards the ethical dimension that concerns us: attention as a form of being-with.
3. **Ethical accountability.** Our claim that attention is a practice of care requires a method that can render ethical significance without moralizing. Phenomenological–hermeneutic work offers precisely this: thick description, argued interpretation, and

transparent movement from lived scene to ethical insight (Gadamer, 1989; van Manen, 2016).

We operationalize the inquiry through four reinforcing practices:

1. **Epoché and reduction.** We adopt a disciplined openness by suspending, so far as possible, explanatory frameworks (neuroscientific, managerial, policy-driven) that might colonize our seeing (Husserl, 2012). This is not refusal of science but a temporary bracket that permits the phenomenon to speak. The reduction reorients us from aboutness to givenness: how attention and care appear within the platform classroom.
2. **Phenomenological description and eidetic variation.** We craft vignettes that render micro-scenes (for example, the teacher waiting through a frozen screen; the student's delayed nod; the class's shared silence after the chat falls still). We then perform eidetic variation (imaginative transformation of features) to probe what in the scene is accidental and what is invariant to the experience of attentional care (Giorgi, 2009). For instance: if the camera is off but the teacher's pacing slows and her voice softens, does the student still experience being held in attention? Iterating such variations helps disclose the essence-structure of the phenomenon.
3. **Hermeneutic circulation and critical distanciation.** Description alone risks innocence. We therefore move interpretively between scene and concept (part and whole) testing emergent understanding against canonical texts (Weil; Merleau-Ponty) and critical diagnoses of technicity (Stiegler; Han; Crary). Following Ricoeur (1981), we intermittently step back from lived immediacy to examine how platform design and the attention economy prefigure what can be perceived or said. We then return to the scene with widened vision, allowing understanding to deepen without dissolving into ideology critique.
4. **Reflexive writing as method.** In line with phenomenology of practice, we treat writing itself as inquiry (van Manen, 2023). Field notes from teaching, reflective memos after sessions, and iterative re-descriptions of the same scene function as attentional exercises, disciplining gaze and language. We maintain an audit trail of interpretive moves (why a scene is privileged, how a concept reframed our seeing, where a counterexample unsettled an early claim) so that readers can follow and assess the logic of understanding. Reflexivity here also requires that we acknowledge the situatedness of the gaze from which these scenes are written: they are composed from the vantage point of an educator–philosopher occupying the teacher's square in the grid, yet the phenomena described are co-constituted by student subjectivities, gestures, and resistances that never appear as fully transparent. We therefore write in the first person of teaching while remaining explicitly aware that what is seen and said

is only one trajectory through a shared field of experience that students inhabit and shape in their own right.

Our primary materials are lived-experience vignettes from the platform classroom, as encountered by the educator–philosopher author and subsequently reflected upon in writing. Concretely, these scenes arise from synchronous teaching between 2020 and 2024 in undergraduate and Master's-level courses in philosophy of education, teacher education, and curriculum studies at a public university, with typical seminar and lecture groups ranging from 15 to 40 students. Classes were conducted primarily via videoconferencing platforms integrated with the institution's learning-management system during and after the COVID-19 pivot to online and hybrid teaching. The "platform classroom" that forms our lifeworld is thus not an abstract metaphor but a recurrent, situated teaching arrangement: a grid of video feeds, a shared screen, and a chat stream in which students preparing for or already engaged in educational practice meet in real time.

The vignettes are composite rather than case reports. Immediately following specific classes, the author kept field notes and reflective memos on moments in which attention and care seemed to appear, fray, or be restored, silences that thickened or broke, hesitations in turning cameras on or off, fleeting recognitions in chat, the strain of holding a group through latency. These notes were later written out as narrative scenes and then condensed across multiple iterations of similar situations so that individual students and cohorts could not be identified. In this sense, each vignette gathers into a single scene what recurs across many occasions; its aim is not documentary exhaustiveness but eidetic clarity. Draft descriptions and the associated candidate invariants were shared in informal conversations with colleagues in teacher education and educational technology, who were invited to test them against their own experiences of platform teaching. Where colleagues did not recognise themselves in a description, or judged an alleged invariant not to hold in their practice, the vignette or its proposed invariant was revised or discarded. The analysis thus remains anchored in a single institutional lifeworld but has been dialogically checked within a small, heterogeneous community of practitioners.

Because our purpose is conceptual illumination rather than empirical generalisation, the claims that follow are eidetic and normative, not statistical: they concern the structures through which attentional care appears in this particular configuration of the platform classroom, and the ethical–political obligations that these structures imply. In this sense, rigor lies not in sample size or representativeness but in phenomenological adequacy, interpretive transparency, reflexive accountability, dialogical testing, and eidetic robustness for competent readers (van Manen, 2023). We secure rigor through:

- **Phenomenological adequacy:** scenes are concrete, sensory, temporally thick; language stays close to experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; van Manen, 2023).

- **Interpretive transparency:** we show how we moved from scene to concept (hermeneutic circle), where we bracketed assumptions (epoché), and how critical distanciation revised initial seeing (Ricoeur, 1981).
- **Reflexivity:** we continuously examine positionality as educator within the platform epoch, how desires, fatigue, and hopes shape what can be noticed and said, and how this positionality both enables and limits what can be perceived of students' own practices of attentional care (van Manen, 2016).
- **Dialogical testing:** emergent claims are placed in conversation with canonical voices (Weil on generosity; Noddings on engrossment; Stiegler on pharmakon; Han on burnout) and with the experiential judgements of colleagues in teacher education and educational technology, and revised where this dialogue discloses blind spots (Gadamer, 1989).

