

## The Opposite of Meditation is Not Action It's Reaction

by Richard Rohr

It seems like our society is at a low point in terms of how we talk about challenging, controversial topics within our political discourse and even our spiritual reflections. I believe the only way through this polarization is a re-appreciation for silence.

Silence has a life of its own. It is not just that which is around words and underneath images and events. It is a being in itself to which we can relate and become intimately familiar. Philosophically, we would say being is that foundational quality which precedes all other attributes. Silence is at the very foundation of all reality—naked being, if you will. Pure being is that out of which all else comes and to which all things return. Or as I like to say, Reality is the closest ally of God.

When we connect with silence as a living, primordial presence, we can then see all other things—and experience them deeply—inside that container. Silence is not just an absence, but a primal presence. Silence surrounds every “I know” with a humble and patient “I don’t know.” It protects the autonomy and dignity of events, persons, animals, and all created things.

To be clear, the kind of silence I’m describing does not ignore injustice. As Barbara Holmes explains: “Some of us allow [silence] to fully envelop and nurture our seeking; others who have been silenced by oppression seek to voice the joy of spiritual reunion in an evocative counterpoint. As frightening as it may be to “center down,” we must find the stillness at the core of the shout, the pause in the middle of the “amen,” as first steps toward restoration.”

We must find a way to return to this place, live in this place, abide in this place of inner silence. Outer silence means very little if there is not a deeper inner silence. Everything else appears much clearer when it appears or emerges out of silence.

Without silence, we do not really experience our experiences. We are here, but not in the depth of here. We have many experiences, but they do not have the power to change us, awaken us, or give us the joy and peace that the world cannot give, as Jesus says (John 14:27).

Without some degree of inner and even outer silence, we are never living, never tasting the moment. The opposite of contemplation is not action, it is reaction. We must wait for pure action, which proceeds from deep silence.

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