

# The Authority of Quiet

**Bill Isaacs:** Let us be present together in this moment of quietness, to listen to the world around us, the world within us, the larger dimensions of Being that are always present.

There is a great deal of noise in the world. I was struck by this realization this summer when my family and I spent a few weeks on an Island 30 miles out to sea, off the coast of Massachusetts. We stayed in a place where you could constantly see the open sea, the sky, the wide landscape, and in the evenings, dazzling and richly textured sunsets. The Milky Way gleamed vividly luminous at night. And most strikingly, it was very quiet. There is a vastness and an openness to this place. I realized how nourishing that is, how sensual, and how easily that experience can be lost in the press of busy experience.

We came back home to Boston and I tried the same experiment that I had conducted every morning while I was there, to sit out on our porch, looking out at the sea. Sitting out on our deck at home, I realized just how much louder and how much noisier it is here: a constant buzz of activity. I had never really noticed it.

Over the past several months, a group of scientists around the world observed that the reduction of activity due to the pandemic caused a quietening of the global level of human activity. They measured these changes and recently published their results in the preeminent journal *Science*. They had this to say:

“Human activity causes vibrations that propagate into the ground as high-frequency, seismic waves. Measures to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread changes in human activity, leading to a months-long reduction in seismic noise of up to 50%. The 2020 seismic noise quiet period is the longest and most prominent global anthropogenic seismic noise reduction on record. While the reduction is strongest at surface seismometers in populated areas, this seismic quiescence extends for many kilometers radially and hundreds of meters in depth.”  
[Science 23 Jul 2020](#)

We all globally took a pause. And the earth felt it. I think this points to the impact we have, at the level of audible sound, which clearly penetrates human social experience but extends beyond that, to the earth itself. This is a symbol of the kind of impact we have at

other levels, one that penetrates far beyond what we can see. Collective human effort has consequences.

This past Friday, August 28th, 2020, was the 57th anniversary of another kind of collective presence, the March on Washington, the famous event culminating at the Lincoln Memorial where Martin Luther King made his landmark “I have a dream” speech. We can see its particular significance in that moment today, as there is again a rising up of awareness of the need for a dramatic shift in the way people of color are treated here. People are bringing to the surface a wound unhealed since the founding of the country. At a deeper level, we might also see that all of this is evidence of a larger process of purification underway, one that is at work cyclically, both personally and also collectively.

To handle these factors effectively, one must bring presence, quietness. Then you may notice what is happening and do what is needed in the moment. King apparently had not planned to speak about a dream in his speech that day. I've heard from colleagues and friends, including one who was present and sitting very close to the stage, that the energy changed dramatically during King's delivery, and out came the words: “I still have a dream. I have a dream.” Apparently Mahalia Jackson was standing right behind him, whispering, urging him, “Tell them about your dream, Martin.” King began to improvise and brought out a deeper current. Interestingly, he then immediately placed it in the larger context of the American dream: “It's a dream deeply rooted in the American dream,” he said, which was itself a vision of equality among all human beings. King's vision was more transcendent than I think is sometimes noticed. King listened and brought out the words that were needed in that moment. This is, of course, always our opportunity, to listen for what is moving and to give it voice. That is because inherent in all of us is the facility to do this. It is a capability that is often not well formed in human beings, or one not trusted, but nevertheless available to be developed.

Evident now in our world is that there are many people endeavoring to bring their dream, what they are hearing, into the world. This is happening despite lots of noise on the surface, and is moving quite powerfully. It is worth thinking about this wider emergence and how you and I are encompassing this, participating in it, accelerating its movement. The vision that there might one day be many people distributed through the world, who are coming to the place of spiritual maturity, was once referred to as the “greater works.” This

refers to the expansion of the expression of Being in and through human consciousness, not theoretically, not believed, but actually experienced.

These changes in consciousness are simultaneously also bringing up many factors that are quite messy and complex. It is useful to consider one's attitude towards the various patterns that are appearing, whether in or beyond oneself. Real maturity goes beyond merely holding steady in the face of all this, of being unmoved, while disturbances arise. Maturity has more to do with listening for the more subtle levels of what could or should unfold in *my* consciousness, relative to the myriad of factors that are moving. The giant pause button of the global pandemic has forced a diminished level of external activity on the surface of the earth, which has had the added blessing of reducing the level of busyness in consciousness so that we might more easily perceive what is seeking to emerge internally.