We explicitly avoid psychologism (Husserl, 2012). When we speak of fatigue or fragmentation, we do so as lived phenomena (how fatigue shows itself in the body's tempo and the class's rhythm) rather than as diagnostic categories. Equally, we do not treat attention as a commodity measurable by time-on-task alone; we treat it as an intentional and ethical relation. Method and ethics are continuous here. If attentional care is the phenomenon, it must also be the method's ethos. Accordingly, examples are composite and de-identified; no student is instrumentalized for argument. Descriptions are offered with humility; counter-readings are invited; interpretive authority is not presumed but earned through resonance. Our lens remains alert to the distribution of attentional conditions (for example, bandwidth, device access, household noise) and to their ethical stakes; this methodological vigilance underwrites the later development of attentional justice. This method permits two conceptual contributions to be responsibly developed. First, attentional care is elaborated not as a slogan but as an eidetic structure disclosed through scenes (waiting through lag; pacing one's voice to a delayed response) and clarified in conversation with Weil's generosity and Noddings's engrossment. Second, attentional justice is proposed as a normative horizon that arises when phenomenological description meets critical hermeneutic awareness of technicity and economy (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015; Stiegler, 2010, 2014). It names the duty to protect and distribute the conditions for sustained, dignified attention in schooling. A phenomenological–hermeneutic method does not claim statistical generality or causal explanation. It can err by overfitting a scene to a favored concept or by romanticizing pre-digital presence. We mitigate these risks through explicit bracketing, episodic critical distanciation, dialogical testing against counterexamples and alternative readings, and reporting of failed invariants (Ricoeur, 1981; van Manen, 2023). The appropriate standards of appraisal are explanatory depth, coherence, and transferability by recognition for practitioners and theorists. In the analysis that follows, we enact this method: we present lived scenes from the platform classroom, vary them imaginatively to surface invariants of attentional care, and interpret them through dialogical

engagement with phenomenology, care ethics, and critical theory. The aim is not to close the question of attention with conclusions, but to clarify its structures so that ethical and political stakes (especially those gathered under attentional justice) can be addressed with precision.

Results

Phenomenological Analysis

This section examines attentional care as it is lived in the synchronous, video-mediated platform classroom. The analysis proceeds in the mode of phenomenological description and hermeneutic interpretation, following reduction and eidetic variation (Husserl, 1983; Giorgi, 2009), lifeworld attentiveness to pedagogical experience (van Manen, 2016, 2023), and dialogical interpretation (Gadamer, 2004; Ricoeur, 1981). What emerges is that attentional care discloses itself along three persistent dimensions (embodiment, temporality, and intersubjectivity) while always under pressure from platform technicity. In each case, we observe (a) how attention shows itself as lived structure, (b) how platform mediation deforms or destabilizes that structure, and (c) how teachers and students, in different but related ways attempts to restore it. This restorative work is not sentimental; it is ethical in Simone Weil's sense of attention as generosity (Weil, 1952) and in Nel Noddings' sense of engrossed, responsive care (Noddings, 2008). It is also fragile, because attention is at once cultivated and extracted in an economy that demands constant availability (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015). Stiegler names that tension pharmakon: technics both harms and heals, corrodes and supports attention, depending on how it is taken up (Stiegler, 2010, 2014). To provide an analytic map of these relations, we can set them in a comparative frame that juxtaposes lived structure, disruption, and ethical restoration (Table 1).

Table 1. *Attentional Care in Platform Pedagogy: Structure, Interruption, Restoration*

Dimension	Phenomenological structure (how it is lived)	Platform interruption (how it is strained)	Restorative act of care (how it is reconstituted)
Embodiment	Attention is enacted through bodily tact: posture, tone, pacing of breath. In this setting, the teacher's body often "holds" the student in a field of concern, while students' own bodily responses (leaning in, nodding, turning cameras on, typing in the chat) also participate in that holding; the learner senses being singled out, named, received (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; van Manen, 2016).	Platform mediation compresses the body to a face, a voice channel, or a username. Latency and framing obscure subtle cues. Gesture risks becoming ocular and flattened (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015).	Attentional care appears as tactful adjustment: soft naming, slowed voice, deliberate leaning in toward the lens. The teacher offers presence as a gift of attention (Weil, 1952), and the student is confirmed as mattering (Noddings, 2008) while also enacting care through their own bodily and vocal responses (for example, steadying their gaze, voicing uncertainty, or signalling support to peers in chat).

