

Title	<i>Attentionality with Closed Eyes</i>
Conversationalist	Tine Bernstorff Aagaard
Conversation number	II
Date	June 2021
Place	Nørrebroparken, Copenhagen. Outside in the sun, mid afternoon.
Time of recording	45:55 minutes
Context	The conversation was initiated in relation to the interdisciplinary TRAVERS program and camp 3 at Copenhagen Contemporary. http://travers.world/
Note for conversation	For most of the conversation we sat in the grass with our eyes closed. We happened to talk around 15 minutes before the recording were started.

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- **Lukas Quist Lund:** [

] what is your understanding and sort of interest in the term of attentionality? And how can we work with this in the field around interdisciplinarity?

Tine Bernstorff Aagaard: [] or transdisciplinarity. []

- []

No, it's just because everything is so separate, right? We just spoke about, keeping to each your own path or your own group or what's known to you. I don't know, like defining ourselves through the differences in a way. [

] This is something a little bit else, [

] What is registered is the edge, the contrast, right? [

] it just came to me because we talked about black and white or the commingling and not being afraid of hitting ourselves and stumbling upon each other in the interaction. So, attentionality, I have a sense that... So, now I'm closing my eyes and I guess it's because of the listening, both with the ears but also just turning off the eyes, turning off the eyes, the gaze that for me is connected to the intentionality and the future, the thinking of what could be in the future. The listening has an in-depth, an here and now. If you hand me something, I don't know what it is before it's in my hands, but if I open my eyes, I have an idea of what's coming. So, there's a kind of a present or like a tuning in. Awakened from just closing my eyes. Like when my eyes were open, I didn't hear the lawn... whatever, the machine that is cutting the lawn or whatever it is. So, I guess turning off in a way the intentionality or the ideas of even thinking what there's going to be... I have to do other things today or in an hour... It's also gone... The lawn that I'm sitting on is a little... I don't know if it's moist or just cold. The photosynthesis is one of the... residual products, excess products of that is coolness. That's really interesting. It's kind of like getting a little damp or

off in any way. But I wonder, what does that do to the intentions that I'm sort of always in the mingle with in the entanglements between all these senses and the knowing and the unknowing?

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- No, [

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[] I think intentionality is connected to the ego. And the ego is really good at, you know, planning a bus trip or checking your taxes or sending birthday invitation cards. These are really hard if we don't have an ego. But the ego is not really good at doing meditation, for instance, meditating upon something. So I think it's great if the ego can have intentions of organizing this meeting. And then it, the ego, can rest, like a little dog or something, it can just lay by our side, happy to be with us, and having like the tongue hanging out, hyperventilating and closing its eyes. Then we can just take a rest, right? [

] Then there's space for something else.

- Perhaps it's like, I don't know, being blind and having a dog to guide you. Because I feel my ego is in some way resting right now, like the exercise of still having closed my eyes sort of makes me move closer to you and into the conversation in some way. And it's hard to explain, because I'm in that closed eyes state. Because now I only have the conversation that sort of binds my ego to something. Something my ego can rest next to. [

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[

] And I often get super eager and want to say something. And I just learned that if I relax in my stomach and take deep breaths, that intention of delivering or sharing something disappears and I even forget what it is that I wanted to say. And then I listen again. So it's like [breathes heavily], and I can feel it physically. I think if I'm aware of my belly, I can also feel how much I'm listening. [

] And then there's... do you know the sense of this... like the space, when you say the conversation holds the space, but then there's a pause in the conversation and the space is still there?

- [] I think sometimes the conversation is mostly made up of the pauses. Like what you don't say. The words between words or the spaces between the words is the most present part of the conversation.

[

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- But I wonder, like for example now, when you stop talking, and I start talking... Do we do it because it's the word that we say that we're interested in? Or do we do it because by having words, then we also have all the pauses? [

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I think it's definitely like a construction around it that we very kindly care for, which is like an idea to hold the space. [

] I don't dare to really just let go, because I can be afraid that the space that the conversation holds also disappears. So perhaps I can, I'm just thinking that by just talking about it, we can kind of bring attention to that presence where the space feels almost physical, as a substance that we are submerged in, that surrounds us, but without it having to be held by the conversation.