What we may observe as we become quieter is that everything that is emerging through all the systems of the earth is intricately synchronized. This coordination operates at every level, and it certainly includes human beings. The patterns that flow through the human body also pulsate in the earth. We are rhythmically and intimately linked. We breathe, for instance, at the same pace that waves arrive at the beach, about twelve times a minute. We are part of the rhythmic whole and moved by it. And yet these linkages do not seem to be so easy to perceive when it comes to how we live our lives. People go questing around here and there to try and figure out what to do, how to contribute, how to survive. Instead of feeling part of a synchronized flow, we experience fragmentation in our thinking and acting.

This confusion can also be observed in how we may relate to the energy of awakening in people. Everyone in fact is being moved by the same underlying factors and the same current—creatively to the degree that they are aligning themselves with it, whether that is obvious to them or not. This is the route towards the restoration of the experience of oneness. But I sometimes feel that we don't always see it that way. We have tribal distinctions among us, clannish judgments, for instance about who is playing a more important role, and who isn't. We know something about how judgement distorts perception and limits vision.

At night, watching the open sky, we see the gradual emergence of individual lights in the heavens, which may seem at first unrelated, but ultimately appear as constellations—

patterns among the stars. So it is with us. In the invisible and undimensional ranges there are myriad patterns of coordination. Even if we cannot initially consciously perceive the patterns of synchronization—our intellects are hopelessly ill-equipped to do that—we may nevertheless realize that we are part of this wider synchronization, which is working towards a very specific end, namely, the continued strengthening of each person's differentiated expression, in coordination with everyone and everything else. There is so much conditioning and density in consciousness that it takes a steady hand and a continuous pattern of compassion to unveil internal quietness.

What becomes clear in our movement into these finer ranges is the potency of quietness. In silence, as we are present and not trying to achieve anything. Letting the quiet power of our own being do the work, a great deal gets done. There is action beyond the level of human language and concept. These ranges deserve more space and more attention from us.

In the silence, you can listen. The Indian philosopher Krishnamurti had something powerful to say about listening:

I do not know if you have ever examined how you listen, it doesn't matter to what, whether to a bird, to the wind in the leaves, to the rushing waters, or how you listen in a dialogue with yourself, to your conversation in various relationships with your intimate friends, your wife or husband...

If we try to listen we find it extraordinarily difficult, because we are always projecting our opinions and ideas, our prejudices, our background, our inclinations, our impulses; when they dominate we hardly listen at all to what is being said...

In that state there is no value at all. One listens and therefore learns, only in a state of attention, a state of silence, in which this whole background is in abeyance, is quiet; then, it seems to me, it is possible to communicate. (*1st Public Talk - 9th July 1967, [Talks and Dialogues, Saanen 1967](#)*).

The silence of Being is one of the more potent tools of divine technology.

Human beings are often quite uncomfortable with silence. When faced with silence, people want quickly to fill it up. Some can't sit in silence for more than a few seconds without saying something. The silence intensifies pressure. When the distractions are removed, what is present subconsciously rises up and needs to be dealt with.

Something else that can emerge in the silence is an awareness of atmosphere and the varied layers of it. People try to sort things out around them by working with the factors

they are aware of. But they often find they have little leverage because they're concentrating on the visible forms, and miss the invisible field out of which the forms emerge.

A useful analogy here is the layers of atmosphere that surround the earth. There are many dimensions to the atmosphere around us. The Troposphere is the first range. This is the one where weather appears, and it extends to about nine miles out. The Stratosphere is next. This is the layer that contains the ozone that absorbs UV light. It goes up to another 31 miles. The Mesosphere goes another 53 miles out. This is where meteors burn up. The Thermosphere extends 372 miles up. This is where the Aurora Borealis can be located, and satellites are placed. The Ionosphere interpenetrates many of these previous layers, but extends far beyond them, extending from three to 500 miles. This layer is full of ionized atoms, and it shrinks and expands based on solar activity. Finally the Exosphere extends enormously, to 6,200 miles out.

