

Developing emotional and social intelligence in Teacher Education: didactics of mortality

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In the presentation I offer I would like to speak about my work within the minor *Being human in the world* (also: *minor anthroposophy*) that I organize at the University of Applied Science in Leiden. This minor is part of the Waldorf Teacher Training Institute (Vrije School Pabo) but it is open to all students in higher education. In this minor we are teaching, researching and experimenting the question: how to be human in the world? One of the premises of the minor is that one needs some kind of artistry to be human in the world¹. Another premise is that the world is a social realm. The third and following premise is that this social realm needs artistry to continue to be². And the fourth premise would be that the source/origin from which this coming into being takes place, is the strive for freedom in the human soul³. Gert Biesta describes the strive for freedom as a longing towards *Erwachsenheit*. According to Biesta education is to urge others, including oneself, to long for 'being in the world'⁴. The endeavor of the minor is to find educational forms to enhance this courage for 'being in the world'. What kind of curriculum enhances the social and emotional intelligence we need to stay present in the world and in relation to others? In 2024 I have worked with Lotte van den Berg, a social artist, to develop a class called 'gestaltungsfähigkeit': the ability to create forms that have a presence in the world. This class has been a beginning of something I hope to explore further in the following years. In my presentation I would like to explain the practical organization of this class, and to explore our experiences with it. One of the things we experienced was how the coming into being of personal beginnings revealed and created social reality between those beginnings. Lotte and me plan to continue our research in the following years. We think our 'didactics of mortality'⁵ is worthwhile to develop. In order to continue the coming into being of the world, we need to practice our ability to stay with the trouble and deal with mortality. Freedom, artistry, ecology⁶ and mortality are closely intertwined.

¹ We follow Aristotle's concept of art: *All art is concerned with coming into being, i.e. with contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being and not being and of which the first principle is in the maker and not in what is made.*

² Hannah Arendt: *"The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and separate them. The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic séance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible."*

³ Hannah Arendt: *"Beginning, before it becomes a historical event, is the highest possibility of the human being. Politically speaking it is identical with the freedom of the human being"*. (Ideology and totalitarianism 480-482)

⁴ This longing exceeds the fear of being in the world, the desire for 'safety' that takes two forms: self-destruction or world- destruction. This might be called binary intelligence: either the one, or the other. Not the ambivalence and paradox of emotional and social intelligence, the self and the other being different aspects of a collective presence.

⁵ An important inspiration is Christine Gruwez' concept of 'verleztlichkeit'. Instead of 'verleztlichkeit' Lotte and me are trying the word 'mortality'.

⁶ Timothy Morton: *All art is ecological.*