

Being within Sensing: Adult Meditative Thought

— Anne-Marie Fryer-Wiboltt

From an ordinary, everyday perspective, sensing the world means being present to the world through our various senses and sense organs. The world seems to be “in front” and appears separate from us. “Over there” is the lovely, round, green cabbage that I am about to pick for making sauerkraut. I see it a few feet away. I recognize it; it is already known to me. It is a green cabbage that I can smell, taste and touch. My attention, formed by the senses, reaches out to perceive the beautiful world of nature. Such is our usual perception of the world. We see “things out there,” and they are isolated from us.

There is another aspect of our being we can call “the embodied awakened self” or “embodied awakened I,” through which we experience this world of things, plants and people entirely differently. Through meditative and contemplative practices—within a mode of complete stillness attending with conscious focus—the embodied, awakened I reveals itself as intimately united with the creative presences and forces of the earth and cosmos, with the unfolding of all life. From within this holy bodily presence, we discover that sensing is not really inside us as we are so accustomed to think. We are within sensing! This intimate experience of being within sensing, as experiencing what another person is sensing, is sometimes named empathy. And this is very much how a very young child unconsciously experiences the world.

Before and during the time the child is learning to speak, sensing is experienced as wholeness, wholeness of “light.” The attention of a young child is all receptivity, all “listening,” entirely sensing. The young child is experiencing herself within sensing as a kind of “field of senses” or “field of light” in which all the senses are together. When a child sees her mother, she sees not the details but the light from within; and

she smiles. The smile is a gesture of joy. She is joy itself. This is before later development in the child when this “sense field” is differentiated into distinct senses: hearing, touch, smell, etc. To experience, for example, a specific color while disregarding all other qualities requires selectivity in attention and repeated experience of doing so. It is generally known that this selective sensing happens quite late in the life of the child.

As the sensory development matures, the child gradually isolates himself from the “light” and becomes a citizen of the world of “things.” He becomes attentive to the separate sense impressions in the world, feeling as if he is “here” and everything else is “over there.” Later in his life, as an adult, he may freely decide to take up the necessary inner development to again intimately, and now consciously, experience sensing as united into whole presences. He can strive to sense again within holy wholeness, with the “light” of the world. ♦

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Resources:

- *Ciborski, Sara, “We Are Our Attention: Motifs and Themes from the Spiritual Psychology of Georg Kühlewind,”* <http://www.anthromed.org/Article.aspx?artpk=238>, visited September 20, 2016 (Baltimore: The Physicians’ Association for Anthroposophical Medicine, 2009).
- *Fryer-Wiboltt, Anne-Marie, Cooking for the Love of the World* (Great Barrington: Steiner Books, 2008).
- *Sardello, Robert, Love and the World* (Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Books, 2001).