Temporality	Classroom meaning unfolds within a shared rhythm of waiting, answering, revising. Husserl describes this as retention, primal impression, and protention: we hold what has just been said, inhabit what is now said, and lean toward what is about to be said (Husserl, 1983).	Platform time accelerates and fragments. Notifications intrude. Lag and micro-breaks fracture the shared now. The class ceases to breathe in one rhythm (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015).	Attentional care appears as temporal generosity. Teachers and students co-create such generosity: the teacher suspends urgency, explicitly "holds the question open," invites silence, and protects intervals in which thinking can form (Weil, 1952; van Manen, 2023), while students honour these intervals by resisting multitasking, signalling when they need more time, or waiting for peers to find their words rather than rushing to fill the silence.
Intersubjectivity	Understanding in teaching is co-created. Dialogue is not mere information exchange; it is the mutual recognition that "you are here with me," and "I am answerable to you" (Gadamer, 2004; Noddings, 2008). Students feel themselves addressed as subjects capable of meaning.	Platform mediation thins reciprocity. Camera-off, mute status, and chat scrolls risk converting persons into streams of text or silence. Stiegler (2014) names this loss of shared symbolic depth as "symbolic misery."	Attentional care appears as confirmation and address. The teacher calls the student by name, acknowledges hesitation without punishment, echoes the student's tentative language back to them, and waits for assent. Students, too, practice recognitive address when they pick up a peer's comment in chat, echo a classmate's idea with explicit credit, or use emojis and short messages to affirm another's contribution. This enactment of recognition re-establishes mutual presence (Noddings, 2008; Ricoeur, 1981).
Technicity	Technics exteriorizes attention. A platform can extend memory, create conditions for shared work, and sustain availability across distance. It can also capture, pace, and monetize attention. This structural ambivalence is the pharmakon (Stiegler, 2010, 2014).	Acceleration culture attempts to eliminate pause, depth, and rest. It demands constant responsiveness and divides attention into monetizable fragments (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015).	Attentional care appears as counter-technics: ritualized pauses, screens-down intervals, refusal to fill every second with content. The teacher uses the technical environment to carve out protected zones of attention (van Manen, 2023; Weil, 1952), while students experiment with their own counter-technics (muting notifications, closing surplus tabs, or collectively agreeing on norms that protect shared focus).

The rest of this section unfolds each dimension in depth, using phenomenological scene-description as the ground of analysis. The classroom moments below are not presented as empirical "data." They function instead as eidetic exemplars, in the Husserlian and Giorgian sense, which allow the structure of the phenomenon to be grasped (Husserl, 1983; Giorgi, 2009). In synchronous teaching on a platform, attention is neither purely mental nor purely visual. It is lived as a bodily field of mutual orientation. Consider a familiar scene in live instruction: a student's camera is on, but their gaze flickers off-screen and back, then away again. The teacher shifts slightly closer to the lens, lowers the vocal register, speaks the student's name, and allows the last clause of the sentence to slow and fall. After a brief delay,

the student's head steadies and they answer, quietly at first. What shows itself here is an experience of being held ("being-held-in-place by another's concern,") to use a descriptive phrase rather than a metaphysical definition. What is being held is not only the student's focus on the academic material; what is being held is the student's sense of mattering in that moment. Van Manen (2016) gives us a name for the teacher's comportment: pedagogical tact. Tact is not a technique; it is a felt, situated responsiveness to what the moment calls for, enacted in real time. Noddings (2008) gives us a second name, engrossment: a receptive, caring attention in which the one-caring turns toward the cared-for without instrumentalization. These are related but not identical. Tact names the teacher's immediate adjustment of posture, tone, pacing. Engrossment names the ethical stance of receiving the student's reality as worthy. In practice they interweave. Merleau-Ponty's claim that "the body is our general medium for having a world" (1962, 146) is not abstract for this setting. The platform does not erase the body; it forces the body to radiate through narrower channels on both sides of the relation, as students also turn their bodies and attention toward one another. In other sessions, students themselves initiate this holding by turning cameras on for a peer's presentation, posting "I'm with you" or "take your time" in the chat, or gently drawing a wandering discussion back to a classmate's unfinished thought. Weil's insistence that "attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity" (1952, 105) clarifies the ethical layer: when the teacher leans in, slows their voice, calls the student by name without hurrying them, they are not merely managing engagement. They are offering presence as generosity. Under Noddings (2008), that offering must be received to count as care; confirmation requires uptake by the cared-for.

Claim 1. In synchronous, video-mediated platform teaching, attentional care appears first as a co-embodied offering of presence in which teachers and students hold one another in view as subjects, not watched as an object. Where mediation thins the sensory field, tact re-thickens it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Weil, 1952; Noddings, 2008).

Attention is not only spatial; it is temporal. Husserl's account of internal time-consciousness shows that any meaningful act of understanding depends on a woven structure of retention (the just-past), primal impression (the now), and protention (the about-to-happen) (Husserl, 1983). In in-person classroom teaching, this temporal weave is often held communally: a question is asked, eyes meet, a pause holds the room, then one voice enters, then another. The class, briefly, shares a rhythm. In the synchronous platform setting, that rhythm is fragile. Lag inserts mechanical delay. Push notifications flicker at the edges of students' screens. Students scatter into private temporalities: one multitasks; one waits politely; one is already drafting an answer in chat out of anxiety. Crary (2013) describes this cultural condition as a 24-7 temporality that attempts to abolish intervals of rest. Han (2015) names its lived effect as burnout: the self-exhaustion of constant responsiveness in a world that denies withdrawal. Against this temporal fragmentation, a careful teacher practices temporal generosity. Consider a moment: the teacher poses a question, then says, "I am holding the question open." Silence is allowed to stand, not

treated as failure. After several slow seconds, a message appears in chat: "I need to think." The teacher responds, "Good. We will." What is being protected here is not silence for its own sake, but the right to think at a human tempo rather than at the tempo of the interface. Weil calls this posture "waiting in expectation" (1952, 111). Waiting, for Weil, is not passivity, but availability to the other's emergence. Van Manen (2023) calls this work with lived time: the educator curates classroom tempo so that students can gather themselves without being dragged by acceleration. In phenomenological terms, attentional care here takes the form of temporal generosity: the active protection of shared intervals in which thought is permitted to arrive. Students also participate in shaping this tempo: some type "still thinking" into the chat, some ask for "one more minute," and others slow the flow by returning the group to an earlier unresolved question rather than rushing to the next slide.

