

iRest

Institute

*What is before birth, revealer, slayer of ignorance,
from which this universe emerges,
that permeates all forms and makes all appearance possible?*

*Hafez says:
“Pulling out the chair beneath your mind and
watching you fall into God,
what else is there for Hafez to do
that is any more fun than this?”*

Post Retreat Blessings...

I trust you're experiencing retreat continuing as you go about your daily activities. I invite you to take time to remember and welcome yourself as pure perceiving amidst your everyday life; listening and welcoming your thoughts, emotions, and experiences—just as they are—while resting as the tangible mystery that is beyond the thinking mind—This that is dynamically ever-present, our true home.

During retreat, we took time to experience our essential essence that is beyond space, time, lack, desire, and need, utterly and always complete and whole, independent of circumstance. We nourished love, compassion, kindness, and wisdom; how everything arises in unbounded openness—awareness, and how awareness dissolves into its homeground, the “something else” that is undeniable.

We took time to sit with another, with our mirrored reflection. We rode the elevator of sensation down to our heart which expanded into its everywhere-ness. And we let go into being, pure perceiving and awareness with abandon—letting go of past, present, and future—knowing that retreat was supporting us to rest, be still, and realize that we're always home—being peace—no matter what's happening within our body and mind, or in the world around us.


In these challenging times, may we keep in perceiving and understanding—with ourselves, others and the world—in our hearts, prayers, and meditations.

As in past years, the recording we made during retreat are available for re-listening with trust you will gain continuing benefit from for your practice of meditation.

Please remember that iRest Institute Mentors are here to support you in. If this is of interest, contact Kirsten Guest (kirsten@irest.org) who can help you connect with an IRI mentor.

I want to thank those of you who so graciously support iRest Institute through your monthly and yearly donations, which enables us to offer these precious teachings worldwide through our scholarship programs.

I share with you some reflections that arose for me during our time together.

With joy and love, 

Reflections from our Retreat

Johannes Tauler

Beyond this, we are led into another domain, where we lose our self so completely that no trace of our self remains. What happens to us here, what we experience and enjoy, no mind can ever experience, conceive, or understand. Indeed, how could the mind ever grasp such a thing, for so submerged are we now, that we know nothing, feel nothing, understand nothing but the Divine alone in the Divine's simple, pure, undisguised Unity. – *Johannes Tauler (1300-1361)*

Buddha: Udāna, Brahmanimantanika & Kevaddha Sūtras

There is a sphere of experience that is beyond the entire field of matter, the entire field of mind, that is neither this world, nor another world, nor both, neither moon nor sun. This I call neither arising or passing away, nor abiding, and neither dying nor rebirth. This is without support, without development, without foundation. This is the unborn, unbecome, uncreated, unconditioned. Do not think that this is an empty or void state, for there is this that is without a distinguishing mark, infinite and shining everywhere, untouched by the material elements and not subject to any power. Here it is that conditioned consciousness ceases to be. Here it is that suffering ceases to be.

Meister Eckhart

In my breaking-through, where I stand free of my own will, And of God's will, And of all God's works, and of God himself, Here I am above all created things, where I am neither God nor creature, but I am that which I was and where I shall remain now and for evermore; for this breaking-through guarantees to me that I and God are not two. Here, I am what I was, where I neither wax nor wane, for here I am an unmoved cause that moves all things. Here, we win for ourselves what we have eternally been and shall eternally remain.

Richard

What is Meditation?

Our approach to meditation is a form of contemplative self-inquiry. It entails observing—perceiving—free of the past, free of naming, remembering, giving direction, controlling, or dividing and creating separation.

In perceiving—in observing—there is clarity of seeing, free from the mind's imposing images, for otherwise, in directing, imposing, controlling, trying to fix and change there is division, which can lead to conflict. Division and conflict end when the observe is absent, and there is only observing, observing without an observer.

The thinker—the 'me'—creates separation but is not separate from what is brought forward in thinking as thought. The thinking mind projects a sense of separation from what is observed, imposes an image, and experiences itself as a separate self, or seer. The thinker, this imaginary self, is an accumulation assembled through thoughts, memory, and images. When there is perceiving, the self is absent, and separation and seeking come to their end. Here there is clarity of perception and the possibility of insight, for perceiving—observation without the past—brings forth great clarity, understanding, and energy.

We inquire: Is pure perceiving, pure observation free of the movement of self as separate, observation free of memory and image possible? Is there a greater truth beyond separation?