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I feel the same, that my head is floating and I feel the grass, but I don't feel my body. [

] I would probably ask

myself how much in my body I am. And I would pay attention to my body. And then I also just realized that [

] where and what is present? Like what is, where is attention, like where, what's awoken or what's present? And perhaps I'm interested in where we come from or what we lean into when we lean into space together. And I think in order to even... I'm also thinking now how do I sense our shared space, not just a sound, but I'm thinking like even like you - perhaps I can listen more to the bodies and our physical presence, not just like the voice [

] it gets

heavier. [

] So leaning backwards, giving in, like falling backwards into something else that holds. Something that is not Tine, but it's like something deeper or... [

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- [

] And maybe I stopped knowing that I was actually looking. Maybe I just fell asleep. But I have the same sense of the stars. I have the same sense of like moving towards or falling away. And all these many, many different positions, some of them in the dream world, some of them in the real world, some of them in between. [

There was a tension that sort of called upon me. [

What did you sense that like? Or how did you experience that? What if you go into that experience now, trying to explore it? Can you do that?

- I was in it before and then I went back to you to talk about it.

That movement is really interesting. [

] when you explore, there is attentionality, right? You don't know what you're going to say, because you're right at it, like walking forwards with your eyes closed or backwards and like feeling what's there. You don't know. Rather, walking with intentionality, it's to tell something you already know. [

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] And I try to pay

attention to whether I am saying something I already knew, like playing a record... I do that most of the time, right? But if I have a conversation, I try to explore with attentionality to the space. And it is a practice, where you together have to agree on going there, because it very easily gets eager and intense.

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- But then also, what is the conversation? Because for me, the conversation is no longer an activity that I can perform or that we can perform, but it's more something that we can become. Be something that sort of takes us in. Like the conversation is a space or maybe just like, I don't know really, but it's something that is like out of, my or our, control. [

] It's more like I have to be in a state where

I'm allowed to come in or where I allow myself to go out, but I cannot go there with a map or something. I don't know.

[

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Whenever I feel like I'm holding my breath because of something I want to say, I breathe and let it go. So there's like leaving all the good intentions of wanting to share things in words and just saying, what if we can share a space?

- [

] you have to use the maps that are honest about their unknownness, sharing all the things that they don't know in some way. Maps that are honest about you can get lost here. [

]

[

] I don't know. I don't know. So perhaps not a map, but there's something about finding your way. I don't know.

- [

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I like the osmosis of having the sense of things fluctuating like through membranes and kind of like being swallowed by the universe. There's a becoming one with it all or just disappearing in a sense. I'm very into that. Like that complete expansion. [

] but I go with that, the ego is there when I need it, right? I know which mouth to put water in when the body is thirsty. It's not like, 'so I don't know where I'm connected to'. In the physical world, that's through this body. I am this body, right?

- [

] we are also some specific relations. We are not all relations, we are something, and we don't know what that specific is, but we are not it all at once, we are part of it all in a very specific and perhaps unique way.

We live through that specificity [

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[

] And perhaps we sway a little like seaweed. What if it's actually okay... this huge sense of absoluteness... including extinction of species, planetary crisis and human race crisis and all species crisis and all that enormous loss and despair. And if we just really let it all be there, without feeling it, but just breathing and sitting through it in a way. What then happens? How do we then go from there? I just wonder if that will change something in the way we continue forward.

- [

] But at the same time... what is taking good care of your body? And how is this discomfort perhaps something that can also drive something forward in a positive sense? Can tribute with something of knowledge, or just anything? I don't know. [

] But maybe also just stay with it. And now I just wonder in a larger sense, what is the discomfort of having our eyes closed and having a conversation where we do this, with the ego, because my ego is also hurt. And how is the whole discomfort connected with intentionality?