Claim 2. In synchronous, video-mediated platform teaching, attentional care appears as deliberate temporal generosity. Teachers and students together interrupt the platform's-imposed pace: The teacher interrupts the platform's-imposed pace, restores intervals of thinking, and thereby honors the student's temporal presence as a subject of understanding (Husserl, 1983; Weil, 1952; Crary, 2013; Han, 2015; van Manen, 2023), while students learn to request, defend, and offer such intervals to one another.

Teaching is also an encounter of subjects. Gadamer (2004) argues that understanding is not a private event but emerges in dialogue: we are addressed, and in being addressed we are drawn into meaning. Noddings (2008) likewise insists that care is relational: care must be perceived by the cared-for. In the synchronous platform classroom, this intersubjective circuit is precarious. With most cameras off, the teacher often speaks into a field of icons. A student types "not sure." The teacher replies, "Not being sure is a good beginning. Would you be willing to say what you're hearing in the sentence?" After a delay, a tentative voice arrives. The teacher echoes the student's words back, nearly verbatim, and asks, "Is that right?" The student affirms. What appears in this exchange is not mere participation but recognition? Hesitation is not treated as incompetence; it is taken as a legitimate point of entry. The teacher here is doing what Ricoeur (1981) calls hermeneutic recognition: returning the student's emerging meaning to them in a form they can own. For Noddings (2008), this confirms the relation of care, in which the student is not overrun but invited. The refusal to punish hesitation, and the willingness to echo the student's tentative language back to them for assent, are the mechanisms by which recognition is made audible. Stiegler (2014) warns that without this kind of recognitive work, mediated education risks producing "symbolic misery": the erosion of shared meaning and intergenerational transmission when technics both mediates and hollows attention. The synchronous platform classroom is structurally susceptible to that erosion: a student can be present-as-icon yet absent-as-subject. Attentional care here is the deliberate act of calling that subject back into a shared space of meaning without coercion. Parallel to such voiced

exchanges, other students may type “same here,” “that helped,” or “thank you for saying that” in the chat, amplifying the recognitive field laterally rather than only vertically.

Claim 3. In synchronous, video-mediated platform teaching, attentional care appears as recognitive address circulating between teacher and students and among students themselves. Naming the student, acknowledging hesitation without penalty, echoing their formulation back for confirmation, and students’ peer-to-peer affirmations are practices that reconstitute a fragile intersubjective field in which learning can occur (Gadamer, 2004; Noddings, 2008; Ricoeur, 1981; Stiegler, 2014). Technics does not sit outside attention; it organizes and channels it. For Stiegler (2010, 2014), technics exteriorizes memory, time, and attention. That exteriorization is not inherently corrupting; it makes teaching across distance possible. But exteriorized attention becomes available for capture. Crary (2013) argues that contemporary digital capitalism is structured to abolish downtime and hold subjects in continuous addressability. Han (2015) describes the subjective cost: burnout, self-exploitation, a state in which individuals demand of themselves the constant availability that systems demand of them. Within that condition, attentional care takes the form of counter-technics. The teacher refuses to allow the platform to dictate the total rhythm of the session. Instead of layering constant polls, reaction badges, and parallel chat streams, the teacher establishes a ritual pause: screens down, heads up or eyes closed, pens moving on paper, shared silence for one minute. Afterward, the teacher invites articulation: “What came up in that quiet?” Students often report not only better grasp of the concept (“I finally understood the claim you made about evidence”) but also affective relief (“I could breathe”). This is what Stiegler means when he calls technics a pharmakon: poison and remedy at once (2010, 2014). The same infrastructure that fragments attention can be appropriated to shelter it, if the educator actively inscribes a counter-rhythm. Van Manen (2023) would call this pedagogical practice: an intentional shaping of the learning situation so that lived meaning can appear. Weil (1952) would call it generosity given shape in time. The phenomenological point is that attention is not merely left vulnerable to extraction; it is actively defended. Students also invent counter-technics: some routinely silence phone notifications before class, others agree in group chat to resist parallel social-media scrolling, and some create backchannel spaces oriented toward mutual encouragement rather than distraction.