To be perceiving, we must relinquish controlling ourselves and our circumstances; controlling the body, senses, mind, attention, and thought, all that comprise past knowledge, the analyzer, the controller, and separation, division.

The self as separate is an illusion—a deception—created by the mind through thought whereby thought invents a separate self who is a controller, and therefore controlled by the images it creates, as the

thinker, the self, is not separate from the images it creates. Direct observation is necessary, as then the controller is seen and set free, without repression or denial.

We look without concept, without imposing a word on what is perceived, because we've understood that the word—the concept—is a thought that is comprised of the past, as an image that is not what is being perceived. To live free of the controller and control, of the illusory self, there must be no outside authority that we depend on. We must depend only upon ourselves and our own first-hand understanding. No imitating. No conforming. No imagining. No second-hand information. Only direct perception—direct perceiving.

We inquire: Can we understand the nature of control? Is there a way of living free of control, controller, self, and image? Who is the controller and what is to be controlled? It is the movement of thought, which creates division, the controller, and the controlled. In perceiving there is no perceiver, controller, division, or conflict. We act, then, not from thinking and thought, but from pure perceiving, where here we discover there is intelligence and that we are love, compassion, and kindness. Only here can there is true security, safety, stability, and dynamic stillness that is independent of circumstance.

Anxiety & Fear

We feel various forms of anxiety and fear: survival, death, insecurity, not being loved, loneliness, loss, climate change, uncertainty, etc. We need to understand the root source of anxiety and fear and observe its nature and how it comes into being. We need to understand time and thought, for time, thought, and memory and image are the root cause of anxiety and fear.

How do we do this? We must perceive the fact and truth of it—not the idea—that time and thought are the root cause of anxiety and fear. Who is the observer who sees this truth? Are we a separate seer who sees as a separate self? The observer is not separate from what is seen. At the moment of fear, there is only sensation, prior to the mind labeling the sensation as fear. In this moment of direct perceiving there is no separation, no fear as a concept. No escape from or suppression of it. When we end the conflict between the “me” and the sensation that is fear through non-separation, duality conflict cease. End the “me” who is in conflict. How? By being perceiving—in which “me” as a separate self and the conflict are no longer present. Meet afresh the sensation that is labeled as fear. Observe all reactions globally, without the past, seeing and feeling fear with a freshness, an intelligence uncontaminated by the past.

The Thinking Mind's Images

When we see something that's dangerous, we move away. If this is so, why do we not move away from the images that the mind holds us hostage in?

Why does the mind, through thought, create, build, and maintain images? Obviously, the mind, through thought, seeks security, safety, certainty, permanency through the images it builds. But is there true security, safety, and certainty in the mind's images, which are based in memory and the past? We don't like feeling anxiety, fear, or being out of control. Yet the security our images offer is false. Yet we cling to our images. Can we see the danger in identifying with the mind's images that create a prison of contraction in the body?

While the mind's function is to register, store, assess for safety, and react, can we listen, perceive, and observe without reacting, or reacting to our reactions? To do so we must give total attention to what's unfolding without the mind going into thinking, images, and its stories about how things “should” be.

When we live as a center—a “me”—it's impossible to not react from the images we have about ourselves or others. Being a “me” entails separation. And separation is the birthing place of conflict. No center—no “me”—no conflict. So, can we listen, observe, and perceive without a center, a “me”, as the perceiver?

Perceiving

In perceiving there is no perceiver, only perceiving. When there is a perceiver, there is separation—an observer and an observed—which entails division and conflict. As a separate self the mind projects separation and utilizes thinking from thinking—analysis—when responding to situations. While the thinking mind always seeks security and safety, it utilizes thinking from thinking and analysis, which keeps us in time, in becoming, end-gaining, and comparison, which entail insecurity, anxiety, and fear.

To attain true peace, we must understand what true safety, security and certainly is.

When we live from thinking, we live from the past, which is projected into a future. But truly there is only this moment, now, where this moment—now—contains both our past and our future. Without a radical transformation now, the future continues to contain what we are now, which is based on the past.

If there is to be radical transformation, then it cannot entail time. It must be instantaneous, uncontaminated by past memory and images. For there to be true psychological safety, security, and certainty we must be able to listen with full awareness and undivided attention. Listening that unfolds in time gives rise to separation and conflict. In pure perceiving we are outside of time and can truly listen and act from freshness and intelligence that is uncontaminated by the past and thinking. In this there is action that is without conflict. Action without conflict springs from love, compassion, and kindness that are not based in time and are independent of object.

