

## Active listening

Act of listening. Listening to act upon.

Listening is not solely hearing. Furthermore it involves observing the situation, being attentive, receiving the spoken, interpreting the received, embracing empathy, understanding the message by integrating it in your own frame of references, evaluating it and resolving it by a chosen response. It is evenly important to consider the space the conversation takes place in, the atmosphere that is created and to recognise who "the other" is that you are listening to. The other does not always have to be a person or a single participant. It can be a non human or a collective. Deeply listening to a conversation in words that humans created is often already difficult enough. Listening to someone that is speaking a different language than you is even more complicated. What about listening to a language that is not in my understanding of language or which I do not perceive as a language? Do I listen to languages that I don't know? To the unheard and overheard?

What if it would be 'nature' that I would try to listen to?

There directly an obstacle presents itself:

How can I listen to nature when I only learned to understand in words that humans created?

How can I understand nature without knowing how to listen to it?

And can I listen to nature when I see myself apart from it?

In the Western world, we tend to see nature as an external concept, not belonging to us, while as homosapiens, we are actually part of that same nature. This also manifests itself in many western languages. Being able to talk about nature is already a colonial dynamic of dominating it.

So why do humans<sup>1</sup> tend to take advantage of those that can not speak in our understanding of language? Hereby included are animals and plants and in general, the ecosystem around us that humans often take for granted.<sup>2</sup>

'We' don't let the environment around us speak to us, 'we' shut it up by suppressing it.

Aldo Leopold, a philosopher, scientist, ecologist, forester, and environmentalist, mentioned in one of his works<sup>3</sup>, a quote which I find very inspiring: "Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. (...) We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect" (Leopold, 1989)

Similarities are to be found in the field of ecopsychology<sup>4</sup>. It is the interconnection between ecology and psychology and how our well being depends on the wellbeing of our natural environment.

Theodore Roszak mentions in his book: "The Earth's cry for rescue from the punishing weight of the industrial system we have created is our own cry for a scale and quality of life that will free each of us to become the complete person we were born to be."

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<sup>1</sup> when talking about 'humans', I am not trying to generalize and include everyone in this definition, but the overall idea of how some are destroying the planet and live in disconnection to the natural environment

<sup>2</sup> As such, Taylor opposes the since-dominant anthropocentric perspective by asking "in what sense are human alleged to be superior to other animals? We are different from them in having certain capacities that they lack. But why should these capacities be a mark of superiority?" (Taylor, 1981, p. 211).

<sup>3</sup> A sand county Almanac by Aldo Leopold 1949

<sup>4</sup> Ecopsychology connects psychology and ecology in a new scientific paradigm. The political and practical implications are to show humans ways of healing alienation and to build a sane society and a sustainable culture. Theodore Roszak is credited with coining the term in his 1995 anthology, Ecopsychology, which he co-edited with Mary Gomes and Allen Kanner.

So is there a way to not see myself apart but as a part of nature?

This question can linger in all of us, can be evaluated and reflected upon. I am suggesting to start listening to nature or let me rather formulate it as the natural environment<sup>5</sup> and start figuring out a way to go against the normative paradigms<sup>6</sup> of the concept of nature being separate of you.

I am using the method of a guided meditation on listening, to reflect upon the above stated questions. To open up your mind for the interconnection of a holistic worldview<sup>7</sup>.

Listening to build a relationship, ensure understanding, resolve conflicts, and improve accuracy.

Listening by giving free and undivided attention to the speaker.

Listening by having an open mind and open heart.

Listening actively.

Active listening.

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<sup>5</sup> 'natural environment' refer in this text to: "all the animals, plants, rocks, etc. in the world and all the features, forces, and processes that happen or exist independently of people, such as the weather, the sea, mountains, the production of young animals or plants, and growth" - Cambridge dictionary.

<sup>6</sup> A paradigm is a standard, perspective, or set of ideas. A paradigm is a way of looking at something. The word paradigm comes up a lot in the academic, scientific, and business worlds. ... When you change paradigms, you're changing how you think about something.

<sup>7</sup> "A holistic worldview is a profound respect for the diversity of life, of cultures, of species, and a profound understanding of their subtle but vital interconnections. A holistic worldview sees the earth as a whole, and perhaps in some sense living, entity — Gaia" (p. 391).

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