Claim 4. In synchronous, video-mediated platform teaching, attentional care appears as shared counter-technics. attentional care appears as counter-technics. The educator appropriates the platform against its own acceleration, creating small pockets of protected attention within a system that would otherwise monetize every available interval (Stiegler, 2010, 2014; Crary, 2013; Han, 2015; Weil, 1952). and students likewise develop everyday counter-practices that defend their own and their peers’ attention. Across these dimensions, a model comes into view. Attentional care in the synchronous, video-mediated platform classroom is not reducible to cognitive focus or behavioral compliance. It is a sustained ethical–phenomenological practice in which the educator:

- offers embodied presence as an act of generosity and tact (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Weil, 1952; Noddings, 2008); and invites, receives, and responds to students’ own bodily and vocal gestures of care toward one another;
- curates shared time so that thinking is permitted to unfold at a livable human tempo rather than at the tempo of the interface (Husserl, 1983; Crary, 2013; Han, 2015; Weil, 1952); while students also learn to signal and respect such tempos among themselves;
- confirms the learner as a partner in meaning, not merely a receiver of content (Gadamer, 2004; Noddings, 2008; Ricoeur, 1981; Stiegler, 2014) and supports peer recognitions in which students publicly take one another’s contributions seriously; and
- actively disciplines technics in order to secure and protect those first three conditions (Stiegler, 2010, 2014; Crary, 2013; Han, 2015) in concert with students’ own efforts to reshape how they inhabit the platform.

This is not a checklist or “best practice.” It is closer to a fragile moral ecology. In this ecology, attention is experienced as being held, being given time, and being recognized as a participant in meaning. These are not stylistic preferences; they are the minimal conditions under which education still feels like a human encounter rather than a managed stream. When those conditions erode (when the body is flattened to an icon, when classroom time is accelerated to panic, when mutual address is lost, when technics dictates tempo) the experience of attention itself collapses into extraction. To attend, under such conditions, is already to resist. That resistance is not heroic in the dramatic sense. It is ethical in the ordinary sense: it interrupts the logics of exhaustion and capture, and it protects, moment by moment, the possibility that teaching remains a relation between persons rather than an interface between users (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015) a possibility sustained not only by teachers’ practices but also by students’ everyday acts of attentional care for one another.

Ethical and Political Synthesis - Attentional Justice

We can now state directly the claim latent in the phenomenological scenes: *attentional justice*. By this I mean the normative demand that the conditions for giving and receiving sustained, humane attention in education (conditions at once bodily, temporal, intersubjective, and technical) be protected and equitably distributed. If *attentional care* names the interpersonal praxis by which a teacher holds, paces, and recognizes a learner, *attentional justice* names the collective obligation to secure the infrastructures, rhythms, and safeguards without which such care cannot endure (Stiegler, 2010, 2014; Crary, 2013; Han, 2015; Noddings, 2008; Weil, 1952). Two clarifications fasten the scope. First, justice here is not reducible to content access: two learners may “have” the same materials and yet lack the protected intervals, stable bandwidth, or freedom from surveillance necessary to *attend* without fragmentation. Second, justice cannot be privatized as goodwill. As Tronto argues, care is political because it must be organized, distributed, and supported across institutions (Tronto, 2020, 2013). Thus, the

possibility of attentional care is a public good, not a private virtue. Our phenomenological analysis showed attentional care as embodied tact, temporal generosity, recognitive address, and counter-technics. These are not free-floating excellences; they are *situated* practices inside arrangements of time, labor, and technics. When schedules compress sessions without intervals, temporal generosity becomes heroic; when platforms mandate camera-on "visibility," recognitive address is swallowed by compliance; when bandwidth is scarce and homes are crowded by wage and care labor, tact cannot overcome infrastructural lack. Here the inferential step is straightforward: from lived deprivation → normative loss → institutional duty. Because attention in education is exteriorized through technics, it becomes capturable and must be governed (Stiegler, 2010, 2014). Because our epoch aims to abolish intervals (Crary, 2013) and inculcates self-exhausting availability (Han, 2015), obligations internal to care (Noddings, 2008) and attention as moral discipline (Weil, 1952) cannot be borne by individuals alone; they require *guardrails*. In Tronto's terms, the phases of care (attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness) must be institutionally distributed, or else care is sentimentalized and exhausted (Tronto, 2020). At the same time, any proposal of attentional justice must face the grain of existing political economies of education: platform providers whose revenues depend on maximising engagement and data extraction; accountability regimes that reward measurable "activity" rather than protected intervals; and procurement arrangements that lock institutions into particular commercial systems. The duties sketched below are therefore not technocratic levers awaiting implementation but normative counter-pressures that have to be negotiated, contested, and slowly encoded in policy, contracts, and professional cultures. To make this normative field tractable without flattening it, Table 2 arrays each phenomenological deprivation alongside its structural driver, the ethical betrayal it instantiates, and the corresponding institutional duty (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Attentional Justice: From Phenomenological Deprivation to Institutional Duty*

Layer (site)	Phenomenological deprivation (how injustice is lived)	Structural driver (how deprivation is produced)	Ethical failure (what is betrayed)	Institutional duty (what must be secured for justice)	Illustrative counter-practice (how care scales)
Infrastructural time	No intervals to think; rhythm collapses into hurry; silence stigmatized (Husserl, 1983; van Manen, 2014).	Compressed schedules; metrics rewarding "activity minutes"; 24-7 expectations (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015).	Betrayal of temporal dignity; attention treated as throughput (Weil, 1952).	Guarantee protected pedagogical intervals; prohibit metric-driven pacing; recognize "time to think" as curricular good (Noddings, 2008; Tronto, 2013).	"Held question" protocols; scheduled silence windows; codified pacing autonomy.
Infrastructural bandwidth	Attention shattered by latency; recognition decays into frozen icons;	Unequal broadband; device scarcity; data	Betrayal of presence; minimal conditions for	Provide reliable access as a right; fund devices and quiet study spaces;	Low-bandwidth pedagogies; audio-first seminar norms;

