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Listening as Healing by Pauline Oliveros

Listening is a multi-dimensional dynamic process. Ways of listening are many fold. These ways of listening are based on experience, habit and training.

Two principle ways of listening are,

- 1) Active listening which involves interpretation, participation or meeting the stimulus with sensual, emotional, intellectual or intuitive energy.
- 2) Receptive listening which involves recording the stimulus in memory. Through one may experience the two principle ways of listening numerous times everyday, force of habit or special training may control and/or limit how one listens.

Sitting by the river on a clear, warm morning, I notice that my attention is drawn to the sound of the constantly fluctuating flow of the water over the rocks. I extend my attention to a particular rock listening intently to the way the water keeps smacking it and bubbling on.

Vibration wraps around me like a blanket. I open my attention to the whole sound of the river and expand to take in all that I can hear; water, birds, insects, humming, whistling and bubbling. I feel my body easing and my mind clearing. I listen to the manifesting stillness in me, as I become attuned to the whole sphere of sound.

Focusing, I pick a sound and follow it until it disappears, then expanding, I return to the field of sound. I pick another sound to follow through the whole web of pulsing vibrations. I listen to my sound vanish into the field of sounds. I sense this rhythm of expansion and contraction.

As I continue to listen, my mind twitches analytically. What is important about that particular sound? Where did it come from? Where is it going? What are its major characteristics? Then I again receive the whole field of sound: water rushing-mind still-mild breezes, rustling leaves. Sound soaking deeply into my memory banks for future examination and pleasure.

I begin playing mentally with the river, imagining counterpoints and harmonies, melodies and rhythms - opposing sounds. I hear the river rushing in a caterwauling waterfall off the Empire State building down to Wall Street, drowning the sounds of machinery and I see people peacefully floating away.

Relaxing again, I open more fully my mental space stretched by my imagination and play. A feeling of well-being rises in me as my ears follow the streaming river.

I realize that any sound can be a cue for the energy one needs. If I need to relax, I can let any sound be a cue to raise my energy. In this way, listening is healing.

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