



You Cannot Capture Silence, It Captures You, by Richard Rohr

For me, the two correctives of all spirituality are silence and service. If either of those is missing, it is not true, healthy spirituality. Without silence, we do not really experience our experiences. We may serve others and have many experiences, but without silence, nothing has the power to change us, to awaken us, to give us that joy that the world cannot give, as Jesus says. And without clear acts of free service (needing no payback of any sort, even “heaven”), a person’s spiritual authenticity can and should be called into question. Divine Love always needs to and must overflow!

To live in this primordial, foundational being itself, which I am calling silence, creates a kind of sympathetic resonance with what is right in front of us. Without it, we just react instead of respond. Without some degree of silence, we are never living, never tasting, as there is not much capacity to enjoy, appreciate, or taste the moment as it purely is. The opposite of contemplation is not action, it is reaction. We must wait for pure action, which always proceeds from a contemplative silence in which we are able to listen anew to truth and to what is really happening. Such spiritual silence demands a deep presence to oneself in the moment, which will probably have the same practical effect as presence to God.

You do not hear silence (precisely!), but it is that by which you do hear. You cannot capture silence. It captures you. Silence is a kind of thinking that is not thinking. It’s a kind of thinking which mostly sees(contemplata). Silence, then, is an alternative consciousness. It is a form of intelligence, a form of knowing beyond bodily reacting or emotion. It is a form of knowing beyond mental analysis, which is what we usually call thinking. All of the great world religions at the higher levels (mystical) discovered that our tyrannical mode of everyday thinking (which is largely compulsive, brain-driven, and based on early patterning and conditioning) has to be relativized and limited, or it takes over, to the loss of our primal being and identity in ourselves. I used to think that mysticism was the eventual fruit of years of contemplation; now I think it all begins with one clear moment of mystic consciousness, which then becomes the constant “spring inside us, welling up unto eternal life”.