	"being-with" becomes intermittent (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Stiegler, 2014).	caps; crowded domestic spaces.	address denied (Gadamer, 2004; Noddings, 2008).	decouple attendance from constant video.	protected asynchronous "thinking windows."
Surveillance and compliance	Camera-mic mandates convert attention into display; students feel watched, not held; dashboards replace dialogue (Ricoeur, 1981; Noddings, 2008).	Proctoring, gaze-tracking, engagement scoring; managerial "visibility."	Betrayal of trust; care collapses into coercion; the self as spectacle (Han, 2015; Stiegler, 2014).	Limit surveillance by policy; require human confirmation over automated scoring; encode consent and purpose-limitation.	"Visible listening" replaces camera mandates; confirmation via faithful echoing, not metrics.
Labor and care burdens	Tact thins under fatigue; students' attention rationed by wage-care labor; learning time splinters (Han, 2015).	Precarious contracts; oversized loads; externalized family labor; endless asynchronous demands (Crary, 2013).	Betrayal of responsibility; costs of care offloaded to individuals (Tronto, 2020).	Reasonable loads; recovery intervals; flexible deadlines honoring lived time; caregiving accommodations.	Collective pacing norms; "no after-hours" boundaries; shared reflection over incessant output.
Curricular tempo and design	Content overwhelms dwelling; learning reduced to stimulus-response (Husserl, 1983; Weil, 1952).	Coverage mandates; assessments equate speed with achievement; "keep moving" nudges.	Betrayal of formation; students processed rather than educated (Weil, 1952; Noddings, 2008).	Recognize dwelling as a learning outcome; diversify assessment to include reflective intervals.	Slow seminars; "screens-down" writing; public silence honored as work.
Cultural voice and recognition	Some students rarely addressed by name; hesitation penalized; dialogic space narrows (Gadamer, 2004; Noddings, 2008).	Linguistic hierarchy; racialized scrutiny; algorithmic moderation suppressing dissent.	Betrayal of equality in address; failure of confirmation (Ricoeur, 1981).	Norms of naming and fair turn-taking; multi-channel expression; anti-bias review of moderation tools.	Echoing ("Is this what you meant?"); chat-to-voice bridges; teacher self-audit of address patterns.
Governance of technics (pharmakon)	Affordances dictate tempo and gaze; counter-rhythms fragile; attention extracted (Stiegler, 2010, 2014).	Vendor lock-in; engagement KPIs; monetization of presence (Crary, 2013).	Betrayal of inheritance: technics ceases to extend care across generations (Stiegler, 2014).	Public-interest procurement; "interval affordances" (silence timers, notification shutters); data governance aligned with care.	Institutionalized counter-technics (ritual pause features); default "quiet mode"; opt-in metrics.

The left column preserves fidelity to the lived structures already described; the center columns show how those structures are strained by time–labor–technics; the right columns articulate

duties logically entailed once we admit that interpersonal attentional care requires institutional scaffolding. In Tronto's vocabulary, attentiveness without resources becomes sentiment; responsibility without authority becomes burnout; competence without time becomes performance; responsiveness without recognition becomes compliance (Tronto, 2020, 2013). Educational rights are usually framed as access and non-discrimination. The phenomenology suggests two *minimal* rights constitutive of learning as a human encounter:

1. the right to protected intervals: time within schooling free from acceleration, surveillance, and metricization, in which thought can form at a livable tempo (Husserl, 1983; Weil, 1952; Crary, 2013; Han, 2015); and
2. the right to recognitive address: to be named, heard, and echoed as a partner in meaning rather than displayed as an object for evaluation (Gadamer, 2004; Noddings, 2008; Ricoeur, 1981).

These are not rhetorical embellishments; they are the normative distillates of the lifeworld scenes. Beneath these thresholds, attentional care collapses and extraction prevails. Stiegler's pharmakon guards against nostalgia: the same platform that fragments attention can be appropriated to shelter it, *if* institutions encode counter-technics into governance (Stiegler, 2010, 2014). Crary warns that the default of the attention economy is to abolish intervals (Crary, 2013). Han shows that the default of the subject within it is exhaustion (Han, 2015). Appeals to teacher virtue alone therefore miss the scale of the problem. Obligations attach to time (interval protections), presence (surveillance limits and consent), technics (procurement that demands "quiet affordances"), and labor (loads and boundaries that make care thinkable). Realising these obligations, however, is neither simple nor cost-neutral: institutions operate under budgetary constraint and audit cultures; platform contracts are often negotiated at system level; and individual schools or universities cannot, on their own, reconfigure the global attention economy. The point of naming attentional justice is therefore not to conjure a frictionless reform agenda, but to identify the directions in which policy, procurement, professional ethics, and collective action by educators and students would need to move if care is to remain more than rhetoric. In this register, bell hooks help keep the ethical timbre audible without managerial drift: "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility" when configured as a community of care and critical presence (hooks, 2014). That verb "remains" is conditional upon attentional justice.

