



Unconditioned Stillness, by Rick Hanson

Stillness, a sense of the unchanging, is all around.

For example, it's not the ultimate stillness, but there is that lovely feeling when the house is quiet and you're sitting in peace, the dishes are done and the kids are fine (or the equivalent), and you can really let down and let go. In your character, you have enduring strengths and virtues and values; situations change, but your good intentions persist. In relationships, love abides -- even for people who drive you crazy!

More subtly, there is the moment at the very top of a tossed ball's trajectory when it's neither rising nor falling, the pause before the first stroke of the brush, that space between exhalation and inhalation, the silence in which sounds occur, or the discernible gap between thoughts when your mind is quiet.

In your mind there is always an underlying calm and well-being that contains emotional reactions, like a riverbed that is still even as the flood rushes over it. There is also the unchanging field of awareness, itself never altered by the thoughts passing through it.

More abstractly, $2+2=4$ forever; the area of a circle will always be pi times the radius squared; etc. The fact that something has occurred will never change. The people who have loved you will always have loved you; they will always have found you lovable. Whatever is fundamentally true -- including, ironically, the truth of impermanence -- has an unchanging stillness at its heart. Things change, but the nature of things -- emergent, interdependent, transient -- does not.

Moving toward ultimate matters, and where language fails, you may have a sense of something unchangingly transcendental, divine. Or, perhaps related, an intuition of that which is unconditioned always just prior to the emergence of conditioned phenomena.

Wherever you find it, enjoy stillness and let it feed you. It's a relief from the noise and bustle, a source of clarity and peace. Give yourself the space, the permission, to be still -- at least in your mind -- amidst those who are busy.

To use a traditional saying: May that which is still be that in which your mind delights.