Awareness

Unbreakable peace, well-being and authentic spontaneous action arise when we are free of being a separate self. Action then arises from the innate intelligence that springs directly for the unnamable, indescribable Mystery that has given birth to the entire cosmos. Action is then universal, not-personal, dynamic, where life is living us as its expression. Here we knowingly know our underlying identity as pure perceiving—pure awareness, untouched by time and space, in which there is true love, compassion, kindness and spontaneous action not based in thinking or the past. Here it is impersonal, universal Intelligence which acts.

Attention

Attention is a movement of the mind that is constantly monitoring and assessing for safety and security. When there is the movement of attention from a center or separate self the mind divides what is indivisible into separate objects, into perceiver and perceived, time, space, and internal and external. The movement of attention, however, can be in perceiving, in which there is no separation, even as attention continues its movement of monitoring and assessing.

We inquire: Can we understand through perceiving the various ways attention moves?

In pure perceiving, observing how the mind, with the movement of attention, divides what is indivisible into:

1. Internal and External, where the mind conceptualizes “thought objects”, as, for instance, an imaginary juicy, red apple. Or, as inside versus outside where in fact there are neither. Or, as a thought: “I am lacking”, or “I am a force for good in the world.”
2. Dilated versus Narrow, where attention attends to a particular object, say a sound in the immediate vicinity, then all sounds at once.
3. Directed versus Receptive, where attention rests on a sensation, say in jaw, then shifts to feeling the entire body, globally
4. Close versus Distant, where attention attends to something that feels close in, i.e., an emotion, and then attends to a distant perception, say a tree.
5. Singular versus Split, where attention rests upon a particular object in the visual field, say a tree, then attends to the entire visual field at the same time as many separate objects.

6. Focused versus diffuse, where attention rests on a particular object, say a tree, then softens and takes in the entire visual field.
7. Subjective (Towards) versus Intrinsic (From), where attention appears to be a center that attends towards an object, say the pelvis, then rests in the pelvis and senses “from” the pelvis as a radiance of sensation.

Love

There are two kinds of love: 1) Love as a separate self for or towards something or someone, and 2) Love that is independent of object, where there is no separation, but only love as a global presence-essence that doesn't separate, divide, or judge. Where there is true love, not from a center as a separate self, there is true compassion, kindness, beauty, ease, and intimacy.

Death

Why are we frightened of death? Isn't it that we are afraid of the ending of “me”? Isn't the “me” really the fear of the loss of the accumulations of knowledge that the thinking mind has assembled and projected as a separate self, who lives in time (past and future) and space. Isn't death the loss of all that we take ourselves to be. The “me” is simply memory of past knowledge and experiences projected into a “now” and a “future”.

When we live as pure perceiving, we live free of the “me” as a separate self. We live free of past images, and therefore free of time: past and future. Freedom from the “me” means living free from memory, where dying to the past is happening in each moment, where we don't carry past thoughts and images into this moment. Freedom from the “me”, then, is to understand what we are beyond time, space, and memory. Now there is no fear of death as a future event, as dying is happening in each moment.

Awareness

Is there subject-object duality in being awareness. In being pure awareness separation is understood as a product of the dividing mind. Here, we live free of subject and object, even as the appearance of subject and object appear in awareness. Subject and object are not two, nor one. We live beyond concept and word, even as concept and word continue to appear in the mind.

Seeking

What are we seeking through meditation? In seeking the mind is projecting that something has been lost and that the mind will recognize it when it is obtained. Seeking is from the mind projecting preconceived concepts. In meditation—in pure perceiving, in pure awareness—all forms of seeking are seen to be what they are and there is spontaneous disidentification from seeking. Attention now turns and recognizes what is always the case: the “something else” that is indescribable yet undeniable, that is and has always been.

We are ultimately seeking is the end suffering; that which is outside of time, space, thought; that is original, fresh, incorruptible, and transformational. That is free of conditioning. That is honest, truthful, and authentic. A mind that doesn't deceive itself. That which is beyond desire, attachment, aversion, and illusion.

In meditation there is perceiving free of perceiver and center, free of expectation, projection, anticipation, suppression, rejection, control, choice, and conflict, free of separation and division. In perceiving we find what we have been seeking, which has been here from the very beginning. Here we find freedom from suffering.