Objections and replies

Objection 1: "Attentional justice" is too vague to guide institutions.

Reply: Its content is given by the phenomenology. The two minimal rights are operationalizable without reducing them to metrics: schedule-level interval requirements; interface "quiet modes"; explicit limits on surveillance; norms that require named address and faithful echoing before evaluation. These are *forms that protect conditions*, not managerial

checklists and they leave room for teachers' and students' own local inventions of attentional care within those conditions.

Objection 2: This romanticizes pre-digital presence.

Reply: The stance is pharmacological, not nostalgic. In-person schooling also accelerates and surveils. The claim is medium-independent: wherever education occurs, the conditions of attentional care must be secured; in the platform epoch, the modes of extraction are specific, and so must be the counter-technics (Stiegler, 2010, 2014). The point is not to idealize the pre-digital classroom but to make visible how different media afford or obstruct the shared practices by which teachers and students hold one another in view. Recognising this also means conceding that some of what is called for here runs against prevailing accountability regimes and platform business models; present difficulty or resistance is not the same as absence of obligation.

Objection 3: What about students' responsibility to attend?

Reply: Weil already frames attention as discipline (Weil, 1952). But responsibility presupposes possibility. Where attention is structurally fragmented (by bandwidth scarcity, punitive surveillance, or collapsed time) invoking personal responsibility becomes a moral alibi for institutional failure. Attentional justice restores the conditions under which responsibility has meaning. Within those restored conditions, students are not passive recipients of care but co-practitioners of attentional care: they learn to request time, to protect one another's focus, and to resist distraction-enhancing affordances. Responsibility, in this account, is relational and reciprocal rather than a unilateral burden placed on individual students.

Objection 4: But isn't attentional justice impossible under data-extraction platform capitalism?

Reply: If impossible means "cannot be fully realised within current commercial architectures and funding regimes, then the objection is sound, but that is precisely why a critical vocabulary is needed. The point of attentional justice is not to promise a frictionless redesign of schooling, but to name the ways in which prevailing platform arrangements systematically undermine the very conditions that education presupposes. Crary and Han already show that 24/7 capitalism tends to abolish intervals and produce exhaustion (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015); Stiegler warns that attention becomes a target of industrial capture (Stiegler, 2010, 2014). In such a milieu, institutional actors have limited room to manoeuvre, but not none: they can negotiate procurement clauses that limit data extraction, adopt quiet affordances as selection criteria, revise assessment policies that reward constant visibility, and ally with teacher and student organisations to press for regulatory change. Attentional justice is therefore best read not as a utopian blueprint that ignores structural constraint, but as a critical standard by which partial advances, institutional compromises, and outright regressions can be named and contested.

Four theses

Thesis 1 (Phenomenological): Attention in education is a lived, intersubjective practice enacted through body, time, recognition, and technics (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Husserl, 1983; Gadamer, 2004).

Thesis 2 (Critical): Platform capitalism (and, more specifically, dominant EdTech business models organised around engagement maximisation and data extraction) tends to abolish intervals, instrumentalise visibility, and thin recognition (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015; Stiegler, 2014).

Thesis 3 (Ethical): Attentional care obliges temporal generosity and recognitive address; such obligations cannot be privatized to heroic teachers (Noddings, 2008; Weil, 1952; Tronto, 2020, 2013).

Thesis 4 (Political): Attentional justice names the public duty to secure infrastructural and temporal conditions for attentional care, including interval protections, surveillance limits, equitable access to connectivity and quiet, and governance of technics as pharmakon through concrete levers such as procurement standards, regulatory constraint on data extraction, and professional norms that privilege protected intervals over measurable activity (Stiegler, 2010, 2014).

The question, then, is not whether individual teachers can wrench moments of presence against the grain, many can, and do. It is whether schools, systems, regulators, and platform providers will accept that these duties run counter to some prevailing incentive structures, and nonetheless undertake to negotiate and enforce them. Only then does attentional care cease to be a scarce kindness and become a common right.

Conclusion

To conclude is risky when the phenomenon is attention. Conclusion suggests a terminal point; attention, as we have seen, is a way of beginning again of turning toward, slowing down, receiving. What we can responsibly do is name, with care, the contour of what has been disclosed and the burden that follows from it. First, the descriptive claim: attention in education is not an inner spotlight nor a quantifiable resource; it is a lived structure that appears as bodily tact, temporal generosity, and recognitive address within the ambivalent medium of technics (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Husserl, 1983; Gadamer, 2004; Stiegler, 2010, 2014). The platform classroom does not abolish these structures; it tests them. Presence thins into pixels and buffers; time stutters under acceleration; dialogue risks dissolving into streams. In such conditions, attentional care manifests wherever a teacher's embodied offering holds a learner in view without objectifying, wherever time is given back to thought against the tempo of the interface, wherever a hesitant voice is named and echoed until it can recognize itself (Weil, 1952; Noddings, 2008; Ricoeur, 1981). Second, the normative claim: these interpersonal acts of care presuppose minimally just conditions. If attention is always already exteriorized through