There are many ranges of atmosphere. The same is true of internal experience. When one is quiet, we can discern some of these more subtle dimensions of atmosphere present in human experience. One of the qualities of atmosphere is that it is *subtle*. Subtle is a beautiful word that comes from roots meaning “below the weave.” The subtle is what resides behind the manifest, the overt. The subtle is below the weave. There are many delicate factors that rarely have a chance to be perceived because there is too much coarseness and noise and too little space. Our mission as individuals is to provide a point of conscious awareness for these factors, to listen for them, and to perceive how we are to be moved by them. This requires work—emotional, mental, and spiritual work. There is a great deal of power in these ranges, much more than may be initially evident.

One of the other dimensions of technology that is already present with us in consciousness and is that part of these more subtle ranges, is the capacity to *let*, to allow. There are several modes of “letting.” First there is letting go, for instance of releasing false patterns of feeling and identity, false narratives about ourselves that may have held us in their grip for however long, that need healing and release, or perhaps simply cycles that are ending. Letting go. That itself requires a certain kind of confidence born of the experience of the quietness of Being. But there are other kinds of letting. There is letting flow—letting something emerge, uncontrolled by human thinking and human needs. This kind of letting allows a flow of factors to unfold.

There is also another dimension, that of letting things alone, of letting things be, letting them function in their own way, at their own level. There are certainly many ranges of function that go far beyond what human beings actively control, but that are nevertheless meant to be in our consciousness. These ranges require letting also, letting without interference.

We come to a certain humility in the face such awareness, an awareness that we are to let alone the coordinated unfolding as there are greater and greater levels of awakening, and simultaneously greater and greater levels of disturbance stirred up by the intensification of more light shining in human consciousness. This requires an increased capacity to function in these quieter ranges of awareness, where there is the space to appreciate and encompass, to see the historical arc unfolding, to have perspective in other words, and to then have the space to discern what to do.

We can also be simply appreciative of the factors as they are emerging, however uncomfortable they may be. Invariably, in true hindsight, the discomfort is recognized as a gift. We can bring that hindsight into the present and see the gifts now. So for instance, as the United States moves in the next two months towards an election, and potentially into a destabilized and tumultuous cycle, do you have the quietness to discern what is trying to happen and what healing is needed, without taking sides, without demonizing anyone, without reacting? Where is the space for that? It seems hard to find among political leaders. There are very few contexts where there are wise, neutral, sane places for reflection and exchange, for instance. People are easily moved by fear.

Some cultures have the tradition of elders who hold perspective for everyone. Modern western culture, particularly in the US, does not seem to have that kind of visible center point. But we in fact know how to provide this. We have the analogy, and can observe the impact, of the past few months.

When we quieted our global activity, the earth felt it hundreds of kilometers below the surface, and no doubt above as well. Our pause had a profound impact. This was felt at the physical level, but other levels of function are certainly connected to the physical, and much more potent. We can allow the presence of quiet to be extended, and have a great deal more impact than we might imagine. But this is only true if the noise at subtler levels inside

ourselves is reduced, so that the voice of the Tone of Being can be heard again in us and therefore its movement intensified through us.

There is a great coordinating effort in which we are all taking part. It is powerful to see and to welcome people you might not have expected, who might be moving in ways that you might not immediately fully appreciate. This is the moment to let the quietness of Being speak. This reality is present in each one who is participating in this rising energy. As more and more people find they are susceptible to efforts to take them out of the moment, there needs to be a counterbalance to this. Out of the quietness there can be a deepening, a centering in something larger than any distraction. And there is great pleasure in participating in letting this be the case.

In quietness, is the magnificent radiance and massive power of Being, power that can easily hold whatever transitions need to be navigated. There are many changes to come, not just at the social and human level, but at the level of the physical planet and beyond that as well. All these changes are synchronized within the quiet of the whole, and of the fullness of Being.

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### **Pre-Service Music**

*1. Rachmaninov 2nd Piano Concerto - Movement II. Adagio sostenuto*

Performed by cellist HAUSER & the London Symphony Orchestra