[

] And I would encourage you to allow your ego to be hurt. [

]

- [

] That, oh, I

have never considered this, and the consideration of it does have some meaning. It offers something new.

That's attentionality, like paying attention. And something else came. And then when it comes, whatever comes, that's the next part. So when you open and that the space helps, right? Because when space expands, you can expand. So in this expansive space, things dare to peep out and then whatever comes, meet it with softness without judging it, either in positive or negative. Just, notice it and allow it to be there. And if then something else comes, like a discomfort with that being there, then care for the discomfort. It's also allowed to be there. See if it can be okay that it's there and that can come emotion and that can come things. And it's also okay and then you can go back to breathing and allowing it to come through but not go in it. Just let it be there in the space, caring for it and it's going to take care of itself. And that's really the work. [

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Yeah, I think that's a brilliant shortcut.

- Do you think that grass has attentionality as well?

I think we could spend some time with grass and ask it.

- [] on the very premise of the human, which is of course because we are humans. But I just wonder, how about everything else? [

]

I've been exploring for, I don't know, like 10 years not shaving my legs. Kind of just to embrace. That's what I thought of when you mentioned the lawn, because this is a very, like the intention of this lawn, intention, it's plant and it's made and it's cut and it's...

- And it's only grass.

It's only grass.

- It's like a desert for one plant.

Yeah, so for me it's hard to really connect with anything to do with 'nature'. I know that it is biology, but the intention from the human is very present for me.

- It's cultivated.

Yeah, so then I thought of my legs and the cultivation of my legs and just embracing what is there and what is natural is such a loaded word in that sense, but what is... I don't know, intentionality of my biology [

] What was the question again?

- I'm not sure. Or maybe there was no question.

[

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I have a sense that the tuning in and the slowness for me really connects with the slowness of plants' movement and growth. So there's like a leaning into that or like I feel like I connect, by letting go of the intentions to attentionality. Perhaps plants are just attentionality because it's where they can grow? Where can it not? How much water is there? It's just completely in tune with the conditions.

- [

] So I'm still just stretching towards something and I'm open to everything that I'm going to meet in this relation and practice of relating. That could be at least a mere way of understanding attention.

Yeah, kind of becoming a plant in a way.

- Or just becoming in general. Becoming nature.

Or reemerging. [

] As I go through all of those layers and things, ropes and metal plates and stacked rocks and sticky tar and animals and all the things that live in this structure in a way. And seeing it, the curiosity, it's, ah, without judging, this is, ah, I wonder what this is hiding, what this is blocking out. So I'm really caring, even the sense of the matters, the materials and their agency, their way of performing this blocking. [

]

- How does that feel? Like how does that feel for us right now? How do we feel right now?

[

] It's perhaps more states or vibrations or energy flowing, different kinds of qualities of energy.

- I feel warm. I feel somebody is holding me or looking at me or just anything. And maybe it's just, as you said, the energy, like something flows. But I think warmth is a feeling that I have. But as a we.

Yeah, it's a quality, right? You can name it, but it's not a feeling.

- [] but what I really mean is that because it's a 'we', to feel this coming together, the merging. And that is the warmth.

And it's hard to name it, right? Like who senses or how you can say there is warmth, perhaps? Because I and we are even a little odd.

- It's very odd. And in some ways it's still meaningful. I feel like I can say things that I mean and want to share, but at the same time the oddness is like a part of it. I want to share the oddness.

[]

- And maybe it's okay with you. I'll open my eyes.

[] do it at your own pace. We can just take our time to do that. And if it's too quick, you can just close them again. And don't look at me, just look at something else. Like I'm not going to look at you either, because it's intense in a way. Just look at something soft. It's good to give it a little time to land back in.

[opening eyes]

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[] and even the trees are really pleasant. It's wild with so many leaves just in one tree. It's completely overwhelming in a way.

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- I will turn the recorder off.