technics, it is always already vulnerable to capture. Crary names the regime that would abolish intervals altogether (Crary, 2013). Han describes the subject who, under such a regime, internalizes the demand to be always on (Han, 2015). Stiegler calls the whole arrangement pharmacological, simultaneously corrosive and curative (Stiegler, 2010, 2014). From this it follows that attentional care cannot be privatized as heroism. It requires institutional guardrails intervals protected in schedules and interfaces; surveillance limited by consent and purpose; equitable access to bandwidth, devices, and quiet; loads and boundaries within which pedagogy can breathe (Noddings, 2008; Tronto, 2020, 2013). and it also requires that these guardrails be pursued through concrete levers such as policy (for example, limits on proctoring and engagement scoring), procurement (contracts that demand "quiet affordances" and data-minimising architectures), participatory platform design, and collective action by educators and students who refuse to treat exhaustion as an acceptable price of schooling. We called the horizon that gathers these obligations *attentional justice*. Third, the epistemic claim: phenomenology has proven to be the right instrument for this work. It is not because description suffices, but because description disciplines. The epoché frees us, however briefly, from managerial reflexes; eidetic variation prevents us from mistaking accidents for essences; hermeneutic circulation keeps our scenes answerable to tradition and critique (Husserl, 1983; Giorgi, 2009; Gadamer, 2004). What emerges is not a toolkit, but a clarified field of sense in which ethical and political duties become thinkable without being reduced to metrics. What, then, can a conclusion promise? Not solutions that would be a betrayal of the very temporality we have defended. Instead, a set of disciplined recognitions:

1. Attention is an ethical act before it is a cognitive state. When a teacher leans toward the lens and slows a sentence, when a class inhabits a deliberate pause, when a student's tentative phrase is echoed back for assent, education is occurring in the deepest register—a gift of presence that Weil would call generosity (Weil, 1952), and Noddings would recognize as engrossed care (Noddings, 2008).
2. The pharmacology of technics is inescapable and decisive. The platform is not our enemy, nor our savior. It extends us and it exhausts us. To refuse nostalgia and refuse surrender at once (to design and demand counter-technics that shelter intervals and recognition) is the sober path Stiegler counsels (Stiegler, 2010, 2014). Crary and Han remind us why such shelter is necessary: because the default settings of our epoch are without rest and without mercy (Crary, 2013; Han, 2015). Avenues of resistance therefore include not only classroom-level tactics (shared silences, slowed pacing, camera-optional norms) but also institutional and political work: revising attendance and assessment policies that reward constant visibility, scrutinising platform contracts, and aligning with unions and student organisations that contest extractive digital infrastructures.
3. Justice is the form that care must take when scaled. We have named two minimal rights that crystallize the phenomenology: the right to protected intervals and the right to

recognitive address. Where these are systematically absent, talk of "student responsibility" becomes hollow responsibility presupposes possibility. Institutions that claim to educate must secure these conditions, or at least refrain from destroying them (Tronto, 2020, 2013). For many systems this will mean re-negotiating indicators of "quality" away from mere engagement counts, and accepting that some forms of good teaching will leave fewer digital traces.

4. The teacher's work remains irreducible. Even with guardrails, attentional care is artisanal: a posture, a cadence, a way of listening. Van Manen's tact is not a protocol; it is a cultivated sensibility (van Manen, 1990, 2014). Gadamer would say that understanding "happens" rather than being produced (Gadamer, 2004). No interface can automate this happening; no dashboard can detect its dignity.

There is a temptation to end with prescriptive lists. We have resisted that temptation for methodological and ethical reasons. Methodologically, prescription outruns the evidence of lived description; ethically, it obscures the politics that make prescription ring hollow where conditions are unjust. Yet refusal of prescription does not entail quietism. The analyses offered here point toward trajectories of change: policy frameworks that treat intervals and non-surveilled presence as educational goods; procurement alliances that give institutions leverage over platform design; collaborations between teachers, students, and designers to embed "interval-first" features; and cross-institutional movements that contest attention-mining as incompatible with public education. Instead, we offer a criterion, simple to state and demanding in practice: an educational arrangement (a class, a schedule, a platform) is adequate to human learning to the extent that a learner can truthfully say, *I was held; I was given time; I was recognized.* Where any one of these is absent (where the body is reduced to an icon, where the tempo forbids thinking, where speech is reduced to display) attention collapses into extraction and schooling becomes the management of users. A word, finally, about hope. Hope here is not optimism; it is the kind of patience Weil calls "waiting in expectation," a cultivated readiness that does not grasp (Weil, 1952). It looks like a minute of shared silence that does not panic; like a refusal to let dashboards dictate dialogue; like a procurement decision that favors "quiet affordances" over sticky engagement; like a schedule with breathing room; like a labor policy that honors the human limits within which care can occur. In bell hooks' terms, it looks like a classroom configured as a community of care and critical presence rather than a theater of extraction (hooks, 2014). It also looks like small but cumulative acts of institutional and political reconfiguration: a faculty senate motion against invasive proctoring, a ministry guideline that recognises protected intervals, a consortium that insists on data-sparing platforms. If conclusion must have a sentence that carries forward, let it be this: to attend, here and now, is to enact a small justice. It is to give time back to thought, and thought back to relation. It is to insist that even under platform conditions, education remains a practice of

freedom, not because freedom is downloaded, but because, for a breath's length, we hold one another in view at a livable tempo, and meaning arrives.

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