

Absence and Loss of Connection to the World and the Other as transformative potential

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In the current climate, where we identify, at least in part, with our digital self, we lose the matter-of-course connection with our surrounding world. This drifting away can bring about a sense of loss that is felt throughout our post-modern society. Perhaps now, more than ever, when at times 'the way out' eludes us. We can trace the starting point of this alienation to the beginning of industrial age with the romantic and poetic reactions to industrialisation. We now find ourselves in a time of acceleration of this estrangement, where even our bodily existence can be regarded conceptually. I will argue that this sense of loss needs to be felt, in order to open our eyes to the potential connections with the world that are part of our embodied existence. The pain of the absence of connection can open our eyes to what it means to be human, to accept our inherent vulnerability.

In conversation with Hartmut Rosa, Otto Scharmer, Gert Biesta, Rudolf Steiner, T.S Elliot and others, as well as drawing on my own empirical research on deep-listening, I will put forward the idea that we can be awakening to transformed forms of social and emotional intelligence, when we can muster the self-awareness necessary to sense our loss. The thinkers mentioned above provide me with a theoretical and poetic framework, where my own research on deep listening in Waldorf education also gives me a very practical starting point from which to unpack and portray the forms of consciousness and the skills that I found in the conversations I for this research project. These often centred around bodily awareness, ways to (re)connect with their inner world, and strategies to arrive in the present moment.

As teacher trainers we can try to embody these newfound values and skills and weave them into our curriculum and into our way of being in the world. And perhaps, even more importantly, recognise them in our students and nurture them.

My goal in this paper is shed light on some aspects of what reawakening to our bodily intelligence might look like in the 21st century, with a special focus on perception of, and connection with the other person in our colleagues, students and the children in our (student's) classroom.